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EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1212
Vienna, 17 January 2019**

**EU Statement on Freedom of Expression in the Russian
Federation**

The EU is concerned about a set of draft laws which would further restrict freedom of expression in the Russian Federation.

The amendments proposed to the State Duma on 12 December 2018 introduce administrative liability, including 15 days of detention, for online speech that expresses in an insulting way disrespect to society, state, official symbols, the constitution, and public bodies. Another part of the suggested provisions entails administrative fines for dissemination of deliberately untrue information that presents threats to life or health, risks mass public disorder or a break in public services, or has other serious effects.

These vaguely worded restrictions would further undermine freedom of expression in Russia. The EU shares the concerns expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. The draft amendments could result in greater interference in online freedom of expression by the authorities and increase self-censorship. We further take note of the views expressed as part of the ongoing process within the State Duma.

The draft provisions are part of a worrying trend where legal measures are used to target journalists and other independent voices in Russia. The EU recalls that all participating States agreed in Milan to bring media freedom related laws fully in compliance with international obligations and commitments so that they do not limit the ability of journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference. We again urge Russia to draw on the expertise and advice of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.



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The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as CANADA, UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.