

## **Abstract**

On the 1st of January 2023, a Foreign Espionage Act was added as an amendment to the Swedish Freedom of Press- and Expression Acts. According to the law, it may be illegal for journalists to publish information that would harm the relationship to another state or an intergovernmental organization, such as the UN or NATO. When the law passed, journalists, media executives, and media experts criticized the Foreign Espionage Act for being a threat to Swedish media freedom. It was perceived that the law could lead to self-censorship among reporters and editors, as well as intimidating sources and whistleblowers. In this study, eleven semi-structured interviews with Swedish reporters and editors have been thematically analyzed in order to explore the perceptions and implications of the Foreign Espionage Act about 1,5 years after its passing. The findings show that even though self-censorship is considered a serious threat and a possible implication of the law, none of the participants of this study admit to self-censorship. This suggests a high level of professionalism among Swedish journalists. However, participants also say that the Foreign Espionage Act should be seen as one threat among many directed at Swedish media freedom. This is not only concerning in the current times but more so for the future when a different political landscape may use laws like the Foreign Espionage Act to seriously restrict media freedom. This study gives a first glimpse into the perceptions and implications of the foreign espionage act and serves as a starting point for future research on the topic.

## **Keywords**

Media freedom, press freedom, democracy, self-censorship, Sweden

## **Title**

One year with the Foreign Espionage Act: Implications to the Freedom of Press in Sweden