



By email:
Secretary-General Klaus Welle

CC:
President Antonio Tajani MEP
Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly

28 February, 2019

Dear Mr. Welle,

We are writing to draw your attention to a **serious breach of the obligation of impartiality** of the European Parliament Secretariat.

Yesterday, the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Parliament, which is responsible for the content of the European Parliament's various online channels, published several tweets regarding the legislative proposal on copyright in the Digital Single Market COM(2016) 593. The proposal is politically highly controversial with positions pro and contra crossing most party lines. The proposal is due to be voted in Plenary in March 2019.

In those tweets, however, the Web Communication Unit **one-sidedly and enthusiastically supports the controversial copyright proposal** as it stands after the end of the trilogue negotiations despite the fact that the European Parliament did not yet adopt the legislative proposal. The tweets are published in English, German, and French, containing the following message:

- On the Twitter account @Europarl_EN: "Your memes are safe. Freedom of expression is not affected. It's all about fair payment to content creators Watch to learn more about the #copyrightdirective ↓". [1]
- On the Twitter account named @Europarl_DE: "Deine Memes sind sicher. Die Meinungsfreiheit wird nicht berührt. Es geht um eine faire Vergütung der Urheber von Inhalten. Hier erfährst Du mehr zur Copyright-Richtlinie ↓". [2]
- On the Twitter account named @Europarl_FR: "Vos mèmes pourront continuer d'être partagés. La liberté d'expression est préservée. Les créateurs seront rémunérés de façon équitable Apprenez-en plus sur la directive relative au droit d'auteur dans notre vidéo !". [3]

Each tweet is accompanied by a video [4] advertising the legislative proposal and interviewing only the Rapporteur. No other political groups are interviewed and hence **no other political opinion is expressed** in the video.

Furthermore, in its German language version the video is entitled "Parlament beschließt Urheberrecht im Internet" (in English: "Parliament concludes copyright on the internet"), a wording that suggests the European Parliament has already voted in favour of the copyright proposal.



In accordance with Article 222 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament the Secretary-General and the Secretariat shall “perform his or her duties conscientiously and with absolute impartiality.” Those tweets, however, can only be interpreted as an **attempt to unduly influence the ongoing political debate** in the European Parliament ahead of the Plenary vote on the copyright proposal in March.

We trust you will take the necessary steps to **remove those one-sided publications from the Secretariat’s official Twitter accounts** accompanied by a formal clarification about the incompatibility of such communications with the impartiality requirement of the Rules of Procedure and the high democratic standards the European Parliament aspires to adhere to.

We thank you for your consideration and remain at your complete disposal for any questions that may arise.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CF", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Claire Fernandez
Executive Director
European Digital Rights

[1] https://twitter.com/Europarl_EN/status/1100697243521294336

[2] https://twitter.com/Europarl_DE/status/1100705082470027264

[3] https://twitter.com/Europarl_FR/status/1100703057942380551

[4] <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/de>