



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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## **Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the situation of the freedom of the media in Azerbaijan**

The European Union has noted with concern the recent developments affecting the freedom of media in Azerbaijan. Numerous cases of harassment, arbitrary detentions, court cases and violence against independent journalists as well as opposition figures in Azerbaijan have been reported. The EU is also concerned about the reported pressure against entire media outlets.

The EU attaches great importance to the principle of the freedom of the media, which represents a constituent element of democracy. It calls upon the government of Azerbaijan to create an environment where the media can work freely, effectively and without fear. The EU underlines that the measures to limit the freedom of the media in Azerbaijan run contrary to the spirit and purpose of the recently adopted ENP Action Plan and of the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, as regards human rights and fundamental freedoms and the specific commitments made by Azerbaijan therein. The EU also stresses that those measures are not in line with international obligations undertaken by Azerbaijan in the context of its membership of, *inter alia*, the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

# **P R E S S**

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The EU acknowledges the decision of the National Television and Radio Council to allow ANS TV and radio to resume broadcasting, pending resolution of outstanding licensing issues, as a positive step. The EU underlines the importance of resolving outstanding regulatory issues so that a strong and independent media sector can flourish in Azerbaijan.

The EU will continue to keep the situation of the freedom of the media in Azerbaijan under close review.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

\* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.