



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1544 Vienna, 27 November 2025

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

The EU would like to warmly welcome the Representative on the Freedom of the Media, Mr. Jan Braathu, to the Permanent Council, and thank him for his report.

We reiterate our unwavering support for the RFoM's mandate and autonomy, which enables the institution to respond to existing and emerging threats to freedom of expression and media freedom, both online and offline, and to assist participating States in fulfilling their commitments in this field.

As all participating States have agreed, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law are part of the foundation of the comprehensive concept of security. And as the RFoM rightly pointed out in his report, media freedom is not only a fundamental democratic principle but also an essential pillar of security.

The RFoM's work is particularly important as we continue to see democratic backsliding in many countries of the OSCE area. In this context, we encourage the continued use of all the tools at the disposal of the Representative and his committed team, in particular the early warning and rapid response function which are needed more than ever. Dear Representative, your bold voice needs to be heard in response to the most serious violations of media freedom-related commitments.

Mr./Madam Chair,

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a flagrant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and OSCE principles and commitments, and continues to cause immense suffering for Ukraine and its people. We deeply regret the considerable number of journalists and other media actors who have lost their lives as a result of Russia's aggression. The Moscow Mechanism reports since 2022 document cases of journalists

killed, detained, abducted, or mistreated, and that journalists are among the thousands of Ukrainian civilians arbitrarily detained by Russia. We recall that journalists and media actors reporting from armed conflict must be protected in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

In Russia and in Belarus, the systematic repression against all segments of society continues, including the crackdown on independent media, journalists and media actors, and other critical voices.

We agree with the RFoM that exiled journalists play a unique and important role in providing independent reporting to audiences in highly restrictive environments, which is the case particularly in Russia and Belarus.

We welcome the RFoM's focus on the safety and professional challenges faced by environmental journalists, who sometimes risk their personal safety by openly reporting on climate change, pollution, natural resource management and biodiversity issues in OSCE Participating States.

It is with deep regret that we note a shrinking space for civil society across a number of OSCE states, where legislation and policies are increasingly obstructing the work of civil society organisations, human rights defenders, journalists and media actors. These groups face increasing pressure including through restrictive legislation, such as laws limiting freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, as well as intimidation, harassment and violence online and offline, and excessive use of force by law enforcement, including instances of torture and ill-treatment. We note the concerns expressed by the RFoM regarding the use of restrictive legislation, often targeting so-called "foreign influence" or "foreign agents", including in Russia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan. 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.

Mr./Madam Chair,

Women journalists continue to face gender-specific threats, including in the digital space. In this context, we would like to commend the RFoM for the important work in relation to Safety

of Female Journalists Online, a project which marked its 10-year anniversary this week. We echo the RFoM's call to participating States to join the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign.

Digital platforms continue to play a significant role, offering both avenues for free expression and new challenges in facilitating the spread of disinformation and online surveillance. In this regard, the EU has spearheaded legislation, in particular the European Media Freedom Act, the Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act, and the Artificial Intelligence Act. Tackling such challenges while fully respecting human rights remains a key priority for the EU. We appreciate that RFoM continues to place these issues high on the agenda.

In conclusion, the EU reiterates the need to ensure the financial means needed for the RFoM as an institution to fulfill its mandate in its entirety.

We also reaffirm our commitment to ensuring media freedom, freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, and call on all participating States to do the same.

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