



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council Nr 908 Vienna, 19 April 2012**

#### **EU statement on freedom of the media in Turkey**

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The European Union is concerned about the significant increase in the number of imprisoned journalists in Turkey. According to the Representative on Freedom of the Media's updated list of imprisoned journalists in Turkey around ninety journalists are currently in prison. The EU shares the Representative's assessment of the need for continued judicial reforms, in particular regarding the anti-terror law and the criminal code and the restrictive interpretation of both laws by the courts.

While we welcome the recent release of a few journalists, we note that their cases are still pending trial. We regret that courts usually do not grant pre-trial release of defendants. Also the length of pre-trial detentions continues to be a matter of concern, as well as the long sentences given to journalists if convicted.

The EU would like to reiterate, that it strongly condemns terrorism and continues to support Turkey's efforts to fight against it. Nonetheless, this must not provide a pretext to constrain freedom of expression or to impair the independence of the media.

We welcome the good co-operation between the Representative and the Turkish authorities. In this context we welcome the recent visit by the Representative to Turkey, during which she also visited journalists in prison. We encourage Turkey to make full use of the assistance and expertise offered by the Representative's Office, including in the ongoing legislative reform process.

Finally, the EU reaffirms its commitment to Turkey's negotiation process and offers its full support to the continued implementation of Turkey's reform agenda, in particular the ongoing constitutional reform.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.