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## **EU Parliament: new rules to ensure public participation and protect journalists, media, activists, academics**

The European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee adopted its position on new rules to ensure EU-wide protection from vexatious Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) against journalists, media, activists, and academics. The text was adopted with 15 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention, the European Parliament said in a statement. Abusive legal actions are often used to silence those protecting fundamental rights, the environment, and public access to information. The new rules would also apply to cross-border cases. MEPs extended the definition of "cross-border cases" to include cases where "the topic of the case is relevant for more than one country and is accessible electronically". In addition, MEPs urge EU countries to implement the Commission's recommendations. Under the new rules, victims of SLAPPs "would be able to apply for their case to be dismissed early and it would be up to the claimant to prove that the case is not manifestly unfounded". Claimants would also cover all costs of proceedings, while the victims of SLAPPs would have the right to "compensation for related damage, including reputational harm". Defamation cases "would only be admissible in the defendant's national court". MEPs urge EU states "to not recognise judgements against those targeted by SLAPPs in third countries and domiciled in their territory", who, by contrast, would be entitled to claim compensation.

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