



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 923  
Vienna, 6 September 2012**

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### **EU statement on freedom of expression in the Russian Federation**

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The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the statement by the EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on the sentencing of "Pussy Riot" punk band members in Russia, issued on 17 August 2012 in Brussels:

"I am deeply disappointed with the verdict of the Khamovnichesky District Court in Russia in the case of Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alyokhina and Ekaterina Samutsevitch, members of the punk band "Pussy Riot". This sentence is disproportionate. Together with the reports of the band members' mistreatment during their pre-trial detention and the reported irregularities of the trial, it puts a serious question mark over Russia's respect for international obligations of fair, transparent, and independent legal process. It also runs counter to Russia's international obligations as regards respect for freedom of expression. This case adds to the recent upsurge in politically motivated intimidation and prosecution of opposition activists in the Russian Federation, a trend that is of growing concern to the European Union. Respect for human rights and the rule of law is an indispensable part of the EU-Russia relationship. Sentencing of the three young women, two of whom are mothers of small children, to two years in prison for a peaceful, if controversial, expression of their views, is

deeply troubling. I expect that this sentence will be reviewed and reversed in line with Russia's international commitments."

Furthermore, the EU shares the concerns expressed in response to the above-mentioned verdict by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in her statement of 17 August 2012 in which she warned of a dangerous tendency towards curbing freedom of expression. We state our strong appreciation for the invaluable efforts of the Representative and her team in assisting the participating States in meeting their commitments in respect of freedom of expression and free media.

The Acceding Country Croatia\*, the Candidate Countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+ and Serbia\*, as well as the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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