

Joint Regional Call to Online Platforms:

Strengthen Safeguards and Engagement in the Western Balkans

Sarajevo, 7 October 2026

To:

Meta
TikTok
Google

Cc:

European Commission – DG CONNECT and DG JUST
European Parliament - Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield (EUDS)
UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
UNESCO - Internet for Trust initiative
OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, media and journalist associations, fact-checkers and other public interest actors from across the Western Balkans¹, call on the online platforms to strengthen their engagement, establish more structured cooperation with civic actors and devote stronger attention and resources to address the priority risks affecting the digital information environment in the Western Balkans:

(1) Access to audiences for independent media and civic actors: Independent media, journalists, human rights defenders and civil society organizations across the Western Balkans consistently report moderation decisions and enforcement practices that negatively affect the visibility, reach and engagement of their content. Content removals, account restrictions and suspensions may result from coordinated abuse of platform reporting systems and bot attacks against media and civil society actors, as illustrated by a [recent wave of suspensions](#) of Instagram accounts in Serbia and [similar cases affecting media and public-interest accounts](#) in Albania.

(2) Online safety and participation of public-interest actors: Harassment and intimidation of [journalists](#), [fact-checkers](#), human rights defenders and civil society organizations is on the rise and often amplified through [coordinated campaigns on online platforms](#). It takes forms of smear campaigns, threats and other forms of online abuse, often disproportionately affecting women in these fields of public-interest work.

¹ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

(3) **Democratic discourse and information integrity:** Recent regional research has documented the growing use of [coordinated information manipulation](#), artificial amplification and the use of AI to distort public debate and reinforce polarization. Additionally, the shortcomings in the enforcement of platform [monetization policies](#) continue to allow a revenue stream for repeat disinformation actors.

Many of these risks migrate across online platforms, amplifying their reach and impact and requiring coordinated platform responses.

As EU candidates, the Western Balkan countries are in the process of aligning with the EU acquis, including the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). This call is not about future legal obligations, but it does reflect the urgent need to address challenges already affecting citizens, media organizations and civil society actors in the region today. **Platforms' engagement with regional stakeholders from an early stage of this process is crucial both for the implementation of existing platform policies and the development of additional safeguards sensitive to local context.** It is also of utmost significance to build the partnerships, expertise and operational readiness needed to support future implementation of the European digital framework across the region.

We call on the addressed platforms to:

1. Develop trusted partnerships with public-interest actors across all Western Balkan countries and establish **dedicated communication and escalation channels**, including **helplines**, to enable media organisations, journalists, human rights defenders and civil society organisations to rapidly report and resolve serious content moderation issues, coordinated abuse of platform systems, and online harassment and threats.
2. Extend **procedural safeguards for decisions affecting media content** to the Western Balkans, reflecting the principles of the DSA and the EMFA. This would help ensure timely notifications, clear and reasoned explanations, meaningful human review informed by local context and appeal and redress mechanisms that would be accessible, timely and effective.
3. Promptly **investigate and take appropriate action** on credible evidence submitted by trusted regional partners, relating to cases of coordinated manipulation campaigns, abuse of platform systems and repeated monetization of disinformation in violation of platform policies. Provide **timely feedback** on actions taken, particularly during periods of heightened political tensions and elections.

Across the Western Balkans, civil society organisations, media organisations, journalist associations, fact-checkers and researchers have developed extensive expertise in documenting platform-related harms, monitoring information manipulation and supporting users affected by

platform decisions. We encourage platforms to systematically integrate this expertise into their regional risk assessment, policy implementation and operational response.

We stand ready to contribute evidence, contextual expertise and operational support through sustained collaboration to help ensure that platform policies and practices are responsive to the realities of the Western Balkans.

Signatories:

- UG “Zašto ne”, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia, Serbia
- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIRN BiH)
- Здружение за еднакви можности и права ЛИЛПА СИЛА Битола, North Macedonia
- Share Foundation, Serbia
- NGO 35MM, Montenegro
- Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society, North Macedonia
- Action for Democratic Society (ADS), Kosovo
- BH Journalists Association (BHJA), Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Udruženje za promociju prirodnih nauka “Nauka i svijet”, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Foundation Atelier for Community Transformation – ACT, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Post-Conflict Research Center (PCRC), Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Foundation Mediacentar Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Centar za mlade KVART Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Sarajevo Open Centre, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Civil Rights Defenders, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- The Press and Online Media Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Association JaBIHEU, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Coalition for Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Women in Tech, Kosovo
- Crime and Corruption Reporting Network - KRIK, Serbia
- Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), Montenegro
- Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS), Kosovo
- Young Professionals Network (YPN), Albania
- Center Science and Innovation for Development (SCiDEV), Albania
- Open Data Kosovo
- Novi Sad School of Journalism, Serbia
- EUCRTA, Belgium
- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)
- South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM)