

**Committee of Experts on protection of journalism
and safety of journalists
(MSI-JO)**



23 September 2015

MSI-JO(2015)06

**4th meeting, 17-18 September 2015
(Strasbourg, Agora, Room G01)**

Meeting Report

1. Opening of the meeting

The Committee of Experts on protection of journalism and safety of journalists (MSI-JO) met in Strasbourg on 17 and 18 September 2015. The meeting was opened by Ms Françoise Tulkens, Chair of the MSI-JO. She highlighted the importance of the fourth and final meeting for the completion of the draft recommendation on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The Committee adopted the agenda.

3. Information by the Secretariat

Ms Silvia Grundmann, Secretary of the CDMSI, shared her impressions of the last CDMSI meeting during which the Chair and the Rapporteur of MSI-JO were present. She highlighted the quality of the presentations and discussion and thanked the Chair and the Rapporteur once more for their participation in the CDMSI plenary. She stressed the high expectations of the CDMSI for this groundbreaking text and the support for it expressed by numerous delegates.

Ms Onur Andreotti, Secretary of MSI-JO, drew attention to the Secretary General's report of 19 May 2015. This report identified freedom of expression as one of the Council of Europe's priorities and mentioned the importance of journalists' safety as a fundamental element of that freedom. Ms Andreotti emphasised in particular the following point of the report: "*(...) three-year Europe wide programme to support national mechanisms to protect journalists, such as ombudsman institutions, press commissioners and non-governmental organisations. The goal of the programme will be to strengthen the capacities of such mechanisms, to promote networking and exchanges of experience in the area of safety of journalists and to*

raise the visibility of the issue in the member states". She stressed the importance of a more realistic and effective approach for the draft Recommendation, in particular for the guidelines related to the "legislative framework" and "independent review mechanism". She announced the participation of Ms Simona Granata-Menghini, Deputy Secretary of the Venice Commission to the discussions for that specific purpose.

Ms Andreotti informed the Committee of the upcoming Conference "*Freedom of expression: still a precondition for democracy*", which will take place on 13 and 14 October 2015. She also confirmed the participation of national Ombudspersons to the Conference. She mentioned a Council of Europe project for the establishment of a European Network of Ombudspersons for freedom of Expression, which is currently at an embryotic stage of development.

She also discussed the further development of the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, which has been operational since April 2015.

4. Main focus of the meeting

The main focus of the 4th MSI-JO meeting was the presentation by the Rapporteur, the discussion on and endorsement of the final draft recommendation on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, notably in light of the comments from the CDMSI at its 8th meeting (Strasbourg 16-19 June 2015) (MSI-JO(2014)10).

The draft was discussed paragraph by paragraph, and amendments were adopted accordingly. Mr Tarlach McGonagle, the Rapporteur, emphasised that the recommendation was intended to be comprehensive, but not exhaustive.

The Russian Federation expressed its reservations about the inclusion of "other media actors" as subjects of the recommendation. The other members of the MSI-JO held the view that this inclusion was essential and should be maintained. It was decided that the view of the Russian Federation would be reflected in a footnote of the final recommendation.

On the second day of the meeting, Ms Simona Granata-Menghini, Deputy Secretary of the Venice Commission, joined the MSI-JO for a discussion on the procedure of review of national legislation mentioned in the draft recommendation. Her comments were taken into account in subsequent amendments of the relevant provisions.

It was decided that the Rapporteur would process all amendments which were accepted during the 4th meeting. The secretariat will send the amended text to the members of the MSI-JO by 12 October 2015. Any final comments (only on material errors or significant omissions) should be submitted before 17th October. The draft would then be forwarded to the CDMSI for endorsement, before being submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption by the beginning of 2016.

5. Any other business

The Chair thanked the members of the MSI-JO and the secretariat for their excellent work and successful cooperation over the past two years, and closed the final meeting.