

Brussels, 24th November 2016

Dear colleagues,

As International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) President, I was today informed of a Resolution passed by the European Parliament aimed at "counteracting propaganda against it by third parties".

This Resolution must have been very controversial as it was carried by 44% of the voting MPs (304 on 691 with 179 votes against and a high number (208) abstentions).

This motions tackles Russian media, Russia Today and Sputnik, by names which is highly unusual: in my opinion, those media should have been given a chance to defend themselves in front of the European Parliament against such an accusation, it seems that opportunity wasn't offered to them.

It's not the first time Russia Today is targeted: when its bank accounts were blocked in the UK, the European Federation of Journalists protected it, both IFJ and EFJ still don't believe that censorship, harassment and demonization are never the right answers to counter so-called propaganda. They believe rather in ethical journalism, self-regulation, media pluralism and media literacy to face it.

As President of a Federation of unions of which several have journalists working for those very media in membership, I am also concerned for their welfare and safety. And I call the management at these medias to recognise duty of care for the journalists they employ.

The European Parliament as well as the International and the European Federations of Journalists are attached to freedom of expression: freedom of expression is based on the principle that facts are sacred and the comment is free. Even though the comment may not please us, this principle should always prevail.

IFJ and EFJ have been besides busy for many months to foster dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian journalists under the motto "one profession and two countries" on one side and between Russian and "Western" journalists on the other side.

On 14-16 December, the EFJ, the Russian Union of Journalists (RUJ) and the EU Delegation in Russia will co-organise in Moscow the fourth and final meeting between EU and Russian journalists. The Moscow meeting will follow earlier similar events that took place in London, St Petersburg and Brussels earlier this year: the Resolution carried on by the European Parliament won't help promote this dialogue.

Both IFJ and EFJ are also willing to fight hate speeches and in this context they would like to lean on the support of institutions like the European Parliament. Further resolutions should pave that way instead of raising tensions

This reaction is sent to you through email: a printed version will be sent to you tomorrow.



Philippe Leruth
President