

# International delegation to meet Ukraine president over press freedom concerns

KIEV, UKRAINE / PARIS, FRANCE / DARMSTADT, GERMANY: The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and the World Editors Forum, the global organisations for the world's press, will lead an international delegation to Ukraine next week to meet President Viktor Yanukovich and investigate growing concerns about freedom of expression in the country.



Representatives from media and human rights groups, including Article 19 and Freedom House, supported by the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Ukraine Association of Press Publishers, and the Independent Regional Press Publishers Ukraine, will join WAN-IFRA in Kiev from 1 to 4 April. The delegation will meet with Ukrainian media and civil society figures and is scheduled to meet President Yanukovich on Tuesday 3 April to discuss freedom of expression concerns.

"This is an excellent opportunity to relay our concerns about media freedom in the country directly to those who are in a position to make a difference," said Larry Kilman, deputy CEO of WAN-IFRA. "We hope dialogue with the authorities will help them address the severe challenges facing the independent media, particularly during a year in which Ukraine will be the international spotlight."

"The Press Freedom Mission to Ukraine comes at a critical juncture as conditions for the media have worsened since President Yanukovich's election," said Susan Corke, director for Eurasia programmes at Freedom House. "Opposition channels in Kharkov were taken off the air and journalists continue to face pressure and violence for just doing their job, particularly when it involved investigating sensitive issues such as corruption."

The government has been accused of pressuring media owners through "soft censorship" tactics that include denial of broadcasting licenses, targeted raids by tax inspectors and intrusive court cases.

Impunity and violence against media personnel also remain a problem in Ukraine. A number of high profile cases have seen critical journalists targeted for their work uncovering corruption and the abuse of power by top officials. In many instances the perpetrators remain at large.

Ukraine will host the Euro 2012 football championships this summer, following by WAN-IFRA's [World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum](#), the global summit meetings of the world's press, which is expected to draw more than 1000 publishers, chief editors and other senior newspaper executives to Ukraine from 2 to 5 September next.

More on the press freedom situation in Ukraine can be found at [here](#).

Note: The delegation will hold a press conference on Tuesday, 3 April, at a time and venue to be advised. For more information, contact Larry Kilman, Tel: +33 1 47 42 85 07. Mobile: +33 6 10 28 97 36. E-mail: [larry.kilman@wan-ifra.org](mailto:larry.kilman@wan-ifra.org)