



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1561 Vienna, 23 April 2026

#### **EU Statement in response to the Report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Jan Braathu**

1. The EU warmly welcomes the Representative on Freedom of the Media to the Permanent Council, and thanks him for his report. We reiterate our strong and steadfast support for the mandate and autonomy of the RFoM. We highlight the important role of the Office in responding to threats to media freedom and freedom of expression online and offline, and the assistance to participating States in fulfilling our extensive commitments in this field.
2. The RFoM rightly points out that media freedom is one of the conditions that make peace and security possible. The report highlights pertinent thematic issues. At the same time, we strongly encourage the use of all tools at the disposal of the RFoM. These include the early warning and rapid response function, where the RFoM's frank assessment and bold voice is needed more than ever in relation to the most serious violations. As the world's only intergovernmental media freedom watchdog, this is an essential added value of the mandate, and even more so in times of scarce resources.

Mr. Chair,

3. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a flagrant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and of OSCE principles and commitments. We pay tribute to all journalists and other media actors who have lost their lives as a result of Russia's aggression. Journalists are civilians and must be protected at all times. Russia's war has also resulted in arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, intimidation and ill-treatment of journalists and other media actors, particularly in temporarily occupied territories, contributing to a climate of fear, censorship and impunity. We join the RFoM in condemning targeting of media facilities and recall that Russia must respect international humanitarian law, as underscored following

Russia's drone attack against the Ukrainian Public Service Broadcaster Suspilne Odesa on 28 March.

4. The EU condemns the structural system of human rights violations in Russia, which are part of a further intensifying systematic, state-sponsored internal repression. The EU is deeply concerned about the systematic crackdown on civil society, especially independent media and journalists, among others, and about internet shutdowns and online censorship.
5. In Belarus, the EU strongly condemns the gross, systematic and widespread human rights violations, restrictions to political participation and to independent media, and remains concerned about intimidation campaigns against all segments of Belarusian society in the country and abroad.
6. We share the concerns expressed by the RFoM about the situation in Georgia, where we have seen a deterioration of the situation for media and journalists, including arbitrary arrests and increasing repression. In its Europe Press Freedom Report, published in March, the partner organizations of the Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform assessed that in 2025 the situation in Georgia continued to deteriorate at an alarming rate.
7. We also share the RFoM's concerns about the cases of Abzas Media, Toplum TV, Meydan TV and imprisoned journalists which show that pressure on journalists in Azerbaijan is increasing. We call on the country to uphold its international obligations, including with respect to human rights and to take immediate steps to ensure a safe and enabling environment for all journalists and media workers.
8. In Türkiye, the EU remains concerned about targeting of journalists, alongside other groups, including through arbitrary arrests and detentions.
9. We share the RFoM's concern regarding the increased levels of violence and intimidation of journalists in Serbia and join his call on Serbian law enforcement to protect freedom of media and safety of journalists and to investigate and prosecute perpetrators.

Mr. Chair,

10. Digital platforms offer both avenues for free expression and challenges in relation to disinformation and online surveillance. Tackling such challenges, while fully respecting human rights remains a key priority for the EU, and we have adopted significant legislation in this field. We appreciate that the RFoM continues to prioritize these issues, including through the Policy Manual on Safeguarding Media Freedom in the Age of Big Tech Platforms and AI. We value the work in relation to other challenges highlighted in the report, such as the safety of journalists including female journalists, SLAPPs and other judicial pressures on media freedom, and laws addressing so-called “foreign agents”, among other things.

11. In closing, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring media freedom, freedom of expression and the safety of journalists at home and abroad.

*Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, and San Marino align themselves with this statement.*