


Ambassador Thomas Schneider
Chair
Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)
Avenue de l'Europe
67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France

Date: 3 September 2018

Your Excellency:

Attached is the application by International Media Support (IMS) for observer status at the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI).

We trust that this application meets with your approval and look forward to the opportunity to work with the CMDSI in the future.



Jesper Højberg
IMS Executive Director

Ambassador Thomas Schneider
Chair Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)
Avenue de l'Europe
67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France

3 September 2018

Your Excellency:

IMS wishes to apply for observer status at the CDMSI. For this purpose, we are pleased to provide the following information:

1. The official name of the organisation: International Media Support (IMS)

Date of establishment: 01 September 2001.

IMS HQ office address: Nørregade 18, 1165 Copenhagen C, Denmark

Website: <https://www.mediasupport.org/>

Point of contact: Ms. Gulnara Akhundova, Head of Department for Global Response, tel. +45 52 10 78 20, email ga@mediasupport.org

2. Governance structure

IMS is governed by a board according to the statutes of the organisation and headed by Mr Jesper Højberg, Executive Director.

Members of the Board:

Mr Andrew Puddephat

Chairman of the Board, Executive Chair, Advisory Board, Global Partners Digital, United Kingdom

Ms Ann-Magrit Austenå

Secretary General, Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers, Norway

Mr Jens Otto Kjær Hansen

Principal, Danish School of Media and Journalism, Denmark

Ms Tine Johansen

Vice-president, The Danish Union of Journalists, Denmark

Mr Gene Kimmelman

President and CEO, Public Knowledge, Georgetown University, United States

Mr Lars Møller

Journalist and media consultant, Denmark

Mr Edetean Ojo

Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda, Nigeria

Ms Charlotte Flindt Pedersen

Director, Danish Foreign Policy Society, Denmark

Mr Holger Rosendal

Head of Legal Department, The Association of Danish Media, Denmark

3. Background

International Media Support paves the way for good journalism through support to local media and human rights groups in countries affected by armed conflict, authoritarian rule and political transition. Across four continents, our core business is to promote freedom of expression, strengthen professional journalism and ensure that media stay safe.

Since it was established in 2001 with a mission to develop the capacity of media to reduce conflict and strengthen democracy, IMS has witnessed the unique ability of strong, independent journalism to foster accountability and promote greater responsiveness to public demands for sustainable and inclusive, social and economic policies. By promoting access to reliable and impartial news and information, IMS supports citizen's participation in the development of society, directly enabling them to have a say in matters that affect them, from service delivery and corruption to environmental and social justice issues.

For over 15 years, IMS has nurtured solid, trust-based relationships with a wide range of national and regional media, international and local human rights partners, civil society organisations and intergovernmental agencies in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus.

IMS has participatory status with the Council of Europe INGO Conference and consultative status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

4. Primary areas of IMS activity

Our priority is a broad media sector approach, which means taking into account all the building blocks of a media sector. This includes addressing media laws that ensure media freedom and the safety of journalists; supporting strong journalist unions and associations which are the backbone of a media sector's infrastructure and skills training of journalists that ensures professional media content.

To achieve this, our work spans a wide range of areas that support and promote free and professional media:

Safety of journalists and media workers: The recent IMS' publication, *Defending Journalism*, showcases how national mechanisms can protect journalists and address the issue of impunity. This IMS study provides a mapping and greater understanding of what works – and what does not work when it comes to addressing the safety of journalists. The seven countries in focus are Afghanistan, Columbia, Indonesia, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. We have knowledge and shared experiences to draw from, international attention and in some places, the will and commitment from stakeholders to address these problems. We have the tools to make practising journalism safer and it remains our highest priority to promote them.

Reform and policy advocacy for media rights and freedom of expression: Media freedom has evolved from the right to freedom of expression, which is a fundamental human right, protected by international and regional instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights and Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In countries where the legal environment restricts freedom of expression and media freedom, IMS works to engage with local and international partners in media reform policy issues. We do this in order to support local demands for the country to create a legal environment conducive to free media development and in compliance with internationally recognised standards.

IMS seeks to ensure that information is gathered and used to bring attention to press freedom violations and improve the press freedom situation. We also work with partners to coordinate advocacy campaigns and joint calls for action.

Attacks on and censorship of the media impact freedom of expression on two levels. Not only do they directly violate the right of media workers to perform their work, but they also obstruct the ability of the general public to access the information that would be provided through the media.

In this regard, the monitoring of media rights violations is essential for building knowledge and awareness as well as providing concrete documentation for advocacy activities that address these violations.

Promotion of ICT and freedom of expression online: IMS works to safeguard principles of independent and pluralistic media and freedom of expression online. We also facilitate the use of new media and technology for dissemination of quality content as well as humanitarian information in conflicts and crises.

Strengthening professional associations and media NGOs on the ground: IMS supports establishment and strengthening of media and journalists' associations, unions, and press councils that work to defend the rights of the profession and are essential to the creation of professional environments in which media independence and quality journalism can flourish.

Strengthening professional journalism and investigative reporting: IMS works to improve the content and quality of media products through training of journalists and media workers in basic as well as advanced journalism skills. This includes areas such as investigative reporting, conflict sensitive journalism, new media technologies, documentary film-making and photo-journalism, which can provide a different outlet for expression in countries where traditional media is under pressure.

