



26 December 2018

Request to drop initiative on amendment of media laws in Albania

Dear Prime Minister Edi Rama,
Dear Minister of Justice Etilda Gjonaj,

Copy: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe Office in Tirana, Delegation of the European Union to Albania

I'm writing to you on behalf the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and PEN International regarding the initiative of your government to amend the media legislation in your country and the procedure that was followed.

Your government has proposed the following major changes in media regulation: state regulation of online media and compulsory registration of online media.¹ We understand that the intent of your initiative is motivated by the fight against disinformation from unidentified actors trying to influence Albanian public opinion.

Albania is not the only country affected by this problem but in democratic countries such as Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany and others, online media are self-regulated. In addition, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has made it clear that "states should not impose mandatory registration to online media as a precondition for their work which can have a very negative effect on media freedom."

¹Draft law on changes and additions to law no. 97/2013 "on audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania" https://www.reporter.al/wp-content/uploads/20181211-Media-Law-Proposed-Amendments_English.docx
Draft law on changes and additions to law nr. 9918, dated 19.5.2008 "on electronic communications in the Republic of Albania" <https://www.reporter.al/wp-content/uploads/20181211-Electronic-Communications-Law-Proposed-Amendments-English.docx>



Your initiative is against best practices and goes against the recommendations of the OSCE which raises our deepest concern. If the current draft laws are passed by the Parliament, they will seriously impair free flow of information and will have chilling effect in online media and restrict the Albanian citizens' right to access information.

We also express our profound dismay that this legislation was drafted behind closed doors, without involving journalists and civil society organizations throughout the drafting process. As an EU candidate country, your government is expected to be transparent and to involve all relevant stakeholders in initiatives concerning them.

We ask you to immediately drop initiative to amend the two draft laws in question and to involve journalists, civil society organisations, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the European Union and Council of Europe in any initiative concerning the right to freedom of expression of media and journalists.

We await a written commitment from your government that this initiative will not go ahead.

Best regards.