



**EUROPEAN UNION**

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**EU Statement in Response to the Representative on  
Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatovic**

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The European Union warmly welcomes the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatovic, to the Permanent Council and thanks her for her comprehensive report. We fully support the mandate of the Representative, Ms. Mijatovic, and we thank the Representative for all the hard work by her and her able team.

Freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including the safety of journalists are top priorities for the EU. In our work in the OSCE, we find the relation to the concept of comprehensive security particularly important: there is a clear link between free expression and free media, and open, peaceful and prosperous societies that contribute to our joint security. We therefore closely follow developments in the entire OSCE region.

We take it to heart that the RFoM's report includes concerns in relation to media legislation, treatment and safety of journalists in EU Member States. We remain committed to cooperating with RFoM and heeding her advice.

Mr Chairperson, the EU shares many of the concerns raised by the RFoM in her report. We have joined the RFoM in calling on Turkey to urgently reverse the negative trend and guarantee respect of its constitutionally enshrined commitment to freedom of expression and of the media. We remain concerned by the latest wave of arrests of members of the media, further closures of media outlets, and the continued restrictions on the freedom of expression, including social media.

We have echoed the RFoM's call on Russia to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists, and we have shared her concern with regard to new legislation that could seriously infringe on access to information, freedom of expression and the independence of media. The space to conduct independent journalism in Russia regrettably continues to shrink. At the same time, Russian disinformation campaigns continue to distort the media arena in the OSCE region.

With regard to Ukraine, the RFoM has raised a number of concerns related to legislative developments and safety of journalists, while welcoming the commitment by the authorities, the media community and civil society to strengthen media freedom. The EU acknowledges the willingness of Ukraine to work with the RFoM and welcomes the visit of the Representative to Kyiv in October, noting, however, that much more needs to be done by the authorities. We remain concerned with the dire situation for freedom of expression in Crimea, illegally annexed by Russia, as well as in areas held by Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine and in that context, call attention to the recent decision by the Crimean de facto authorities to prevent Crimean journalist Mykola Semena from leaving Crimea to participate in the eighth annual Assembly of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership in Brussels on November 28, where he was due to receive an award for his work on freedom of expression.

The on-going dialogue between the representatives of media communities of Russia and Ukraine, held under the auspices of the Representative's Office, including the recent workshop on post-conflict reconciliation in Sarajevo, is important for reestablishing trust and we welcome it.

The Representative recently reiterated her call on the authorities of Azerbaijan to reform the country's defamation legislation, saying that the amendments, if adopted, would again send a negative signal about the state of free expression and free media in the country. The EU shares these worries, and is concerned that while the release on probation of journalist Khadija Ismaylova in May was a positive step, other journalists and bloggers remain detained in the country. The EU expressed concerns regarding the state of freedom of expression in the country during the last Human Rights Dialogue held earlier this year in October.

In much of Central Asia, the situation regarding freedom of expression is concerning and has been for some time. The recent cases raised by the RFoM with regard to the detention of a journalist in Uzbekistan and harsh sentences against media personalities in Kazakhstan add to this picture.

In the Western Balkans threats and violence against journalists remain a serious issue. The death threats against a journalist in Bosnia and Herzegovina, most recently highlighted by the RFoM, requires the responsible institutions to conduct a swift and thorough investigation.

Mr Chairperson, the conclusion after listening to the report of Ms. Mijatovic is simple: we all need to increase our efforts to implement all OSCE principles and commitments on freedom of expression and media freedom. The EU greatly appreciates the commitment of the German Chairmanship to these issues. In particular, we welcome the fact that a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the topic of freedom of expression and freedom of the media was organised in October. As the Ministerial Council in Hamburg stands before us, the EU reiterates its support for the two draft decisions presented by the Chairmanship related to this field, with a view to further enhancing our OSCE commitments and bringing them in line with standards in other international fora. We will continue to engage constructively on these draft decisions. Beyond Hamburg, we look forward to retaining freedom of expression and media freedom high on the agenda also next year during the Austrian Chairmanship.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.