



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities

**HOW MEDIA CAN HELP INTEGRATION
IN DIVERSE SOCIETIES**

Op-ed by
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On the occasion of
**The Digital Launch of the Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities
and the Media in the Digital Age**

[Check against delivery]

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Today marks the launch of the “Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age”- issued by my Institution, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

In recent years, fundamental transformations have taken place in the media landscape. New technologies have enriched the media, with a proliferation of diverse platforms, alongside the more traditional outlets. That has meant enhanced opportunities to access an abundance of diverse content, including content produced in other countries, and increased tools for individualized and interactive participation in the public debate.

I see media, especially in its modern form, as a mirror of society and an agent and accelerator of change. In the past decade, its ability to divulgate information and reach and connect people has been exponentially amplified, and so has its potential to defuse or, alternatively, ignite conflict. This is particularly relevant to diverse societies, where the likelihood of identity-related divisions being exploited domestically or externally is often higher than in ethnically homogeneous contexts. In diverse societies, where minorities and majorities live side-by-side, the media can offer all groups in society enhanced opportunities to shape identities and explore viewpoints. As media increasingly transcends borders, minorities can easily form transnational networks.

Regrettably, however, the media also carries risks for peace and stability. Transitional networks involving minorities spread across various States have the potential to interfere in, and possibly damage, bilateral relations. The new media carries the risk of political manipulation, and minorities can be instrumentalized. A rise in inflammatory language in the political discourse globally is translating in the spread of xenophobic and racist language. The new minorities which have emerged as a result of the recent immigration wave are an easy target.

States have a responsibility and an interest to ensure that the media and the opportunities it offers are used in a way that minimizes these risks, and rather catalyzes the integration of diverse societies. A society that is fully integrated, where different groups live together in mutual respect and tolerance, is a society that is resilient to conflict. The “Tallinn Guidelines

on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age”, which I have presented today together with President Kaljulaid, give States concrete and comprehensive policy advice on how to use media as a powerful tool of conflict prevention and societal integration. The recipe is a combination of multilingualism reflecting the linguistic diversity in society; participation of various groups in media content production and delivery; and restraint by States in their interference in other countries’ affairs.

Tallinn has lent its name to these Guidelines. The “Tallinn Guidelines” are a tribute to Estonia as an innovator, user and promoter of digital technologies, but also as a multi-ethnic society that continues to face and address divisions along identity lines. The steps that Estonia has taken in this context, including the establishment of a television channel offering a common space for minorities and the majority, should be capitalized on to further advance social integration and cohesion. This would also constitute an opportunity to showcase a successful model to other countries.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities’ “Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age” are available at <https://www.osce.org/hcnm/tallinn-guidelines>

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