



17TH CENTRAL ASIAN MEDIA CONFERENCE

Digitalisation for Freedom of the Media

19-20 November 2015, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

RECOMMENDATIONS

This document summarizes recommendations of more than 70 journalists, representatives of government, civil society and academia from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan along with international experts and participants from Denmark, Germany and Mongolia at the 17th annual Central Asian Media Conference, organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on 19-20 November 2015 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The conference focused on how to improve pluralism and media freedom in the context of the digital switchover.

The conference participants agreed that:

- The digital switchover of terrestrial broadcasting goes far beyond a mere technological change. It represents a clear and important opportunity to improve media pluralism and access to different programme formats and sources of information. The digital switchover has clear implications for the advancement of democratic values and principles. The completion of the transition from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting should be a high priority in media policy for governments and other state institutions and must be fully achieved as soon as possible with full and effective protection of freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Citizens should be informed about the progress and end date of the implementation.
- Taking into account the crucial role of media regulatory authorities in the new digital communications environment, particularly vis-à-vis the protection of pluralism and safeguarding free expression, free media and access to information, such authorities should be independent.
- Digitalization policies and regulations need to particularly take into consideration the important role that regional and local broadcasters play vis-à-vis their respective communities, as well as transborder broadcasting from one Central Asian nation to another.
- Media regulation should avoid undue political or economic interference. It should guarantee fair, open and transparent broadcasting and create a pluralistic media landscape. Such processes should be guided by clear and pre-established procedures and criteria.

- Media and communications regulators should act in a transparent and accountable manner under judicial and public supervision.
- Regulation of new media platforms such as IPTV, stream TV and on-demand audiovisual services should be guided by a proportional and light-touch approach.
- Public service media should play a key role in the guarantee of a plural and diverse media environment after the completion of the digital switchover. This role was agreed to and promoted in the Recommendations of the 16th Central Asian Media Conference in 2014.
- New forms of journalism, also known as open or citizen journalism, which emerge as a result of digitalization, should fully enjoy the same rights and protection as traditional media, as freedom of expression is protected in traditional and new media platforms.
- States should adopt effective legislation for the protection of intellectual property rights in the digital era in compliance with their international commitments and with full respect of the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the media.
- Effective self-regulatory instruments should be introduced wherever necessary and strengthened wherever they exist to facilitate a flexible and non-intrusive framework vis-à-vis rights and responsibilities in the digital media environment.
- The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media should assist participating States in the completion of the digital switchover and the implementation of appropriate policies and regulations in order to strengthen freedom of expression and freedom of the media as well as pluralism.
- Propaganda for war and hatred which is easier to carry out in the digital world should be properly addressed by States, according to international standards.