European Commission: Launch of European News Media Forum

IRIS 2021-5:1/17

Ronan Ó Fathaigh
Institute for Information Law (IViR)

On 23-25 March 2021, the European Commission held the first edition of the European News Media Forum, which was a structured dialogue on the issue of the safety of journalists, and the preparation of a Commission Recommendation on the safety of journalists. In the recently adopted European Democracy Action Plan (see IRIS 2021-2/4), the European Commission had stated that it would set up the Forum to strengthen cooperation with stakeholders on media-related issues, and would organise a structured dialogue involving Member States and other stakeholders, bringing in the expertise of the Council of Europe, OSCE and UNESCO.

The purpose of the Forum was to provide an opportunity for discussion of the main issues related to safety of journalists, and was attended by a range of stakeholders, including representatives of the journalistic and news media community, self-regulatory bodies (media/press councils), civil society, the Council of Europe and other international organisations, as well as representatives of the Member States and their media regulatory authorities. The Forum sought to gather input for the Commission's planned Recommendation on the safety of journalists. The Commission stated it would seek to ensure "better and targeted implementation" of a number of requirements set out in the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors (see IRIS 2016-5/3). Furthermore, the Commission's Recommendation will also address the online dimension of journalists' safety, given the "growing digital threats that media professionals are facing", and will pay specific attention to gender-based threats, as female journalists are particularly exposed to attacks.

The Forum was organised around four modules, namely: (I) journalists on the ground - ensuring unrestrained operation of journalists and addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the journalistic community; (IIa) journalists' protection - ensuring physical safety of journalists; (IIb) journalists' protection - addressing online threats and digital empowerment; and (III) journalists and equality - addressing gender-based attacks and supporting journalists representing minorities. A number of discussion papers were also published on the modules, and all interested parties were invited by the European Commission to provide written contributions addressing the questions included in the

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

discussion papers.

Finally, the Commission stated that the structured dialogue will be a central step in the preparation of the Commission's Recommendation on ensuring safety of journalists in the EU, which is planned to be adopted in 2021.

European Commission, European News Media Forum on Safety of Journalists, 25 March 2021

https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/events/european-news-media-forum-safety-journalists

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026