

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Working Session 2: Freedom of the media**

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Finland aligns itself with the EU statement and the recommendations made in it. In addition to that I would like to highlight a few issues in my national capacity.

Freedom of expression and opinion are essential fundamental freedoms and human rights. They are legally binding provisions of international and European human rights conventions. Their provisions have been fleshed out in national legislation.

Sharing of information – or disinformation – does not stop at national borders. Therefore it is valuable to discuss in this meeting how freedom of expression, safety of journalists and access to information are implemented in practice.

The state of a European Rechtsstaat, or a state governed by rule of law, can be measured by the freedom of the media, protection of journalists and independence of its judiciary. We are seriously worried to see how rule of law principles have been questioned in several OSCE participating states and how journalists have been even attacked and imprisoned for their work. Safety of journalists is a cornerstone for the freedom of the media and a democratic society by large.

Media freedom is more important than ever in today's world, which has sometimes been called a 'post-truth era'. In today's world disinformation spreads quickly, and can be orchestrated to fragment society – even by manipulating algorithms. However, situation tends to be worse in contexts of more media control: censored or controlled media is already by definition manipulation of information. Pluralist, free media context in turn allows wider scale of viewpoints, and, especially combined with adequate media literacy, provides better resilience to disinformation.

Finland enjoys a very high standard of the freedom of the press. In addition to basic guarantees like no interference from the government, the level of press freedom in Finland is also due to more proactive efforts taken: availability of information from the authorities, high level of source protection and an effort to offer a fast Internet connection to all citizens. Right to access to information from the authorities is guaranteed by legislation, and documents of the authorities are by assumption public, with strict regulation to exceptions. This right to access information is also effective in preventing corruption and other misuse of power. In line with this, Finland is committed to promoting the swift entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents.

Strengthening human rights and the Rule of Law and supporting an open and inclusive society are also key themes for us as we take up our Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe later this year. In the international fora, Finland works to promote respect for the freedom of expression, with particular focus on the rights of women and the most vulnerable population groups. We fully support the autonomous institutions of the OSCE, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and their strong and inde-





pendent mandates. Finland is also a proud member of the newly established OSCE Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists.

In order to further promote freedom of the media and access to information:

- We call on participating States' authorities to ensure full and transparent investigation of all attacks against journalists.
- We appeal to all participating States to sign, ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents.
- We also call on all participants, governments and civil society alike, to actively promote provision of media literacy training for youth, both through formal and informal education, in order to build resilience to disinformation.