

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Council of Europe Conference
Freedom of expression: still a precondition for democracy?
Strasbourg, 13-14 October 2015
Hemicycle, Palais de l'Europe

Concept Note

Objectives

- 1) To raise awareness and command the attention of member states, private sector and civil society about the Council of Europe historical role and responsibility as a guardian of freedom of expression in Europe, to show-case the Council of Europe acquis, notably the jurisprudence of the Court;
- 2) To provide a forum for reflection and discussion on how to assess the impact of state action (legislative and non-legislative) on freedom of expression;
- 3) To build European momentum for a continued and intensified dialogue between all actors, as an imperative for the realisation of freedom of expression at all times and contexts, including in times of crisis;
- 4) To mark a decisive step towards strengthening Council of Europe collective action with other international organisations on promoting freedom of expression in Europe, based on the recommendations of the Secretary General's report "State of democracy, human rights and rule of law in Europe" in particular the three-year Europe-wide programme to support national mechanisms to protect freedom of expression.

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Key/overarching questions

- 1) Has Europe renounced freedom of expression as its fundamental value? What are the challenges of our times?
- 2) How to have a holistic and balanced approach at the international level on the right to freedom of expression and the necessary limits and restrictions in a democratic society; what is the impact of European Court of Human Rights' case-law for such an approach ?
- 3) How can Europe invest more on the citizens' awareness of freedom of expression issues?

Participation

- Representatives of member states, Permanent Representations, members of expert committees MSI-JO and MSI-INT, parliamentarians, ECtHR Judges and Registry Lawyers, Journalists, national ombudspersons, cartoonists, civil society including partner NGO's, Internet industry, Parliamentarians, academia and students; UNESCO; OSCE; EU
- Appx. 200 participants

Outreach

- The up-dated research report "Internet: case-law of the European Court of Human Rights"
- Publication – a collection of articles on the protection of journalism as a condition of an enabling environment for public debate
- Short videos "The Whys and the Hows of freedom of expression as a human right"