
Hungary: Mijatovic (Commissioner for Human Rights), pluralism of the media and freedom of expression have been “eroded”

An alarm bell, the umpteenth one, from the Council of Europe about the “erosion” suffered by pluralism of the media and freedom of expression in Hungary. This time, it has been rung by the Memorandum published today by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović. It points the finger at “the compounded effects of a politically-controlled supervisory authority and the State’s distortion of the information market”. There are still a few “independent voices” and they are appreciated by public opinion, but “a free political debate and a free exchange of different opinions, which are the prerequisites for a democratic society to thrive, have been remarkably reduced, especially outside of the capital”, the Memorandum says. There are also “endless smear campaigns against human rights defenders and independent voices, designed to gag society and send a clear message that there will instantly be retaliations against any criticism of the government”. In all this, the government “proved that it does not intend to adhere to the rule of law”, as it completely disregarded any national or international court ruling. The list of pluralism-damaging behaviours includes “opaque procedures in the distribution of revenue from government advertisements”, threats to journalists. In 2020, the anti-pandemic emergency rules “deteriorated the situation even further”. And there will be the parliamentary election in 2022.

Valentina Bombelli