

*European Press Councils query Irish privacy proposal*

Press self-regulatory bodies throughout Europe have taken the unusual step of issuing a joint statement expressing concern at the position in the Republic of Ireland, where a Privacy Bill threatens to undermine efforts to establish a self-regulatory body. The issue was discussed at the annual meeting of the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe, a group designed to promote self-regulation, resist attempts to harmonise or impose press regulation, and share experiences and information.

The statement said that:

"Representatives of press councils and media organisations from 20 countries, meeting in Sofia for the 8th annual conference of the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe, were concerned to hear that efforts to create a self-regulatory press council in Ireland may be thwarted by proposed new privacy legislation. They hoped that the press in Ireland would still be given a chance to demonstrate that a self-regulatory system can promote high journalistic standards and deliver effective redress for complainants, while protecting freedom of expression in the media. The existence of imposed regulations to govern the editorial content of newspapers and magazines would be likely to make the practice of self-regulation impossible.

Self-regulation of the press is the norm throughout Europe, including Eastern Europe where many new press councils have recently been established".

The two day meeting also discussed differing concepts of privacy across Europe, funding models for press councils, threats to and opportunities for self-regulation, and the position in Eastern Europe, which has become more favourable to self-regulation in recent years.

**ENDS**

**Notes**

- European countries with press councils or media organisations represented were: Bulgaria; Azerbaijan; UK; Denmark; Hungary; Bosnia & Herzegovina; Netherlands; Belgium; Croatia; Albania; Luxembourg; Sweden; Macedonia; Romania; Kosovo; Norway; Moldova; Switzerland; Montenegro; Slovenia.
- Observers were from: Sri Lanka; China; Kyrgystan
- OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) observers came from France and Russia.

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