



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

PC.DEL/378/26
24 April 2026

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE REPORT BY RFOM

As delivered by Ambassador Ellen Svendsen at the Permanent Council, Vienna,

23 April 2026

Mr. Chair,

I welcome Ambassador Jan Braathu back to the Permanent Council and thank him and his team for this comprehensive report.

Media freedom is essential to both democracy and security in our region and beyond. All participating States affirmed this in the Helsinki Final Act.

And yet, as your report outlined, conditions for media freedom across our region continue to deteriorate. In an increasing number of participating states, journalists are being persecuted, arbitrarily detained and harassed— physically and online. This is an alarming and destabilizing development for our region.

Ukrainian journalists are taking a particularly high toll in their tireless fight to expose the brutality of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. We, as you representative, call upon the Russian Federation to release all arbitrarily detained journalists and to cease the silencing of independent media.

In Georgia, once a regional leader in media freedom, the authorities turned towards further undermining independent journalism through harassment, intimidation, legislation and judicial actions, as well as arbitrary detentions of media actors. In Russia and in Belarus, the situation is alarming. Media actors face a repressive environment where media freedom no longer exists. In a number of countries, including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan, journalists have been arrested, prosecuted, and convicted. In Turkmenistan, the room for independent journalism is very limited. On Serbia, we support and value your continued engagement regarding the negative media freedom trend.

Mr. Chair,

A free media enlightens and exposes, it checks on power and gives a voice to those who might not be heard. Even in a world where disinformation floods our screens and where malign use of new technology threatens to further blur the line between truth and lies,

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

there *is* truth, and there are lies. Journalists help us make this distinction. Not alone, but through education that promotes media literacy and critical thinking, through access to information and public debate, and through international cooperation among governments, technology companies, civil society, and independent media.

To meet these challenges, the Norwegian government launched the National Strategy to Strengthen Resilience Against Disinformation last year, presented by the Ministry of Culture and Equality, outlining a comprehensive approach to counter harmful information flows. In this complicated landscape, it is worth noting that everyone, including journalists, has ethical responsibilities.

Against this bleak backdrop, your loud and clear voice can bring change, representative. By exposing breaches of the very principles we all have agreed upon, and by training journalists and governments alike, stifled voices can reemerge as part of the bedrock of democracy and freedom.

Colleagues,

As we enter a phase where priorities must be sharpened, we welcome steps taken by the RFoM to ensure the efficient safeguarding of its mandate. Your autonomy is your greatest asset. We must cooperate closely, while ensuring that you retain the independence necessary to fulfill your important mandate of assisting – but also calling out – those who undermine the very bedrock of democracy and freedom.

Ambassador Braathu, dear Jan, we look forward to continued close cooperation and wish you every success in your important work.