

Committee of Ministers: Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of Investigative Journalism

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In a Declaration adopted on 26 September 2007, the Committee of Ministers called on member states to protect and promote investigative journalism. Behind this declaration stands the Committee's conviction that genuine investigative journalism helps to expose legal or ethical wrongs that might have been deliberately concealed. Therefore, this kind of journalistic work makes an essential contribution to the "watchdog" function of the media in a democracy.

The Declaration calls on member states to guarantee the personal safety of media professionals, their freedom of movement, access to information and right to protect their sources of information. It also stresses that deprivation of liberty, disproportionate pecuniary sanctions, prohibition to exercise the journalistic profession, seizure of professional material or search of premises should not be misused to intimidate media professionals and, in particular, investigative journalists.

The Declaration draws special attention to the recent case law of the European Court of Human Rights (case of *Dammann v. Switzerland*, Application no 77551/01, see IRIS 2006-6: 4) which has interpreted Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights as protecting not only the freedom to publish, but also journalistic research - an essential stage for investigative journalism. The Committee of Ministers calls on member states to take into consideration this development and to incorporate it into domestic legislation where appropriate.

The Committee also expresses its concern over the increasing limitations on freedom of expression and information in the name of protecting public safety and fighting terrorism, lawsuits against media professionals for acquiring or publishing information of public interest, cases of unjustified surveillance of journalists and legislative measures to limit the protection of "whistle blowers".

The Ministers also invite the media, journalists and their associations to encourage and support investigative journalism while respecting human rights and applying high ethical standards.

Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the protection and promotion of investigative journalism (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 26 September 2007 at the 1005th meeting of the Ministers'

Deputies)

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