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Brussels, 22. 09. 2021

Dear Minister,

Media freedom and media pluralism are core EU values. As European Commission President von der Leyen said in her 2021 State of the Union address, defending media freedom means defending our democracy. Media companies cannot be treated as just another business. Their independence is essential.

Member States have an obligation to guarantee an enabling environment for journalists, protect their safety and promote media freedom and media pluralism. For this reason, the Commission is analysing the situation of media freedom and media pluralism in all the Member States as part of its annual Rule of Law report.

The Commission has repeatedly expressed its serious concerns as well as its expectations of the Slovenian government in relation to the Slovenian Press Agency (STA), most recently in the 2021 Rule of Law report¹.

In April, the Commission had already confirmed that Slovenia's funding to the press agency for its 2021 activities is fully in line with EU State aid rules². Yet, the Commission has been informed that STA has still not received any funding for its 2021 activities. In this respect, the Commission has received several letters from STA about the current situation, explaining the risks to the agency's continued operations. Such a situation presents major risks for media freedom and media pluralism in Slovenia, and consequently in the EU.

*Dr Vasko Simoniti
Minister of Culture
Republic of Slovenia*

¹ The country chapter on Slovenia is available here:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2021_rorl_country_chapter_slovenia_en.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_2041



The Commission has been following closely national developments, including legal proceedings and discussions on the new public service contract. We understand that, under Slovenian national law, it is the duty of the Slovenian government to ensure the independence and the appropriate funding for the public service provided by STA and that this has been recently confirmed by the Slovenian Supreme Court. We understand that this obligation applies irrespective of the eventual conclusion of a public service contract. We also consider that your authorities notified funding for STA to the Commission, in acknowledgment of this obligation.

Public media play a crucial role to play for democracies to thrive. The Commission supports the important role of independent news agencies to guarantee media freedom and media pluralism across the EU. It is therefore important that Member States refrain from any attempts to put direct or indirect pressure on media, including by withholding the necessary financing. In this context, we urge you to find a swift solution to fund STA in a way that would fully preserve its independence.

We would be grateful to receive information on most recent developments, in particular as to when and how the funding of the public service of STA will be provided.

Yours sincerely,

Věra JOUROVÁ

