



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

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(In English and Albanian only)

PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE MEDIA

hosted by the Parliament of Albania

and organised by the

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Tirana

24 February 2017

DRAFT PROGRAMME

VENUE:

Sheraton Hotel
Sheshi Italia
1000 Tirana
Albania

The event is open to the press. Please contact the PACE secretariat (contacts below) for further information.

1. Background and rationale

The proposed seminar intends to implement the Council of Europe Action Plan for Albania 2015-2017, adopted by the Committee of Ministers. It aims at empowering parliamentarians to improve legislation and operational mechanisms in four policy areas: Media, Corruption, Justice and Discrimination.

The first of a series of 4 seminars shall provide an opportunity for enhanced dialogue on the “role of the public broadcaster on enhancing its independence and impartiality”, adopting a peer-to-peer approach, between parliamentarians of the Parliament of Albania and members of parliaments of other Council of Europe member States. Good practices shall be shared and synergies created with local and international civil society and institutions in the field of Media, to help promote Council of Europe standards and identify concrete areas of reform of the Albanian legislative framework.

Media ownership transparency is a necessary requirement for both, ensuring media pluralism and offering media users the possibility to use those media intelligently. Public service broadcasters play a crucial role in a democratic society, providing unbiased information, respectful of the plurality of opinions. National parliaments have the power and responsibility to ensure that the mission, structure and funding of their public service broadcasters ensure their independence.

This parliamentary seminar shall provide elements for a discussion within the Parliament of Albania regarding the missions of the public broadcaster RTSH and the Audiovisual Media Authority AMA, in order to foster a pluralist media environment in Albania.

Furthermore, although “insult” laws may be a deterrent for hate speech, prosecution for defamation can “be misused in what could be seen as attempts by the authorities to silence media criticism”, as recalled by the PACE Resolution 2019 (2014) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania. “Such abuse – leading to a genuine media self-censorship and causing progressive shrinkage of democratic debate, and of the circulation of general information – has been denounced by civil society, notably in Albania”.

The seminar shall therefore also discuss defamation and hate-speech in Albania, from the perspective of the European Convention of Human Rights.

2. Participants

Members of the Parliament of Albania
Members of parliaments represented in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
European experts
Members of civil society
Media

3. Working Languages

Albanian, English and French

4. Background documents

[PACE Resolution 2065 \(2015\) on increasing transparency of media ownership](#)

[PACE Recommendation 1878 \(2009\) on the funding of public service broadcasting](#)

[PACE Resolution 1577 \(2007\) towards decriminalisation of defamation](#)

[PACE Resolution 2019 \(2014\) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania](#) (in particular §§ 5.1, 5.2, 5.4)

[PACE Information note \(18 January 2017\) by the co-rapporteurs on their fact-finding visit to Tirana \(26-28 October 2016\)](#) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania

[PACE Information note \(15 September 2015\) by the co-rapporteurs on their fact-finding visit to Tirana \(29 – 30 June 2015\)](#) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Friday, 24 February 2017

8h30 - 9h00 *Registration of participants*

9.00 - 9.30 am

OPENING SESSION

Welcome by **Ms Valentina Leskaj**, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Albania, Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Albanian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

Mr José Cepeda, Spanish member of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr Claus Neukirch, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Tirana

Dr. Stephen Stork, First Counsellor, Head of Operations Section I – Governance and Rule of Law, European Union Delegation to Albania

9.30 - 11.00 am

SESSION 1: LEGAL STANDARDS FOR MEDIA TRANSPARENCY AND PLURALISM, INCLUDING DURING THE RUN-UP TO ELECTIONS

Moderator: **Mr Taulant Balla**, Joint chairman of the Committee for the Electoral Reform, Parliament of Albania

Speaker: **Mr Gentian Sala**, President, Audiovisual Media Authority of Albania

Ambassador Bernd Bochart, Head of OSCE Presence in Albania

Mr Reinhart Binder, Director of Legal Affairs and Company Development Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (rbb)

Discussion

11h00 – 11h30 *Coffee break*

11.30 - 1.00 pm

SESSION 2: EDITORIAL STANDARDS FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

Moderator: **Mr Genc Pollo**, Chairperson of the Committee on Education and Means of Public Information, Parliament of Albania

Speaker: **Mr Thoma Gëllçi**, General Director, Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH), Tirana

Mr Boris Bergant, Former Vice President of the European Broadcasting Union; Media Adviser, Slovenia

Mr Chris Banatvala, Former Ofcom Content board member, consultant on media

Discussion

1.00 – 2.30 pm *Lunch hosted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

2.30 - 4.00 PM

SESSION 3: INSULT LAWS – DETERRING EFFECT ON HATE-SPEECH OR CHILLING-EFFECT ON MEDIA FREEDOM?

Moderator: **Mr Piro Misha**, member of the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA)

Speakers: **Mr Darian Pavli**, Director of Programs, Open Society Foundation for Albania

Ms Stanislava Ilchenko, Assistant Lawyer at the European Court of Human Rights

Discussion

4.00 – 4.30 pm *Coffee break*

4.30 – 5.30 pm

SESSION 4: THE REGULATION OF AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Moderator: **Mr Volodymyr Ariev**, General Rapporteur on media freedom and safety of journalists, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the PACE

Speakers: **Ms Milena Harito**, Minister of Innovation and Public Administration, Republic of Albania

Mr Alfred Peza, Deputy-Chairperson of the Committee on Education and Means of Public Information, Parliament of the Republic of Albania

Discussion

5.30 – 6.00 pm

CLOSING SESSION

Conclusions by: **Mr Volodymyr Ariev**, General Rapporteur on media freedom and safety of journalists, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the PACE

Ms Valentina Leskaj, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Albania, Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Albanian Delegation to the PACE

4. Secretariat

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE (PACE)

Parliamentary Project Support Division (PPSD)

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Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Mr	Rüdiger DOSSOW	Secretary of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media ☎ +33 3 88 41 28 59 rudiger.dossow@coe.int
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PARLIAMENT OF ALBANIA (Host Country)

Ms	Irma Pashkja	Parliament of Albania irma.pashkja@parlament.al ☎ 00355 68 20 43 804
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