

Closing down of Egunkaria a European problem

22 Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg have called for the reopening of 'Egunkaria'; they include the heads of three parliamentary groups

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It is snowing here, too. Snow and a bitter wind. But once you enter the European Parliament the daily routine goes on, despite the snow. Speeches, votes, coffees, discussions, press conferences, etc. And occasionally the issue of the closing down of [Euskaldunon Egunkaria](#).

In a press briefing about seven MEPs denounced the closing down two years ago of "the only newspaper in the [Basque language](#)", called for the paper to be opened and reiterated that the basic rights that lie at the very heart of Europe have to be respected. A total of 22 MEPs signed a statement calling for the closing down of the paper to be suspended. They include Gerard Onesta, the deputy speaker of the European Parliament, and the presidents of three political groups in the Parliament. Jens-Peter Bonde, a Dane and a co-president of the Independence and Democracy Group, Monica Frassoni, an Italian and a co-president of the Group of the Greens, and Graham Watson, the president of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. Josu Ortuondo, the [EAJ-PNV](#) MEP, underlined the seriousness of closing down a newspaper, and the rest concurred with him. "We are here to demand that basic rights be applied in the Basque Country, too".

Important media representatives were unfortunately not present. "If the Turks were to close down a Kurdish paper, this press room would be full," said Gerard Onesta, the deputy speaker of the European Parliament with regret. And Monica Frassoni, the co-president of the Group of the Greens, reiterated this: "The problem of freedom of expression is well known in many countries in Europe, even though not much is heard about it. However, the risks are there, as we can see from the closing down of Egunkaria. Terrorism is the excuse given to justify many things. We have to keep an eye on this. The closing down of Egunkaria is not exclusively a Basque problem, it is also a European problem. It's under our responsibility."

They were keen to stress the need to respect diversity within Europe, as the Scot Ian Hudghton put it: "I can identify myself with the wishes of the Basques that their identity should be recognised". The Catalan Bernat Joan i Mari of the [ERC](#) pointed out that the closing down had been an attack on the Basque Country and on Basque culture.