

Second Roundtable: Secure working conditions of journalists

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

The increased number of reports received by the RFoM Office of journalists being targeted is indicative of a growing danger for, and discrimination against, journalists – and a threat to media freedom and freedom of expression in general – as well as the urgent need to counter such a worrisome trend. The Decision on the Safety of Journalists adopted at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Milan in 2018 (hereafter MC Decision 3/18) recognizes that the work of journalists can put them at risk of violence, intimidation and harassment, which can deter them from carrying out their work or lead to self-censorship, thereby having a negative effect on media freedom and media plurality. The MC Decision 3/18 further recognizes that targeted campaigns undermining the work of journalists are increasing, eroding public trust and confidence in the credibility of journalism, which in turn can increase the risk of threats and violence. It also recognizes the need to effectively address the concerns of women journalists, and that safety entails physical, legal, psychological, political, technological, economic and other aspects.

The RFOM project on the Safety of Journalists (SoJ) aims at assisting OSCE participating States to strengthen implementation of relevant OSCE principles and commitments concerning safety of journalists, with particular reference to the pledges outlined in the MC Decision 3/18 on the Safety of Journalists, as well as to improve implementation of applicable legal frameworks and existing national strategies for the protection of journalists.

In order to effectively support the implementation of the MC Decision 3/18 in the OSCE region, seven thematic roundtables will address the following core issues:

- 1) data collection, analysis and reporting on attacks and violence against journalists and promotion of journalistic work;
- 2) secure working conditions;
- 3) safety of journalists in conflict situations;
- 4) intersectional perspectives;
- 5) digital safety;
- 6) legal harassment;
- 7) police prevention and fight against impunity.

FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The second roundtable will focus on “Secure working conditions”. Journalism is a dynamic, but also a notoriously precarious profession. The proliferation and convergence of media, combined with the economic crisis and the pandemic, lead to diminishing the status of journalists in many OSCE participating States. According to the UNESCO report, as a result, two-thirds of journalists feel less secure in their jobs.¹

One of the most important indicators of the working conditions of journalists is their level of job satisfaction, which is often linked to their autonomy or freedom, but other conditions are also important, for example journalists’ perceptions of how well their news organizations are doing in informing the public.

It is clear that journalists’ and news organizations’ have been challenged by the rise of internet and social media, that news organizations are operating across more platforms, and that journalists are being required to engage with audiences in different and more sophisticated ways than the past.² This has fueled demands for flexibility of work and for people who can provide editorial and creative input across an increasingly integrated range of information platforms.

Freelance journalism has become a key employment alternative in the current media landscape, with news organizations often relying on independent professionals to reduce organizational budgets. Freelance journalists are often caught between intense demands from employers and financial insecurity rooted in the precarious conditions of their work.

Moreover, the media industry is still struggling for survival and sustainability, constantly exploring new business models that can achieve this goal. For example, media companies that want to ensure reader loyalty have launched a business model where anyone interested in reading their content can contribute according to their purchasing power.³ Supporting the economic viability of independent news media while respecting the professional autonomy of journalists is crucial.

These developments alter the conditions of legacy media and raise many questions.

¹ [UNESCO: The business model of the news media is broken; our fundamental right to information at risk | UNESCO](#)

² *Integration of News and News of Integration: A Structural Perspective on News Media Changes*, Peter J. Gade, Elena Raviola, Published 1 March 2009, Journal of Media Business Studies

³

How can working conditions be maintained that provide professional growth and development, recognition, social interaction as well as job satisfaction? Can participating States support independent news outlets, in a manner that is fair, transparent and does not compromise editorial independence? Do changes in employment and contractual arrangements and in job content provide major challenges for training institutions? Which business model could save the future of journalism?

Six experts will try to answer these questions. They will provide insights into secure working conditions for journalists and develop recommendations based on their experience. Furthermore, after the first two hours of closed discussion among experts, the event will open to OSCE participating States and provide an opportunity to discuss the topic with experts in detail, asking relevant questions and identifying opportunities on how to make best use of their recommendations.

MODALITIES

Date and Time: 16 November 2022, 14:00-15:00 Bibliotheksaal, Hofburg

Language: English