

- **Country:** Kingdom of Belgium
- **Committee:** SOCHUM
- **Agenda Item:** Preserving Freedom of Press



The Kingdom of Belgium, is a EU member state since 1993, both forming it and taking on the task of being it's capital. Belgium is also the capital of European ideology, having enacted several prominent acts protecting the freedom of speech and press (*Limits of free speech 2017*). The 1831 Belgian Constitution has the Article 19 that establishes the basics of the freedom of speech (*Article 19 "Freedom of worship, its public practice and freedom to demonstrate one's opinions on all matters are guaranteed, but offences committed when this freedom is used may be punished."*). Belgium is also a member of the NATO and holding it's headquarters. These responsibilities are given to Belgium, thanks to the free environment that the Belgian government and it's people have earned to this day. One of the greatest illustration of this is Belgium's ranking in the RPF Index, stating 32nd (2023) in the world. This is a substantial achievement keeping in mind that the leadings are most dominantly European nations.

Although Belgium is one of the greatest examples that lead the world, no system is perfect as in our media sector. The recent COVID-19 pandemic and other economic aspects have caused great devastation in media sector. (*Protecting press freedom during the covid-19 pandemic: Topics: European parliament*) With the dropping advertising revenues, media companies started to centralise, leading to a dominance in the market and less expression of opinions. The lynching suffered by covering sensitive topics like extremism, terrorism or crime has lead to self censorship not only in Belgium, but throughout Europe.

The current state of the world does not allow us to regress, but always progress. Belgium not only has the potential to progress on itself, but to help the world. The 16th SDG is one of the Belgium's and the Europe's priorities. We have to discuss and safeguard one of the people's basic needs, expressing themselves. While the world is shook by anti-democratic movements, there is never the right time to permanently install these values to the core ideology of the world. We will continue work on to see the results, making the world a better place for all.

References:

1. *Limits of free speech*. Unia. (2017, February 23). <https://www.unia.be/en/areas-of-action/media-and-internet/internet/the-limits-of-free-speech>
2. *Protecting press freedom during the covid-19 pandemic: Topics: European parliament*. Topics | European Parliament. (n.d.). <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20200423STO77709/protecting-press-freedom-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>