



**THE OSCE/ODIHR 2011 HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
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Working Session 4

“Importance of Public Media in Democratic Societies”

The Polish Forum of Young Diplomats

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Honorable Speakers and Participants of the Conference,

We have been speaking a lot today, for example, about the importance of independence of media, as well as about the Internet's role as a medium of worldwide reach and possibly worldwide participation. Indeed, these are topics of great importance in the light of still often not fulfilling the OSCE commitments of free media.

Still, let us have in mind that the situation of more traditional media is also far from being perfect. Especially nowadays – in the times when media strive for financial survivor being, arguably, a platform of entertainment rather than a project targeted at providing high-quality information - one must not forget about the role of the public media as platforms guaranteeing democracy in the OSCE states.

The public media in various OSCE countries have recently had some major problems. Only to name a few examples: in Poland the public media had deep financial problems, in Greece the public TV station ERT has been closed due to the arguable financial issues, in some post-Soviet states public media are used as a tube of the authorities rather than as an platform for inter-societal dialogue of and with the nation and in some nations they serve as subjective sources of information used to unify the society against a common “enemy”. These are only several examples.

We may speak about private providers being partisan but it is the public media that have a mission and are crucial for what the ODIHR holds as crucial – a democratic society.

Let us remember that - for the society to develop in a democratic way - the public media must be a source of impartial and sophisticated information not only on political matters but also on the everyday life of citizens. They should be a place of “nation-wide conversation” - promoting pluralism, democratic participation, mutual understanding and enabling all social groups to show their opinion on the crucial matters. This is very important in post-conflict areas such as in Georgia.

To achieve that, for the OSCE there are two major issues to be addressed:

- 1) There is no effective, pluralist and high-level public media without the financial means to achieve this goal. When public media experience financial troubles they cut their spending and produce worse content. Who is the one that loses an objective view? The viewer. Hence, it might be useful if a special OSCE-based body worked on the issue of how public media providers can raise money crucial for their long-term existence without losing the objectivity and high-quality journalism that they are obliged to provide to the public.

- 2) OSCE states should work out a similar and well-functioning method of appointing the public media governance bodies that would provide non-partisan and engaging platforms of communication with and for the citizens. To achieve it, the directory board of public media should be chosen by a people including not only politically associated figures but also, or mostly, experienced members of the civil society and respected people connected with culture. A direct mandate from the parliament may cause too high political dependence of the station's directory.

If we want to speak about a democratic media environment we cannot only limit ourselves to the new or private media. Private stations are still the most crucial sources of information for the public opinion in many OSCE countries. And these media must be a source of objective, pluralistic and ambitious news and entertainment so that our societies become more democratic and involved in the public sphere.

Thank you!

Note about the **Polish Forum of Young Diplomats:**

The Polish Forum of Young Diplomats is an organization of students and graduates of a number of universities from all over the World and particularly Poland. We have defined our careers and common ambitions to be part of the Foreign Service of the Republic of Poland and a stakeholder on international relations stage. The vast majority of over members are already experienced civic campaigners and working for home and international non-governmental organizations as well as state and international institutions. PFYD was created in 2002.

The Polish Forum of Young Diplomats has a partnership status with the Council of Europe and is a member of the “Group Abroad” gathering over 30 of the most active Polish NGOs working abroad, and of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum.

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