EU ENLARGEMENT FACTSHEET
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement

SAFEGUARDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE MEDIA

WHAT IS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION?

• It is the right to hold opinions and to receive and pass on information and ideas through any form of communication without interference from any public authority.

• It covers a wide array of opinion and beliefs, such as religious, political and cultural.

• It is a fundamental part of a pluralistic democracy and the condition of good governance. Freedom of expression and media freedom are key indicators of a country’s readiness to become part of the EU.

CURRENT STATUS IN THE ENLARGEMENT REGION

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right (Art 2 & 49 of the Lisbon Treaty) that must be guaranteed by each country that intends to join the EU. It is an inevitable condition of democracy, good governance and political accountability.

Countries in the enlargement region still face difficulties when addressing this issue.

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THE EU SUPPORTS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND THE MEDIA IN THE ENLARGEMENT REGION

Through laws and legislation

Freedom of expression in Europe is protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Article 10 EHCR clearly states that “everyone has the right to freedom of expression”. Actions carried out by the European Commission include:

- Regularly defining agreements and priorities in cooperation with governments and EU Delegations, as well as journalists and their organisations

- Partnerships between public service broadcasters (PSB) and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) to support independent and balanced reporting

- Collaboration with bilateral donors and international and regional organisations, particularly the Council of Europe and the OSCE

- Consultations with national and regional media organisations, civil society organisations and other NGOs

Through conferences

The EU organises the “Speak Up! Conference” in the Western Balkans and Turkey, which brings media professionals from the region and the EU together to address the challenges of ensuring freedom of expression and the media, the latest one taking place on 20 June 2013.

Needs identified as priorities that should set the framework for multi-beneficiary support through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) include:

- Grants that enhance networking and regional cooperation

- Support of the development of advocacy and lobbying by journalist associations and watchdog NGOs

- Advisory partnerships between self-regulatory organisations and media market regulators with their counterparts in the EU

- Training opportunities for a new generation of investigative journalists

Through financial and technical assistance

The EU provides financial support through the IPA with a focus on media programmes, such as The Media Strategy in Serbia, with the basic goal of establishing a draft law regulating the media and harmonising the legal framework to strengthen established democratic relations in the country.

One of the main targets is the transparency of media ownership.

A total of 3.2 million EUR will be invested in the media programme by 2016.