



Regional South-East Europe Safety of Journalists Event

Beyond the Headlines: Protecting Journalists to Advance Media Freedom

9-10 May 2024
Podgorica, Montenegro

Welcoming remarks

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to our Regional South-East Europe Safety of Journalists Event.

Let me start by expressing my gratitude to Minister of Culture and Media of Montenegro Tamara Vujović, and Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro Dominique Waag, for joining me on this panel. A big thank you also goes to you, the experts, journalists, representatives from civil society and academia who are joining us. And last but not least, thank you to all colleagues from the OSCE Field Missions in the South-East Europe region.

We are gathered here today with a steadfast dedication: to discuss the journalistic profession's most pressing challenges, to talk about how to best safeguard the physical and psychological well-being of journalists, in an increasingly complex and sometimes hostile environment. We do this to be able to better protect all those



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courageous women and men who go out daily to bring us accurate information, knowledge we need to base our decisions upon. And thus, we are here today for the future of democracy, human rights, and the unfettered expression of ideas—a vital component underpinning our shared security.

In recent years, we have witnessed troubling assaults on, harassment of, and intimidation directed against journalists across the OSCE region, including in South-East Europe. The array of challenges and threats confronting media professionals is growing increasingly intricate and interconnected. The threats are real and concerning in their own right, and they have a real and concerning impact on the state of democracy. These assaults not only jeopardize the safety and professional livelihoods of individual journalists but also erode the indispensable function of a free and autonomous press in upholding accountability, nurturing transparency, and enlightening the public on issues that matter to them.

Today's gathering, themed "Beyond the Headlines: Protecting Journalists to Advance Media Freedom" offers an opportunity to forge connections, cultivate networks, and engage in substantive dialogues and exchanges. Together, we aim to discuss prevailing challenges, celebrate constructive endeavours, and pioneer innovative approaches, all with the overarching objective of bolstering the safety of journalists across South-East Europe.

As outlined in the agenda before you, you will have an opportunity to engage in two interactive sessions.



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One is a workshop on digital safety where together with our cyber-security expert, Jorge Luis Sierra, you will be equipped with practical tools, techniques and knowledge to protect yourself from digital security risks. Importantly, we'll also address the nuanced considerations of gender-based, psycho-social, and physical dimensions in this comprehensive exploration.

After the lunch break, during the World Café session, you'll be invited to participate in dynamic group discussions, to share insights and experiences. We will explore effective initiatives and good practices for safeguarding journalists' digital and psychological well-being. Additionally, we will introduce two of our new resources: the Safety of Journalists Toolbox and the “Guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists”. Next, you'll gain insight into two regional endeavours: one addressing the implementation of the EU Digital Service Act in the Western Balkans, and another one highlighting the psychological support services offered by the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro.

I will not keep you longer from what I am certain will be a productive and enlightening event that will inspire innovative ideas for positive change and will hopefully spark renewed determination to safeguard journalist safety.

Thank you once again for your presence and your active participation.