



T +33(0)388412560

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

[pressunit@coe.int](mailto:pressunit@coe.int)

Ref. DC 116(2015)

## **Freedom of Expression: still a precondition for democracy?**

### **The Council of Europe brings together top judges, government officials and activists to address current challenges to freedom of expression at a conference in Strasbourg**

Strasbourg, 17.09.2015 - Some 300 participants in a conference in Strasbourg on 13-14 October – open to the media – will assess serious ramifications to free expression from such recent events as the brutal assault against Charlie Hebdo journalists in Paris in January. Attorney at Law of Charlie Hebdo, Richard Malka, for example, will count among participants, including European Court of Human Rights judges, national judges, journalists and representatives from media freedom organisations, governments and international organisations.

They will assess the extent to which Europe may be sliding towards criminalising free expression, when dealing with hate speech, and they will consider how to fight terrorism whilst respecting free expression online – and what implications mass surveillance has for free expression.

A recent effort to support free expression, the Council of Europe's [Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists](#), will be appraised as a tool that fosters early warnings of threats against journalists, to enable effective preventive action.

Speakers at the opening of the conference include Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina Almir Šahović representing the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, President of the Constitutional Court of Turkey Zühtü Arslan, Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic, German Federal Government Commissioner for human rights policy and humanitarian aid Christoph Strässer.

[Programme](#)  
[Conference's website](#)

**Open to media**, the conference will be held at the hemicycle of the Palais de l'Europe, the Council of Europe main building in Strasbourg. The opening session starts at 9.00 a.m. on 13 October.

A live webcast will be available on the conference website.

Questions, press accreditation and interview requests should be sent to [Jaime Rodriguez](#), Spokesperson/Media officer, tel. +33 3 90 21 47 04