EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
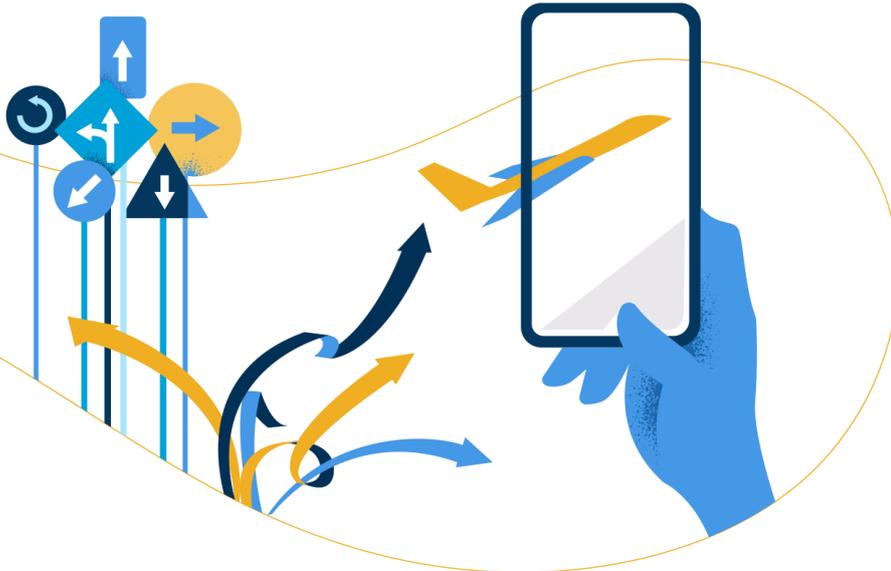
SUPPORTING MEDIA FREEDOM IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Independent Evaluation of OSCE's Programmatic Work on Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression

This is the first independent evaluation of the OSCE programmatic work on Freedom of the Media (FoM) and Freedom of Expression (FoE), conducted by the OSCE Office of Internal Oversight (OIO). The focus of the evaluation is on the ExB programmatic work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) in the period 2016-2021 and on the programmes and initiatives implemented by the OSCE field operations (FOs) in Central Asia and South Eastern Europe during the same time period.

> Evaluation purpose and approach

The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the coherence, effectiveness, comparative advantage and sustainability of OSCE's programmatic work on media freedom and freedom of expression, to identify good practices and provide recommendations to further improve the efficient and effective implementation of the OSCE media freedom programmes and initiatives.

OSCE
Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe

Office of Internal Oversight
EvaluationUnit

KEY FINDINGS

The wide range of programmes and initiatives implemented by the RFoM and the FOs have been praised by media partners, media providers, journalists and government representatives for their expertise, longstanding support to participating States, responsiveness and convening power. The OSCE political influence and comprehensive approach to security are major elements contributing to the comparative advantage of the organization in the promotion of media freedom and freedom of expression.

The RFoM and field operation have implemented their media freedom projects, initiatives and related activities as planned in the period reviewed by the evaluation. The evaluation could not assess the overall effectiveness and impact of the programmatic work due to a lack of measurable outcome indicators and monitoring data for most of the reviewed projects.

While the broadly formulated RFoM Unified Budget objectives, outcomes and outputs are allowing for flexibility in the design and implementation of media freedom projects and initiatives, the evaluation found a growing imbalance between the expected results, the increasing media freedom challenges, the growing needs for support of participating States, and the actual human and financial resources of the RFoM to effectively address these challenges and respond to the needs.

The evaluation considers internal coherence an area for improvement. While the RFoM and field operations are addressing media freedom challenges from different perspectives, there is an unexplored potential for greater complementarity between the RFoM and other OSCE executive structures, and for leveraging synergies in a more comprehensive, whole-of-OSCE approach to media freedom challenges.

The evaluation also highlights untapped opportunities for field operations to address media freedom challenges from a regional perspective, by mobilizing the expertise, and the human and financial resources of several missions for a greater impact.

Both the RFoM and field operations have planned for sustainability in all projects, but the durability of achieved results remains to be seen with time. Gender and human rights considerations have been streamlined in both in the design and implementation of most media projects and initiatives with increasing attention to the media literacy of marginalized populations.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation contains four recommendations for the RFoM and highlights good practices and considerations for the field operations.

Recommendations for the RFoM:

- ✓ **Develop a mid- or longer-term strategic framework with identified priorities and performance indicators.**
- ✓ **Develop and implement a Communications Strategy.**
- ✓ **Identify synergies and plan activities that leverage expertise and resources with field operations in a whole-of OSCE approach to media freedom.**
- ✓ **Commission decentralized evaluations for the larger and multiyear projects.**

Considerations for field operations include exploring a regional approach to resource mobilization, increasing knowledge sharing of good practices with the RFoM office and other field operations, applying a whole-of-mission approach where possible and developing mid-term strategic plans (which some mission already have developed).