



## **Slovenian Press Agency (STA) under Financial Pressure from the Government – No. 62/2021**

(<https://fom.coe.int/alerte/detail/97247209:globalSearch=false>)

Slovenia is a staunch defender of democratic principles and values and, in this respect, of the freedom and independence of the media and journalists. We stress that, between March 2020 and today (November 2021), the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has never interfered with the editorial autonomy of the Slovenian Press Agency (STA). The Government only found that the operation of the STA was not in compliance with the Slovenian Press Agency Act in the part laying down that the agency provides services as part of the public service and as such is financed from the state budget of the Republic of Slovenia.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia is obliged to act in compliance with the legislation and ensure the efficient management of taxpayers' money. That is why, in October 2020, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, the Government Communication Office (UKOM) requested the STA to submit financial documentation on its operation in 2020 to resolve outstanding issues as quickly as possible. The obligation to submit the documentation on the STA's operations to UKOM arose under the public service contract with the STA for 2020, which stipulated that the STA must promptly provide UKOM, at UKOM's request, with all the information and documents relating to the STA's operations. Because STA's director did not want to submit the STA documentation, UKOM was forced to temporarily suspend payments to the STA until the outstanding issues were resolved, as required by the 2020 public service contract between the STA and UKOM. On 8 November 2021, the new STA management and UKOM's management agreed that the STA must fulfil its statutory obligations, and the directors of the two organisations signed the STA public service contract for 2021. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia will therefore pay to the STA 2.028 million euros for the whole of 2021, as foreseen in the STA's annual business plan.

We stress that, between March 2020 and today (November 2021), the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has not adopted any legal act or decision to harm or jeopardise the free operation of the Slovenian media and journalists or to interfere with the editorial policy of any media outlet. On the contrary, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government helped the media with emergency financial measures (providing a basic monthly income, paying social and health insurance contributions, co-financing the salaries of media workers who were temporarily laid off, providing an allowance for work in hazardous conditions to Radiotelevizija Slovenija, etc.).

More information on the signing of the contract with the STA: <https://www.gov.si/en/news/2021-11-08-signature-of-the-sta-contract-for-2021/>