



## Conference on Media Freedom in the OSCE Region

### *Strengthening media freedom for resilient and vibrant democracies in the digital age*

Palais Berg, Vienna, 22 November 2024

#### CONCEPT NOTE

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As a core pillar of a functioning democracy, free, independent, and pluralistic media play an intrinsic role in safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms, which in turn contribute towards safe and stable communities. While the importance of strengthening media freedom is considered as a given in democracies, reality presents a bleaker picture, as the space for free and independent media continues to shrink. War and armed conflict pose additional challenges to media freedom and the safety of journalists. No country is immune to these challenges or to the risk of backsliding, even where progress has been made, if freedom of expression and the integrity of democratic institutions are taken for granted. With the right initiatives at both national and international levels, these challenges can be positively addressed. The conference on Media Freedom in the OSCE Region aims to strengthen the link between media freedom, democracy, and security. It will provide a platform to discuss the future of media freedom in a fast-evolving information space, against the backdrop of ongoing threats to independent journalism across the OSCE region.

The conference will be organised by the 2024 OSCE Chairpersonship of Malta with the support of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the 3CL Foundation. In line with the Chairpersonship's motto "Strengthening Resilience, Enhancing Security", the conference will feature three sessions focusing on addressing current challenges to free and independent media.

The first session will address the safety of journalists and the prevailing impunity for crimes committed against them. It will explore the particular and intersectional safety challenges faced by women journalists, as well as the broader risks in the online information space. Building on the 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on the Safety of Journalists, the session will offer the opportunity to present steps taken by participating States towards implementation and initiatives to enable safe environments for journalists, both offline and online. Attention will be given to the specific risks and protection needs of journalists reporting from conflict zones.

With the fast development and accessibility of artificial intelligence, including generative AI, distinguishing facts from fakes is becoming more difficult, reinforcing distrust in the media and democracy. Addressing the challenges related to mis- and disinformation requires a sophisticated response. Building resilience by fostering an active and well-informed citizenry and facilitating both the accessibility and visibility of public interest information is key, especially in times of multiple crises and challenges. The second session will provide a forum to discuss steps towards creating a healthy online information space and the role of various stakeholders in facilitating this. The session will also highlight the key importance of a strong and independent news media to counter disinformation and build resilience.

The third session will bring together youth from across the OSCE region, academics and practitioners to discuss the future of media and initiatives to increase knowledge and resilience among young people in the vast online information space. It will provide the opportunity to explore strategies to better reach young people with public interest information and journalistic content, as social media increasingly become their primary access point. Ideas and recommendations developed during a half-day workshop on 21 November with students and young professionals entitled 'Young People and Information' will feed into this session.

## AGENDA

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**09:00 – 10:00** Registration and welcome coffee

**Master of Ceremonies:**

- **Mr Keith Demicoli**, Multi-award-winning presenter and journalist, Malta

**10:00 – 10:45** Opening Session

Welcoming remarks:

- **Ambassador Natasha Meli Daudey**  
Permanent Representative of Malta to the OSCE, Chairperson of the Permanent Council
- **Mr Christopher Cutajar**  
Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta
- **Mr. Zoran Dimitrovski** (*video message*)  
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of North Macedonia
- **Ambassador Vesa Häkkinen**  
Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE
- **Mr Philippe Tremblay**  
Director/Officer-in-Charge, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Keynote address:

- **Ms Carole Cadwalladr**, Pulitzer-nominated and award-winning journalist, author and features writer for The Observer and The Guardian, UK

**10:45 – 12:45** **Session I: Strategies and partnerships to promote a safe and enabling environment for the media**

- **Ms Beata Balogová**, Editor-in-chief of SME, Slovakia
- **Mr Matthew Caruana Galizia**, Director of the Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, Malta
- **Ms Anastasiia Stanko**, Editor-in-chief of Slidstvo.info, Ukraine
- **Mr Tom Gibson**, EU Representative and Advocacy Manager, Committee to Protect Journalists CPJ

**Moderation:** **Mr Ton van den Brandt**, former Principal Adviser to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

**12:45 – 14:00** Lunch break

**14:00 – 15:30 Session II: Availability and accessibility of public interest information: how to create healthy online information spaces**

- **Dr Paolo Cavaliere**, Senior Lecturer in Digital Media and IT Law, Edinburgh Law School, University of Edinburgh
- **Mr Luboš Kukliš**, Expert on Media Regulation and Online Governance, Digital Services Act Enforcement Team, European Commission (DG Connect)
- **Ms Trish Shaw**, CEO and Founder of Beyond Reach Consulting Ltd, UK
- **Mr Herman Grech**, Editor-in-chief, The Times of Malta

**Moderation:** **Ms Deniz Wagner**, Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

**15:30 – 16:00** Coffee Break

**16:00 – 17:30 Session III: Youth, information, and the future of media**

- **Mr Alexandru Ghetan**, YMC Project Manager, Centrul Media pentru Tineri, Moldova
- **Dr Nina Shengelia**, Lecturer at Tbilisi State University, Member of IMS high-level Group of Experts for Resilience Building in Eastern Europe, Founder of the Social Media Council, Georgia
- **Participants from the Workshop ‘Young People and Information’**

**Moderation:** **Prof. Alex Grech**, Executive Director 3CL Foundation and Associate Professor at the University of Malta

**17:30 – 17:40** Closing Remarks