

DRUŠTVO
NOVINARJEV
SLOVENIJE
()?!:;,./

DRUŠTVO NOVINARJEV SLOVENIJE
VOŠNJAKOVA 8, 1000 LJUBLJANA
T: + 386 1 426 03 63
F: + 386 1 426 03 64
E: GENERALNI@NOVINAR.COM
NOVINAR.COM

Government letter smears Slovenia's reputation and denigrates journalism

The contents of a letter about the Slovenian media landscape that the Slovenian Government has sent to the Council of Europe (CoE) in response to [criticism by the CoE Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists](#) has no basis in reality. It only reflects the ideological views of the biggest government party and smears Slovenia's reputation internationally. As such it would not warrant a serious response had it not been an official document by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

For 30 years Slovenia has been a democratic country with a media landscape that does indeed experience various anomalies but still operates in a relatively normal framework. The country has obsolete media legislation that requires adjustments, but despite that it remains comparable to European standards. It has a public broadcaster supervised through the programming council by the public as well as politics. Editorial policies as well as ownership structures of Slovenian media outlets are diverse and to claim that they are all united in some sort of ideological warfare against the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) is a reflection of a persistent paranoia that has long coloured the attitude of the SDS, and consequently of the current government, towards the media and journalists. Slovenian media have often been desirable political loot, and this is in no small measure true of the SDS and the Janez Janša-led government – whenever the opportunity arises.

Slovenian journalists perform their job in line with professional and ethical standards, and even more importantly they do it as well as their peers in western democracies. Deviations from these standards are in fact characteristic of media outlets that are directly or indirectly connected to the SDS; that are substantially financed by Hungarian companies; that run smear campaigns against all who disagree with the SDS's agenda; and that manipulate facts and spread intolerance against all who are different or have different views. They justify their *actions* with the mental framework of ideological warfare

ID ZA DDV: **SI75372193**

MATIČNA ŠTEVILKA: **5147425000**

Društvo novinarjev Slovenije je naslednik Društva slovenskih književnikov in časnikarjev, ustanovljenega 28. marca 1905 v Ljubljani, in Slovenskega časnikarskega društva, ustanovljenega 22. oktobra 1944 v Črnomlju.

where the end justifies the means, exactly the same ideological framework described in the government letter.

The entire depiction of Slovenian media history in the letter is merely an attempt to distract attention from the fact that the international community has recognised the unacceptable nature of the pressure exerted by the prime minister and the SDS on the decisions and work of editors and journalists at public broadcaster RTV Slovenija. The Slovenian Journalists' Association (DNS) has previously warned international organisations that statements about RTV Slovenija made from a position of power cannot be understood as an expression of public criticism, they constitute direct pressure on the editorial decisions of journalists and editors at RTV Slovenija. Including veiled threats of layoffs in criticism of an article that was written in line with professional standards but whose content was not to the prime minister's liking, is not a justified warning about abuse of public funds. And to imply, in the context of expressing disagreement with the report, that the public broadcaster is wasteful with its resources and has too many employees cannot be interpreted as a well-meaning call to streamlining, it should be seen as an indirect threat.

The Slovenian government does not understand that editorial independence is enshrined in the law and that the public broadcaster is not a state broadcaster. And that the state, despite being the founder of the public broadcaster, has no right to make editorial decisions. Democracy ends when citizens can no longer state their opinions and views freely and without fear – and we always emphasise that such opinions must be stated respectfully. Erosion of democracy starts with journalists and media outlets – including with the subjugation and disciplining of public media.