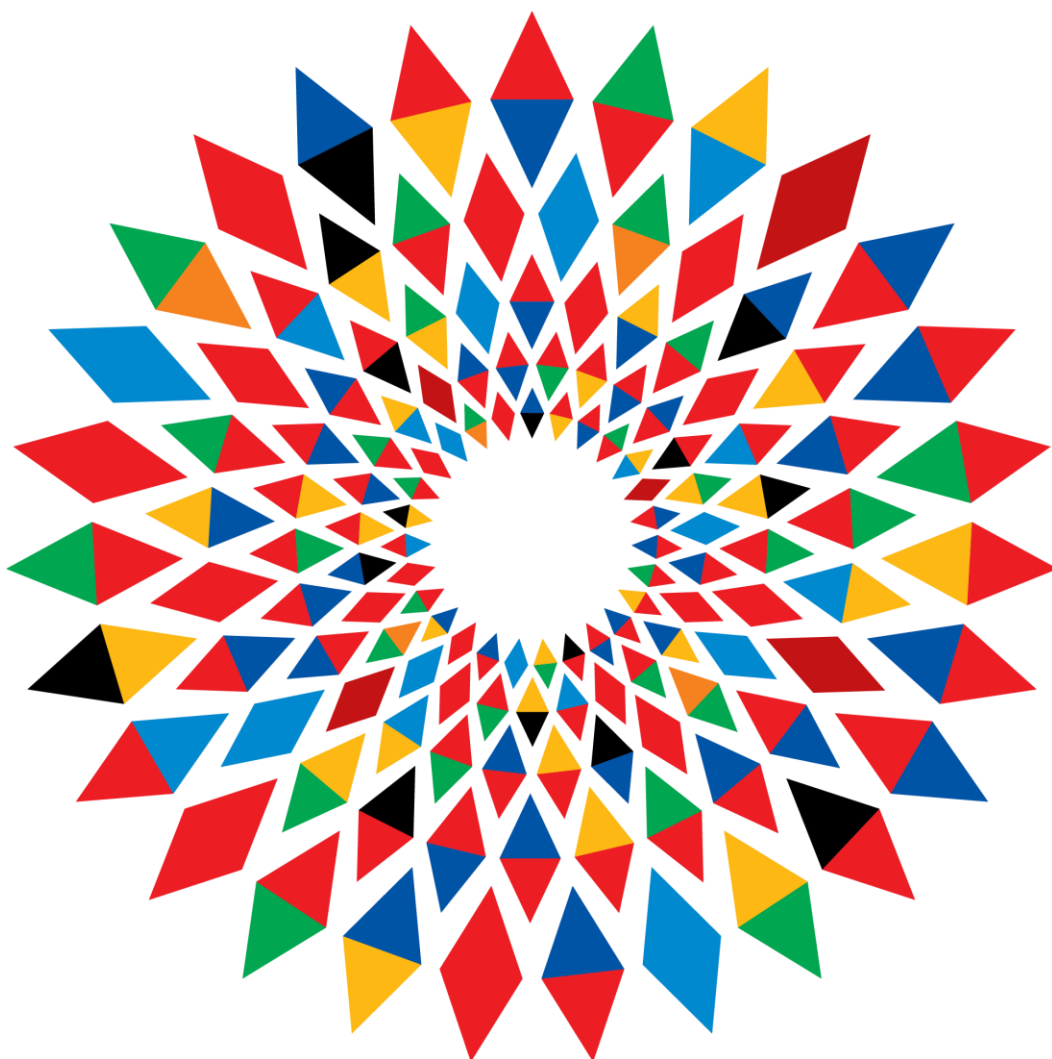


EU2022.CZ

Czech Presidency of the Council
of the European Union



Eastern Partnership Media Conference

Date: 1 – 2 December 2022

Venue: Prague, Czechia, Czernin Palace and RFE/RL Headquarters

Context: Free and independent media and professional journalism face many challenges globally, but their situation is especially difficult in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Russia's illegal and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine exposed the strength of and danger posed by Russian propaganda targeting especially Ukraine, but also other countries in the wider neighbourhood. The Belarusian state became an aggressor, lending its territory for attacks against Ukraine. Its repressive apparatus pushed independent media out of the country. The situation of recurrent war gives media a special role in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The bravery and valuable work of independent journalists from war-torn Ukraine, but also from other countries demonstrate that it is important to invest in the resilience of the media. One of the priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU for the Eastern Partnership is the effort to transform the useful concept of resilience into a practical and concrete agenda. Support of independent media and professional journalism is one of the key long-term priorities of Czech foreign policy not only in the Eastern Partnership region.

Objective: To discuss and show practical examples of how to strengthen the resilience of the independent media and professional journalism in Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries; to present current EU media policies, programs and strategies; to renew political commitments towards independent journalism and media freedom; and to contribute to building practical skills strengthening media resilience.