Media business development: IMS carries out training in sustainable media business development for print, online and electronic media around the world.

5. Reasons why IMS is applying for CDMSI observer status

IMS' track-record in the Council of Europe area and beyond illustrates clearly the coherence between the proposed engagement with CDMSI and IMS' past, current and future work. IMS' work will support the important mission of CDMSI to steer the work of the Council of Europe in the field of freedom of expression, media and internet governance. IMS's work in the following areas we believe would contribute to CDMSI's goals:

(a) Global connectedness

On a policy level, IMS is actively engaged in policy and advocacy efforts like the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists which aims to create a free and safe environment for media workers. IMS also participates in international dialogue initiatives on themes that are highly relevant to journalists around the world, e.g. cyber security and how to cover topics like violent extremism and migration. Building on these efforts, IMS can help CDMSI to develop innovative methodology and learning in media-related fields, such as digital security, and conflict sensitive and investigative journalism.

IMS recognises that many of the challenges media face in the Council of Europe area and beyond, demand an extensive collaborative approach involving a wide range of actors on both local, regional, and global levels. IMS has a longstanding involvement with a broad range of international alliances and networks. This gives IMS global and local influence, which means that IMD could bring on board insights from the development of global policies and methodologies. IMS participates and acts with a leading role in:

- **Global Forum for Media Development:** A global network of over 150 media development organisations advocating on media policies and coordinating media development work globally. IMS sits in the Steering Committee.
- **UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity:** A multi-stakeholder global framework advancing work to improve the protection of journalists worldwide and combating impunity.
- **Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities:** An IMS-cofounded multi-stakeholder model for coordination of humanitarian efforts and local media.
- **Global Investigative Journalism Network:** A global association of investigative journalism organisations.
- **Global Network Initiative:** A unique network of social media, technology, and telecommunication companies, and human rights and media development groups.

(b) Professional research and monitoring of freedom of expression and media development trends

IMS produces in-depth analysis of the media sector to understand the different elements of a sound media sector, particularly those that relate to IMS' strategic priorities: media content production and distribution, journalist safety, media policy and law reform, and diversity within media. This analysis is framed by UNESCO's Media Development Indicators, which IMS was instrumental in developing. We publish material such as media sector assessments, handbooks on journalism, and briefing papers on topical issues related to media to promote freedom of expression and to help develop free and professional media worldwide. This material could be used in the CDMSI work. IMS will share the findings of our context analysis with CDMSI with a view to harmonising media development initiatives and ensuring these address local needs and priorities.

(c) Alignment with the activity of the Media and Freedom of Expression working group at the INGO Conference Human Rights Committee

Earlier this year, IMS has initiated establishment of the Media and Freedom of Expression Group within the Human Rights Committee of the INGO Conference. The **ambition** of the working group is to inform and **influence** decisions and policies at the Council of Europe level for the respect, protection, support and promotion of freedom of expression and media development in the Council of Europe member states. This working group will contribute towards the promotion of several articles of the Convention, and in particular Article 10 and Article 11, with a focus on access to reliable information and fundamental freedoms as an indispensable and enabling prerequisite for all other human rights.

The working group will deal with the following issues:

- Protection of human rights defenders and promotion of the legitimate role they undertake
- Promotion of good journalism and debunking disinformation and propaganda
- Defense and promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of the media; as well as other freedoms related (freedom of association and freedom of conscience)
- Promotion of diversity, equality, peace and tolerance through responsible journalism, with special attention for the position of women (especially in conflict zones), LGTB- community, other minorities possibly routing from religious communities or ethnic backgrounds.
- Strengthening the media and civil society's ability to provide the necessary fact-based information and narratives that will help discourage radicalisation.
- Fostering inclusion, recognising the need to strengthen the cohesion of the social fabric of society necessary to bring about stability and democratisation as well as factors that influence the drivers of migration, we will strengthen the ability of media and civil society to represent, empower and mobilise a diverse society.

- Pluralism promoting a level playing field for oppositional media as part of the democratic process.
- The media responsibility in view of the separation of the church from the civil state, the philosophies of secularism, religious liberty, and religious pluralism.

IMS' Head of Department is in charge of coordination of the Working Group. Establishing a link between two structures could lead to potential synergies between the two and help boost significantly our current efforts to promote freedom of expression and media development within the INGO Conference.

(d) Connecting the dots – establishing a connection with national partners and media in the CoE countries

Partnerships are at the core of all of IMS' work and an essential means to advance change. IMS partners produce reports, studies and research that can contribute to informed decision-making at the CMDSI and promote dialogue on relevant issues related to freedom of expression and information, and can provide recommendations to the CDMSI on policies and measures to be taken to better protect the right to freedom of expression and information in the region or in a particular country.

IMS expertise would allow IMS partners to be resource people in conferences and courses related to freedom of expression and information. IMS partners have extensive expertise on these issues and could provide speakers to these seminars.

(e) Annexes

A copy of the IMS certificate of registration.

A copy of the most recent IMS annual report

The point of contact for this application is Ms. Gulnara Akhundova, IMS Head of Department

tel: +45 5210 7820 (mobile)

mail: ga@mediasupport.org | skype: Gulnara.Akhundova