

Steering Committee on Media and Information Society – CDMSI

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 22 March 2017

CDMSI(2017)002Rev

CDMSI comments on Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2097 (2017) “Attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe”

1. The CDMSI examined with interest the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2097 (2017) “Attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe”.¹
2. Freedom of expression, enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, is a fundamental precondition to democracy. According to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and other Council of Europe standards, safety of journalists and media independence, pluralism and diversity are among those indispensable elements which make this freedom not theoretical or illusory, but practical and effective.
3. The CDMSI recalls that according to the Secretary General’s 2016 report “State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law”, almost half of the member states do not satisfactorily guarantee the protection of journalists from violence and threats, and in 27 states the situation is getting worse.
4. The CDMSI further recalls the Recommendation (2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors which put special emphasis on the states’ fulfilment of a range of positive obligations, as identified in the relevant judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and set out in the principles appended to this recommendation. It also drew attention to member states’ insufficient efforts in investigating killings of, attacks on and ill-treatment of journalists and other media actors and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

¹ Statement by the Delegation of the Russian Federation in the CDMSI: “Referring to the request for the CMDC members to provide to the Secretariat comments on the two PACE Recommendations (Recommendation 2097 (2017) – “Attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe” and Recommendation 2098 (2017) – “Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate”) we would like to state the following: The above mentioned recommendations were adopted at the PACE session (January, 2017, Strasbourg) in the absence of the Russian parliamentary delegation that had been discriminated for a long period by PACE. Accordingly we believe these two documents to be non-consensual and should not be considered in our future work. Taking into account that the Russian side opposed previously launching the CoE Platform mentioned in p.1 of the PACE Recommendation 2097 (2017) we consider it unacceptable to us and refrain from participation in its activities.”

5. The CDMSI notes with deep regret that the statistics ensuing from the functioning of the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists has reaffirmed that member states' active involvement in creating and securing a favourable environment for freedom of expression is still an objective to be achieved, and that impunity of crimes against journalists remains a major concern. Of 257 alerts registered on the Platform since April 2015, only 103 triggered a reaction from the member states, and only 25 cases were fully resolved.

6. In this context the CDMSI welcomes the Parliamentary Assembly's attention to the situation of media freedom and safety of journalists, supports its call for a more committed cooperation by member states in the functioning of the Platform and trusts that adequate resources will be allocated to the important objective of providing due follow-up to alerts.

7. In respect of expanding the coverage area of the Platform to Belarus, the CDMSI recalls that in September 2012, in its reply to PACE Recommendation 1992 (2012), the Committee of Ministers reaffirmed its strategic objective of integration of Belarus into the Council of Europe on the basis of the Organisation's values and principles, pursuant to the Declaration of the May 2005 Warsaw Summit. The CDMSI supports implementation of the Council of Europe Action plan for Belarus 2016-2017 (GR-DEM(2016)20, 13 September 2016) which provides for cooperation with Belarus in the media sphere.