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Ministerial conference in Belgrade to discuss how to further protect freedom of expression and Internet freedom in Europe

The conference will address violence and intimidation against journalists and the rights and responsibilities of journalists, bloggers and whistleblowers

Strasbourg, 01.11.2013 – Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society from the 47 Council of Europe member states will meet in Belgrade on 7 and 8 November to discuss how to improve the protection of freedom of expression in Europe.

The conference "Freedom of expression and democracy in the digital age: opportunities, rights, responsibilities" is organised by the Council of Europe in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia.

Participants will discuss the opportunities and challenges to freedom of expression and other human rights in respect of the Internet, for example the implications that access to the Internet has for effectively exercising these rights, and the risks stemming from insufficient protection of privacy online.

The conference will tackle the persistent problem of violence against journalists, and explore ways to prevent their intimidation and harassment. Participants will also consider the rights and responsibilities of journalists, bloggers, whistle-blowers and human rights activists, and action to promote pluralism, diversity and quality in the changing media landscape.

On the second day, the conference will focus on how to deal with the growing phenomenon of hate speech online at national and international level.

The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe Nils Muižnieks, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion of the United Nations Frank La Rue, the OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic, and the director general of the European Broadcasting Corporation Ingrid Deltenre La Rue will be among the guest speakers.

Representatives from civil society, media, business and other stakeholders will also participate in the conference.

Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dačić and Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland will open the conference at 9.00 on 7 November. On the last day of the conference the ministers are expected to adopt a political declaration and several resolutions mapping out the future work of the Council of Europe in the field of freedom of expression.

Practical information:

- The conference, which will be held at the Metropol Palace Hotel, is open to the press
- The ministerial conference will be webcast on the [Conference website](#).

- Media representatives are invited to send accreditation requests before 5 November, 4 pm to zpovrenovic@kultura.gov.rs
- On 8 November, just after the closure, a press conference will be held at 13:30 at the Parliament of Serbia with Philippe Boillat, Council of Europe Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, Ivan Tasovac, Serbian Minister of Culture and Information, and Nebojsa Stefanovic, President of the Serbian Parliament.

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