



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1249 Vienna, 28 November 2019

EU Statement on Russia's "Foreign Agent" Law

The EU is deeply concerned by the amendment to the already problematic "foreign agent" law in the Russian Federation. The amendment widens the scope of the "foreign agent" media law to also recognize individuals as "foreign agents".

This constitutes yet another move to curb media freedom and freedom of expression in Russia. The European Union has repeatedly said that the existing Russian legislation on labelling both NGOs and media outlets as "foreign agents" imposes additional administrative and financial burdens as well as stigmatizes the media or NGO concerned, thus restricting the exercise of fundamental freedoms. This practice clearly goes against Russia's human rights obligations and commitments.

As stated by the EEAS spokesperson, this is yet another worrying step against free and independent media and access to information as well as a further attempt to silence independent voices in Russia.

The EU joins the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in calling on the Russian authorities to drop the amendments. We recall that in Istanbul in 1999, participating States committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure the basic conditions for free and independent media and unimpeded transborder and intra-State flow of information, which we highlighted to be an essential component of any democratic, free and open society. In this context, we reiterate our call on Russia to ensure that all legislation conforms to international human rights standards and obligations, including OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.