



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
Dunja Mijatović**

**Recommendations following the expert meeting
Propaganda for War and Hatred and Freedom of the Media
Vienna, 1 March 2016**

In the past 20 months the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, has been engaged in an initiative to tackle the issue of the rise of propaganda. It included numerous activities, such as working with Russian and Ukrainian journalists on confidence-building measures designed to facilitate a common understanding, and training for young journalists from the two States on topics such as ethics in journalism.

The general approach of the Representative on the issue of current proliferation of propaganda for war and hatred is that it should be broadly identified and sincerely condemned by governments, civil society and international organizations as speech that is inappropriate for the democratic world and the profession of journalism. Governments and political leaders have a crucial role to play in decisively and promptly speaking out against instances of propaganda for war, of intolerant expression and dangerous hate speech in the media.

Convening on 12 February 2016, the OSCE-wide Expert Meeting “Propaganda for war and hatred and media freedom” looked into the prohibition of propaganda for war and advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence in international law. While the legal mechanisms to comply with the ban on propaganda remain extremely important, a repressive approach should not replace the preferable solution of the enabling approach that educates the public and promotes resilience and self-regulation in the media.

As propaganda is especially dangerous when it dominates the public sphere and limits access to information, thereby preventing individuals from expressing and forming opinions and ideas, it is crucial to enforce media pluralism as an effective response to propaganda that creates and strengthens a culture of peace, co-operation, tolerance and mutual respect in the OSCE region.

Particular attention should be given to the unhindered development of new technologies—including digital broadcasting, mobile communications, online media and social networks—which should be given broad support as tools to enhance the dissemination of diverse information.

Following the expert meeting in Vienna where different aspects of the phenomenon of hateful propaganda and its effects on media freedom and the ultimate well-being of society were discussed by media and legal experts, journalists, diplomats, policymakers and government representatives, the **OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović**, has come up with the following recommendations:

To the OSCE participating States (pS):

- 1) Governments are encouraged to renew an international dialogue on what constitutes propaganda for war and hatred in a contemporary world given the new technologies available to warmongers and hate-speech narrators with the objective of reaching a coherent and common understanding of the issue.
- 2) Governments should develop early warning mechanisms for violent hate speech and propaganda for war in the media.
- 3) Governments and political leaders should refrain from funding and using propaganda, especially when it may lead to intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping or may incite war, violence or hostility. This includes taking steps to abolish media entities run by the government or its proxies, and to abstain from sponsoring online trolls or engaging in other covert media operations. In general, non-interference by the governments in editorial decisions is a condition of media pluralism to which all pS have committed.
- 4) Authorities should strongly support the independent, sustainable and accessible activities of public service media with strong professional standards.
- 5) The independence of the judiciary and of media regulators should be guaranteed in law and in policy so as to avoid serving specific political interests and being used to exploit restrictions on propaganda of hatred for curtailing dissenting voices and freedom of expression.
- 6) Access to governmental information is essential, and all journalists should be able to access regions embroiled in armed conflict and receive information from the authorities of the parties involved.
- 7) The direct intervention of governments to stop propaganda is non-productive. A policy of state-run counter-propaganda, forced blocking of access to the media of one's choice and an arbitrary ban on entry to countries or regions for foreign journalists makes no practical sense in today's world and serves only to exacerbate conflicts and tensions, and should therefore be abolished.
- 8) As only an informed, media-literate population can make rational choices based on proven knowledge and fact, strengthening educational programmes on media literacy and Internet literacy may dampen the flames that fire propagandists.

Education and training that provides knowledge, ethics and skills empowers the public to use the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media to interpret and react to hateful messages. Support of such student programmes from an early age remain a duty of the states.

To media organizations and journalists:

- 1) Media self-regulation, where it is effective, remains the most appropriate way to address professional issues. Through self-regulation journalists exercise their moral and social responsibility, including counter-speech to propaganda of hatred and discrimination. Ethical codes and self- and co-regulatory instruments should ensure that cases of propaganda are brought to the attention of the public and act as a barrier to negative individual and group stereotypes being furthered by the media by raising awareness of the harm caused by discrimination.
- 2) Public service media have a responsibility to the media systems of the regions they serve and should lead other independent media entities by example.
- 3) Journalists should be trained in international human rights law as it is a crucial component of and integral to understanding the profession they have chosen to practice.
- 4) Professional organizations should offer platforms for independent reporting where independent journalists can publish and disseminate information.
- 5) Journalist organizations, media unions and associations, self-regulatory bodies and the owners and publishers of media outlets are responsible for providing oversight of published content. Peer-to-peer review and media accountability mechanisms should be developed to assist in this process. Propagandists should be disenfranchised from and by the journalistic community as propaganda does a disservice to all credible, ethical journalists who have fought for, and, in some cases, given their lives for the cause of honest and independent journalism.
- 6) Media freedom will benefit from media unions and associations throughout the region developing professional ties that promote the mission of the trade. The current dialogue “Two countries – one profession” between Ukrainian and Russian media associations could serve as good practice in this regard.

To civil society organizations:

- 1) The root causes of propaganda for war and hatred should be dealt with by a broad set of policy measures, for example in the areas of international and intercultural dialogue, such as the dialogue among journalists, intellectuals, and promoting media education and democracy based on peace, freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity. Citizens should be encouraged to express a range of views and information that embrace healthy dialogue and debate.
- 2) Glorification of the past might lead to violence in the future. Thus, a broader debate on history, especially of historical narrative widely used and protected by the

State should be encouraged. In addition the traditional values compatible with internationally recognized human rights norms and standards should also be used to counter incitement to hatred and war.

3) National and international human rights and media freedom mechanisms, specialized self- and co-regulatory bodies, professional organizations and independent monitoring institutions should be enabled to foster social dialogue in a vibrant civil society, provide early-warnings and also address complaints about incidents of hateful propaganda.

4) In war, truth is the first casualty. Independent commissions and press councils with fact-finding capabilities to uncover fabricated stories in propaganda should be supported; their findings promoted and presented as a basis for media education.

5) Civil society organizations should create national and international coalitions to address emergent threats connecting online hatred and violence offline, and encourage internet service providers, search engines and social media platforms to promote mechanisms that actively respond to such speech, in alignment with international human rights law.

6) There is a need to boost the important work of regional human rights and media freedom watchdogs, such as the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, as they advise and support national policies in this regard. They should be enabled to facilitate a dialogue to foster peace, intercultural understanding and learning.