



## EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 870  
Vienna, 23 June 2011

### **EU statement in response to the report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović**

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The EU would like to warmly welcome the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms Dunja Mijatović, to the Permanent Council and thank her for her report.

We highly appreciate the work done by the Representative, also in EU Member States, and can assure Ms Mijatović and other participating States that those Member States which feature in the report will study the comments and recommendations carefully.

We were pleased to take part in the recent Conference on Safety of Journalists in Vilnius. Adopting a decision on the subject at the Ministerial Council in Vilnius is a priority of the EU and we strongly believe that the Vilnius Recommendations on Safety of Journalists constitute a good basis for such a document.

Unfortunately, both the Vilnius Conference as well as the Representative's latest report show that there is a considerable need for further measures to ensure a safe working environment for journalists. The EU would like to reiterate its concern about the attacks against Seymur Haziyevev and Ramin Dekko in Azerbaijan and the treatment by the police of journalists in connection with demonstrations in Georgia in May.

The EU urges all participating States to prevent attacks on media professionals by fighting a climate of impunity. This can be done only by bringing to justice the perpetrators and masterminds of violence against journalists. In this regard, we welcome the verdict and subsequent sentencing in the case of the killing of Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova and the developments in the case of the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, both in the Russian Federation. We hope that this positive trend continues and are pleased to hear that the Russian Investigative Committee has provided the Representative with information on current cases of violence against media workers. We also hope that those responsible for the murder of the Kyrgyz journalist Gennady Pavlyuk in Kazakhstan and of Georgy Gongadze in Ukraine, will be convicted soon. However, the lack of progress in the investigation of the disappearance of Vasyl Klymentyev in Ukraine and the assassination of Elmar Huseynov in Azerbaijan, is worrying.

We are pleased that the President of Azerbaijan decided to release Eynulla Fatullayev and that Ernest Vardanian was given amnesty in the Transdnestrian region of the Republic of Moldova. This said, we regret that several journalists remain detained or imprisoned on dubious charges or on insufficient evidence: in Kazakhstan the journalist Ramazan Yesergepov and in Uzbekistan the journalists Dilmurod Saiid, Solijon Abdurahmanov and Hairullo Khamidov. The EU also follows the trial against Mahamadyusuf Ismoilov in Tajikistan closely and reiterates its concern about the sentencing of the bloggers Jabbar Savalan and Bakhtiyar Hajiyeu in Azerbaijan. We are concerned by the long pre-trial detentions, the long imprisonment sentences given by courts and the many on-going lawsuits against journalists in Turkey.

The EU remains concerned over the media freedom situation in Belarus which continues to deteriorate. We strongly condemn all harassment, arrests and intimidation of representatives of independent media by the authorities and regret *inter alia* the conviction of Irina Khalip. The EU is particularly concerned about the

on-going trial against Andrzej Poczobut and the attempts to close down the opposition newspapers *Narodnaya Volya* and *Nasha Niva*. We urge the authorities of Belarus to engage meaningfully with the Representative, including by meeting her request to visit Belarus without delay.

The EU supports the Representative's focus on freedom of expression on the Internet and look forward to the upcoming Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the topic of pluralism in new media. We hope that a Ministerial Council decision on this subject can be adopted in Vilnius. In this regard, the EU is concerned by developments in Turkey, where plans to introduce a domain name restriction policy and mandatory content filtering for all Internet users would, if implemented, further limit freedom of expression and access to information. We call on the authorities to co-operate closely with the Representative and use the assistance of her Office to ensure that media legislation, including with regard to Internet, is brought in line with OSCE commitments. We welcome the news that Turkey has invited the Representative to visit and encourage other participating States to do the same.

The EU also wishes to express its deep concern about the situation regarding freedom of the media and freedom of expression in Turkmenistan, a country that is not included in the report due to the nearly complete absence of free media.

Finally, the EU would like to thank Ms Mijatović and her excellent team and wish them all the best in their future endeavors.

The candidate countries CROATIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ICELAND\*\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, as well as SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\*Croatia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

\*\*Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.