



# *Challenges to Press Freedom: The Global Landscape and the Case of Cyprus*

**6 February 2017 - Home for Cooperation, Nicosia**

The importance of the media in democratic processes around the world is constantly highlighted through events occurring globally on a daily basis. To take but one example, in Turkey, the country geographically closest to Cyprus, the media situation dominates much of the country's domestic debate and international profile. At the same time, to take another case, the significant role played by social media trolls in recent democratic decision-making processes also brings into relief issues of media best practices as well as freedom. Indeed, the rise of "alternative" media sources appears to have shaken the hold of credible and fact based news sources on the public's imagination of significant issues. How, then, to maintain democratic accountability and ethics in media coverage while also maintaining press freedom?

This conference will examine the changing media landscape and its relationship to the democratic process in an increasingly polarized world. Attention will focus on both structural and political grounds for bars to media freedom, as well as how better to encourage ethical behavior and accountability in an age of blogs and posts that do not conform to the norms of media fact-checking and ethics. Key questions to be addressed include: How come trust in fact based journalism is decreasing? What factors and forces are at play? How can this be overcome? How do we maintain public trust in the media, when it is shown to be swayed by forces that in turn influence public opinion?

This one-day conference will examine these questions in the context of democratic decision-making, especially in the context of conflicts such as Cyprus. A first panel will bring together experts to give a general assessment of the current structural and political impediments to freedom of the press around the world, as well as the significance of media responsibility for democratic decision-making. A second panel will focus these insights on a discussion of the current media landscape in Cyprus, where impediments to media freedom are primarily structural and where most journalists have not received formal training in journalism, including its journalistic ethics. Such a discussion is particularly significant at a moment when the island's leaders are engaged in negotiations intended to reunite the island.

## Programme

09:00 – 09:30	<b>Registration</b>
09:30 – 09:45	<b>Welcome addresses:</b> H.E. Anna Olsson Vrang, Ambassador of Sweden to Cyprus, on behalf of the organizers Maired McGuinness, (IE, EPP), 1st Vice-President of the European Parliament
09:45 – 10:15	<b>Keynote speech:</b> Dunja Mijatović OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media
10:15 – 11:30	<b>Panel 1: <i>World Trends in Media Freedom</i></b> Moderator: Ayla Gürel Moran, PRIO Cyprus Centre  Jonathan Lundqvist, Chairman, Reporters Without Borders, Sweden Andrey Richter, Senior Advisor to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Janne Virkunen, Former Editor-in-Chief, Helsingin Sanomat, Finland
11:30 – 11:45	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:45 – 13:00	<b>Panel 2: <i>Structural and Political Barriers to Media Freedom in Cyprus</i></b> Moderator: Alexandra Attalides, EP Information Office in Cyprus  <i>Freedom of Press in Cyprus</i> George Frangos, President of the Union of Cyprus Journalists Sami Özuslu, President of the Turkish Cypriot Journalists Union <i>Gender and Media Freedom</i> Maria Angeli, MIGS Project Co-ordinator <i>Alternative/new media</i> Mete Hatay, PRIO Cyprus Centre
13:00 – 14:00	<b>Lunch</b>