

# Respect for labour rights key for press freedom, says IFJ

SKOPJE, MACEDONIA: The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the European group of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), expressed its unwavering support for trade union rights and press freedom in South East Europe after a regional roundtable in Skopje.



"Journalists in South East Europe are still working in an environment of fear," said EFJ president Arne König. "They fear for their jobs as labour laws or collective agreements are ruthlessly violated and they fear for their integrity as owners interfere in editorial content to defend specific interests. As long as labour rights are violated, press freedom will be threatened, and it is the whole identity of the profession which needs to be reasserted."

The EFJ organised last week a roundtable in Skopje with representatives of trade unions of journalists in the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia, as well as with delegates from the two German trade unions of journalists, DJV and DJU.

**Needed: Strategies to build confidence between media, politicians**

An EFJ delegation also met with the general manager of the German company WAZ in the Balkans, Srdjan Kerim, and held talks with leading members of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia to discuss strategies for confidence building between media professionals and politicians in the region.

Participants exchanged views on the violation of the current labour laws and on the precarious situation of journalists in a general context of politicisation and corruption.

"Political and commercial interests seem to join forces to pursue their own agenda regardless of professional standards in journalism," said König.

"Journalists cannot work in an ethical and accountable manner if other parts of society do not follow the law. Unfortunately it is the trust in media and the role of journalism as a public good that are put at risk."

The EFJ roundtable set priorities for the future, in particular the need for legal assessment of the infringement of labour regulations, the importance of national public debates on the future of journalism, and the reinforcement of regional cooperation through the creation of a regional network of unions.

Source: International Federation of Journalists

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