



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1346 Vienna, 25 November 2021

EU statement in response to the Report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Teresa Ribeiro

1. The European Union warmly welcomes the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Teresa Ribeiro, to the Permanent Council and thanks her for providing an overview of the media freedom situation in the OSCE region. The monitoring and assistance by the RFOM are more important than ever in light of the negative trends for freedom of expression and media freedom witnessed in many parts of the OSCE area. Attacks and undue restrictions that target journalists and other media actors are not only a violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, but also a threat against our common security.
2. In her report, the RFOM noted a number of troubling trends in the OSCE region with regard to growing distrust and anti-media sentiments, continued violence against journalists and other media actors, both online and offline, and increasing challenges related to the impact of disinformation and hate speech on freedom of expression and media pluralism.
3. The EU shares many of these concerns. We particularly appreciate the RFOM's continued attention to the deteriorating situation for independent media, as well as journalists and other media actors in Belarus. It is most concerning that despite repeated calls on Belarus to fulfil its human rights obligations, the repressive policy and actions by the authorities remain unchanged.
4. We welcome that the RFoM highlights issues across the region, demonstrating that no country is immune to shortcomings. In advancing the media freedom and freedom of expression within the EU, we remain committed to engaging fully with the RFoM.

5. We also welcome the RFoM's close engagement with the representatives of civil society and independent media. Such outreach plays a key role in providing early warning and rapid response when states fall short of implementing their commitments.
6. Madam Representative, we welcome the joint declaration on Politicians and Public Officials and Freedom of Expression issued together with the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and the Organisation of American States Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, and encourage you to continue to heighten awareness of the intolerant and divisive public communication's implications on undermining democratic institutions, civic space and the protection of human rights. The RFoM's contribution to topics such as safety of journalists and other media actors, including the specific focus on female journalists, threats of disinformation, and artificial intelligence, are particularly important. We especially appreciate your work on new projects focused on assistance to participating States in implementing commitments undertaken in the Milan 2018 Decision on Safety of Journalists, as well as on media literacy.
7. We also commend your attention to the need to assess current and future challenges deriving from the changing media landscape, and your decision to establish an advisory group of eminent persons to assist in this task. We would appreciate more information on your plans in this regard.
8. The RFoM is a unique resource for participating States. The EU encourages all participating States to engage constructively and in good faith with the RFoM and to draw on the expertise of the Office. The EU stands firmly by the institution, the mandate of the Representative, and we emphasize the importance of her support to participating States in the implementation of their OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.