

THIRD OSCE SOUTH EAST EUROPE MEDIA CONFERENCE

Tirana, 18 – 20 September 2013

DECLARATION

The conference participants addressed some of the most pressing media freedom issues in the region today. Topics such as the safety of journalists, independence of public service broadcasters and regulators, internet freedom, digitalization and advertising were at the top of the agenda.

The participants concluded that:

- * The authorities have the responsibility to create a legal and regulatory environment that will guarantee political, editorial and financial independence of public service broadcasters.
 - * Broadcast regulators must be free from political interference, have the independence and the resources to create a pluralistic media landscape.
 - * Self-regulatory mechanisms, offline and online, should be developed by journalists themselves, without state and business interference.
 - * The digitalization of the broadcasting spectrum needs to stimulate media pluralism. The public must be given access to a free-to-air package that includes the public service broadcasters.
 - * The Internet has to remain an open and public forum for freedom of speech and expression. The authorities should not over-regulate the Internet, and should refrain from mandatory blocking of online content or websites.
 - * The right of freedom of access to information needs to be clearly established by law, with effective oversight and appeals mechanisms by independent bodies. The legislation needs to be in line with OSCE standards where all authorities are obliged to swiftly comply with requests.
 - * Freedom of the media applies to all forms of journalism, be it professional, open or “citizen” journalism alike.
 - * The right of journalists not to reveal their sources needs to be enshrined in law.
 - * Safety of journalists remains a pressing problem in the region. Violence, harassment and intimidation against journalists are an attack on democracy itself. The authorities must condemn all attacks and ensure that there is no impunity for crimes against journalists.
 - * Transparency of media ownership needs to be regulated by law, and such information should be publicly available.
 - * Spending on advertising by public entities must be regulated, to ensure that it is not used to put pressure on the media.
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