

Opening remarks at the *First South East Europe Media Law Academy*

Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH Nina Suomalainen

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First of all, I am honoured to take part in this joint endeavour and greet you all on behalf of the OSCE Mission to BiH. I would like to commend our implementing partners – Article 19 and the European Association of Public Service Media in South East Europe – for organizing the Academy, and the RCC, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media for their support.

The topics that you are about to address feature highly among the OSCE commitments. The importance of freedom of the media – including the principles of independence, pluralism and diversity – both in their own right and as tools for the defence of other rights, is fundamental as a core element of democracy.

- There has been substantial progress achieved in South East Europe in reforming its outdated and repressive media-related laws and policies. However, the implementation of the liberal media legislation remains problematic, and further reform of media legislation is required in fields of criminal and civil defamation, public service broadcasting, licensing of broadcasters, access to information, transparency of media ownership and protection of journalists' rights.
- Adoption of media legislation needs be preceded by broad and inclusive public and parliamentary discussions, and in accord with OSCE media freedom commitments and international standards, such as documents of the Council of Europe and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.
- Monitoring mechanisms need to exist as to ensure proper, uniform and full implementation of media legislation, free of political and economic influence. This is where the parliaments need to be engaged. Governments must also strive to support and protect the work of independent regulatory authorities.
- Finally, the financial and editorial independence of public service broadcasters should be guaranteed by law.

I am well aware of the differences in these areas that span the region. I encourage you to actively share your practices, and formulate recommendations for legal reforms. This is where the success will lie.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you fruitful discussions over the next five days and may your cooperation extend beyond this event. In that regard, I look forward to learning of your proceedings and the activities of the network in the long run.