Audience: Approximately 100 participants in person: journalists, media professionals, influencers, and media students from Eastern Partnership countries, including Belarusian journalists in exile; RFE/RL journalists and other media from EU countries; participants from EU institutions/member states.

Abstract: Independent media and professional journalism are key components of democratic societies. Alongside the long-standing challenges to media freedom posed by authoritarian regimes, the unjustified and brutal Russian aggression against Ukraine demonstrated that the information war using post-truth concepts, the intrusion of disinformation and manipulative techniques, is a component of the strategy, which can result in unbelievable human suffering and destruction. In the Eastern Partnership countries, the difficulties faced by journalists are extreme, with some countries of the region among the lowest ranking countries on the World Press Freedom Index. Independent media were liquidated in Belarus and professional journalists were forced into exile. The intimidation of journalists by governments, which prescribe content, and the geopolitically motivated intrusion of manipulative information outlets (often sponsored by Russia) are distorting the information space

in other EaP countries. How could the resilience of professional journalism be strengthened? How should the independent media in Eastern Partnership countries deal with these challenges? How can the EU, member states and donors further support the independence of the media in EaP countries? What are the EaP countries' commitments towards preserving media freedom? What legislative framework can adequately regulate the media space facing new challenges? After two years of COVID-19-related isolation, it is high time to renew the concept of EaP independent media conferences in order to reflect on recent changes and chart the way forward.

Programme:

1st day, Thursday 1 December 2022

9:30 Welcome remarks:

- *Jaroslav Kurfürst*, Deputy Foreign Minister for European Issues, Czechia
- *Lawrence Meredith*, Director DG NEAR, European Commission
- *Jamie Fly*, President and CEO, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)

10:00 – 10:15 Opening remarks: *Věra Jourová*, Vice-president for Values and Transparency, European Commission

10:15 – 10:30 Keynote speech: *Emine Dzhamarova*, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ukraine (online)

10:30 – 11:30 Panel 1: Independent media as a precondition for functioning democracy

Moderator: *Jamie Fly*, President and CEO, RFE/RL

- *Věra Jourová*, Vice-president for Values and Transparency, European Commission
- *Jodie Ginsberg*, President, Committee to Protect Journalists
- *Evgeny Shibinski*, chief editor, Zerkalo.io

Presentations, discussion

11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 – 13:30 Panel 2: Independent media environment in EaP and how to address its deficiencies – stock taking of the current situation (post-Covid, war)

Moderator: Arzu Geybullaeva

- *Lawrence Meredith*, Director DG NEAR, European Commission - EU approach/programs in support of independent media
- *Jerzy Pomianowski*, EED Director – Needs and challenges of independent media in the EaP countries
- *Mariam Nikuradze*, Georgia, OC Media founder – Independent media in a highly polarized society
- *Karen Harutyunyan*, Armenia, Civilnet – Journalism in war
- *Alina Radu*, Moldova, Ziarul de Garda, Director – Impact of disinformation

Presentations, discussion

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 1st block of parallel sessions

1. **Interactions between media and donors** – *opportunity for media and civil society representatives to highlight their needs, for donors to share their plans and strategies and look for inputs; opportunities and gaps*

Chair: Rostislav Valvoda (Prague Civil Society Centre, Director)

2. **Displaced media** – *survival strategies in a new reality, reaching distant audiences, business strategies; lessons learnt; practical examples; available donor support*

Chair: Daria Minsky (media manager, BY)

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:00 2nd block of parallel sessions

3. **Countering disinformation** – *current challenges, tendencies, best practices in addressing information manipulation, new tools etc.*

Chair: Martyna Bildziukiewicz (Head of ESTF, EEAS)

4. **Journalists and media in war** – *role of media in a war; practical examples; journalism and documentation of war crimes*

Chair: Oksana Romaniuk (IMI UA)

2nd day, Friday 2 December 2022

9:30 – 11:00 3rd block of parallel sessions

5. **Focus on regional media** – role of regional media, their added value, sustainability and support

Chair: Hatia Jinjikhadze, OSF Georgia

6. **Reaching new audiences** – audience research, tools, techniques, new formats, strategies how to grow audience and its engagement etc.

Chair: Zoya Charles, media trainer, consultant, journalist

11:00 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 12:00	Conclusions/recommendations from the parallel discussion presented by its rapporteurs
12:00 – 12:15	Wrap up
13:15	<u>Arrival to RFE/RL</u>
13:30	Welcome and introduction to RFE/RL: Jeremy Bransten, Acting Editor in Chief
13:45 – 14:15	Networking lunch with RFE/RL journalists
14:15 – 15:00	Discussion on investigative journalism: Andrei Soshnikov, Chief Editor, Russian Investigative Unit
15:00 – 15:45	Discussion on circumvention of censorship: Patrick Boehler, Head of Digital Strategy
15:45 – 16:15	Tour of building (TBC depending on number of visitors)
16:15	End of Visit



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