



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1156
Vienna, 31 August 2017**

**EU Statement on the Concern about the Arrest of Kirill
Serebrennikov and Freedom of Expression in the Arts in
Russia**

The EU notes with concern that the internationally renowned theatre director Kirill Serebrennikov of the Gogol Center in Moscow was arrested on August 22, in Saint Petersburg and that he is kept under house arrest. We acknowledge that no-one is above the law, however we have also listened to the concern voiced in Russia, that this arrest risks having a negative effect on the freedom of expression in the arts and of independent and critical voices in the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation has committed to protecting and promoting freedom of expression, including in the arts. In Cracow in 1991 participating States committed to “refrain from infringing upon the freedom of artistic creation, and to undertake to promote and protect the free and unhindered development of artistic creativity”. This was reaffirmed in Moscow in 1991, where states agreed that “independent intellectual and cultural life is crucial for the maintenance of free societies and democratic institutions”. These commitments must be upheld. We are worried about increasing attempts to impose censorship and spread propaganda in the arts, silence critical debate, civil society and opposition in the country, as exemplified by numerous measures stifling freedom of expression, in particular online, mass arrests after demonstrations on 26 March and 12 June and harassment of the non-systemic political parties.

The accusation of embezzlement is a serious charge. We therefore urge the Russian federal authorities to ensure a fair, transparent and objective legal process in the case of Mr Serebrennikov. We will continue to follow these developments very closely.

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, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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