

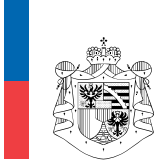
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019
Working Session 1 on Freedom of expression, free media and information
Statement of the Principality of Liechtenstein

Warsaw, 16 September 2019
Nuscha Wiczorek, Second Secretary

Thank you, Mr. Moderator,

Freedom of expression, free media and information are indispensable guarantees in functioning, rule of law abiding democracies. With the popularization of the Internet, these rights have taken on an entirely new dimension for citizens and the media alike. Ensuring their full and equal access to non-discriminatory Internet services should be an utmost priority for all OSCE participating States. Nonetheless, the uncurtailed exercise of the right by some members of society may also result in the inhibition of its exercise by others. This is particularly the case if hate speech is used to intimidate certain social groups and minorities or attack opposition politicians or parties. It is for States to strike the right balance between guaranteeing free speech rights on the one hand and preventing hate speech and discrimination on the other.

In recent years, Liechtenstein newspapers received an increasing amount of letters to the editor and comments online involving discriminatory speech against social groups such as Muslims, refugees, migrants or LGBT-persons. Based on reports of Liechtenstein's civil society, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) issued the recommendation that Liechtenstein's authorities should support the national media in their response to hate speech. To implement the recommendation, the Government's Violence Protection Commission initiated an open dialogue with the Liechtenstein media and organized a workshop with the director of projects of the International Network Against Cyber Hate. The dialogue and workshop aimed at supporting Liechtenstein journalists in identifying and ade-



quately responding to hate speech addressed against vulnerable groups or against journalists themselves.

The project resulted in a better understanding of the Liechtenstein media of how to detect and address hate speech online as well as offline. It therefore contributes to the fostering of a civilized and tolerant public discourse in Liechtenstein which provides room for differing opinions free from discrimination and that does not silence minority or critical voices. Ensuring such a discourse seems to be an ever important obligation of OSCE participating States in the light of shrinking spaces for civil society actors and human rights defenders and increasing nationalist and populist public discourse directed against vulnerable groups. We are happy to share more information on Liechtenstein's collaboration with the media on hate speech bilaterally.

I thank you.