

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1156th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

31 August 2017

**On violations of freedom of the media in Estonia**

Mr. Chairperson,

On 25 August, the authorities in Estonia, which currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, refused accreditation to the international news agency Rossiya Segodnya for the informal meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the European Union to be held in September this year in Tallinn. Three journalists from the agency in succession received refusals without any explanation of the reasons.

Ricardo Gutiérrez, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists, condemned the action by Tallinn, calling it a “serious attack on media freedom”. The European Federation together with the International Federation of Journalists put an “alert” about this matter on the relevant Council of Europe online platform. Harlem Désir, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, has urged the Estonian EU Presidency to reconsider its decision.

The Estonian authorities have been impeding the work of Russian media for a long time under the pretext of a so-called “combating of Russian propaganda”.

Thus, in April this year, they refused entry into Estonia to Ilya Omelchenko, a cameraman working for the television channel REN TV, who had arrived in Tallinn to report on the work of the Open Russia forum.

In March, the news agencies LETA and Baltic News Services, belonging to an Estonian holding company, unilaterally cancelled an agreement with the editorial staff of Sputnik Latvia and Sputnik Estonia. This decision was announced shortly after the Estonian Minister of Education Mailis Reps had talked in an interview with the local newspaper *Postimees* about a recommendation by the security police of Estonia to official bodies of that country not to associate with the Russian news agency Sputnik because, she said, it was not a journalistic but a propaganda source. Evidently it is the norm in a number of countries today to divide the media into “genuine” and “bogus”.

In October 2016, journalists from the Sputnik Estonia agency were refused access without reason to the open press conference by the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, and the head of the Ministry of the Interior of Estonia, Hanno Pevkur.

Earlier the Ministry of Defence of Estonia refused accreditation to Sputnik Estonia journalists for a press conference with the participation of the Minister Hannes Hanso, claiming it was a portal for “propaganda”. This is a public demonstration of disrespect not only for the mass media but also for the political leadership of sovereign States. Evidently this is also the norm in Estonia and reveals the level of democracy in that country.

We have stated more than once at meetings of the Permanent Council that the actions of Estonia are indicative of open and deliberate harassment of Russian media that express opinions disagreeable to the authorities. We can see what the demagogic statements by the Estonian Government on its adherence to the principles of democracy and freedom of speech actually stand for. We urge Estonia to observe its OSCE commitments to freedom of expression and media pluralism and to desist from persecuting Russian journalists for political ends.

Thank you for your attention.