

Subject: Response of the Republic of Latvia to the alert published on 6 October 2023 on the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists – “Proposal to Prohibit Content in Russian Language in Latvian Public Media”

The Latvian authorities would like to provide the following information concerning the alert published on 6 October 2023 on the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists – “Proposal to Prohibit Content in Russian Language in Latvian Public Media” (hereinafter - Alert).

One of the priorities of the National Security Concept (hereinafter – Concept), which was approved by the Latvian Parliament on 28 September 2023, is to strengthen Latvia’s internal security and the cohesion of society. To quote from the Concept: *“In order to strengthen internal security and a cohesive society, it is necessary to promote the consolidation of the majority of society around common values based on the independence of the country, its belonging to the Western world, Latvian as the only State language and an understanding of history that condemns the crimes against humanity committed by totalitarian regimes, and the repetition of similar historical events in modern times.”* The status of the Latvian language as the official State language of the Republic of Latvia is enshrined in the Constitution and consequently the Concept foresees the protection of the State language as one of its overarching goals.

The Concept consists of various sections, one of which entails the prevention of threats to the Latvian information space. This section contains a conceptual proposal (hereinafter – Proposal) to create a high-quality unified information space in Latvian as of 1 January 2026, in line with the main aim of the Concept itself.

As yet no decision has been made to stop the creation and dissemination of Russian language content on public media. Under consideration is a proposal for the public service media to create content in the Latvian language and in languages belonging to the European cultural space. Discussions about the practical implementation and modalities of this Proposal are still ongoing, facilitated by the Latvian authorities in close collaboration with media industry representatives.

Latvia would also like to stress that no objections to this Proposal have been expressed by the National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia as mentioned in the Alert. Objections were expressed by the Public Electronic Media Council regarding the setting of a specific target date for this section of the Proposal to come in force.

National minorities and their culture are an integral and important part of Latvian society and are protected constitutionally. Latvia’s regulatory framework explicitly recognizes and upholds the right to use minority and other languages in the media. Latvia’s commitment remains unwavering: to uphold the State language as the basis for the security of Latvia’s information space while safeguarding the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and ensuring access to a diverse range of information sources.

Proficiency in the State language empowers citizens to fully and meaningfully participate in democratic processes. It also enables their ability to identify themselves with the State and bolsters trust in the information disseminated by the public media,

contributing to a unified information space. Latvia refutes the notion that the implementation of the Proposal would deprive Russian speakers of access to credible and fact-checked information, leaving them exposed to disinformation and propaganda. The law demands that all electronic media under Latvian jurisdiction must ensure that facts and events are reflected fairly, objectively and with due accuracy and impartiality.

Latvia reiterates its strong commitment to continue cooperation with the Council of the Europe and its mechanisms. Latvia is firmly committed to protect and promote freedom of expression, including media freedom. Latvia fully aligns itself with all international standards and obligations that serve to protect journalism and journalists.