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Threats to media freedom and journalists' security in Europe

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2168 (2020)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2168 \(2019\)](#) on "Threats to media freedom and journalists' security in Europe". It has forwarded it to the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) for information and possible comments. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the attention paid by the Parliamentary Assembly to the important subject of media freedom and safety of journalists and the dangerous deterioration of the situation in some member States.
2. In its Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#) to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors, the Committee of Ministers drew attention to the member States on insufficient efforts in investigating killings of, attacks on and ill-treatment of journalists and other media actors, and in bringing the perpetrators to justice.
3. The Committee of Ministers recalls that the consecutive assessments of the state of freedom of expression in Europe, since the adoption of its recommendation contained in the Council of Europe Secretary General's yearly reports on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe have shown that threats to freedom of expression, one of the anchors of democratic societies, continue to grow across Council of Europe member States.
4. The Committee therefore considers it important that an Implementation Guide to its Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#) has been completed and launched. In line with the Implementation Strategy for the recommendation, the Guide will serve as a common basis for national authorities in the development of measures and action plans, including in the prioritisation of such measures and in progress assessment.
5. The Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists (the Platform) was set up by the Committee of Ministers in 2014 following a recommendation by the Parliamentary Assembly. It can be considered as a unique forum of direct exchange between journalists' organisations and member States. The Committee holds regular informal exchanges with representatives of the Platform (most recently at its meeting on 8 September 2020), which provide an opportunity for constructive discussion. Moreover, the Secretary General has kept the Committee regularly informed about the Platform's work, most recently at their Deputies' 1375th meeting on 6 May 2020, when she reported on an online meeting held with the Platform partners on 29 April 2020 at which they presented their [annual report 2019](#) to her in the presence of the Chair of the Ministers' Deputies. The Committee has on several occasions discussed cases that have been reported on the Platform including measures taken by member States (Assembly recommendation, paragraphs 5.1-5.3).
6. At its 129th Session held in Helsinki on 17 May 2019, the Committee of Ministers, recalling the importance of freedom of expression, online and offline, as a cornerstone of a democratic and pluralistic society, agreed to reinforce the Organisation's work in this field and to enhance its co-operation and dialogue with the relevant tools of the Council of Europe, including the Platform, to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists.

1. Adopted at the 1397th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (3 March 2021).



7. The Committee of Ministers recalls that the Platform serves as an important source of information with regard to the safety of journalists in Council of Europe member States. While the Council of Europe has at its disposal other sources of information – such as the statistics of the European Court of Human Rights and the Secretary General's annual reports – the Platform and its alerts should be taken into consideration to the extent relevant when setting priorities and assessing the progress of the implementation strategy of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#) (Assembly recommendation, paragraph 5.4).

8. The Committee of Ministers will continue to co-operate with the Platform and encourage member States to make available the necessary resources to give it greater visibility, recognition and impact, and calls on the Parliamentary Assembly and the Platform's partners to continue contributing to these efforts. (Assembly recommendation, paragraph 5.5).

9. Lastly, with reference to paragraph 3 of the Assembly recommendation, the Committee of Ministers recalls its decision to hold the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society (in Nicosia, Cyprus)² to discuss at the highest political level critical developments in the media environment and regarding the safety of journalists. The conference is intended to stimulate political engagement on necessary priority actions to secure freedom of expression and its corollary media freedom, as guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, both online and offline.

2. This Conference has been postponed to June 2021.