Introduction

The European External Action Service (EEAS) has launched a public consultation on the planned EU guidelines on Freedom of expression.

On 25 June 2012, the EU strategic framework on Human Rights and Democracy was adopted and it foresees that the EU will develop Common Foreign and Security Policy Guidelines on Freedom of expression online and offline, including the protection of bloggers and journalists.

The Human Rights guidelines are an integral part of our EU's human rights policy and are practical tools to help EU representations in the field better advance EU policy.

The EU guidelines on Freedom of expression, which should be adopted in the coming months, aim to ensure a maximum of coherence and consistency in EU and EU member states' actions, as well as a reinforced visibility of the EU commitment on freedom of expression.

They will build upon existing instruments and documents, recalling key principles and containing clearly defined priorities and tools for the promotion of freedom of expression.

The EEAS is currently consulting civil society on the content of these guidelines.

This answering guide has been prepared in order to make the task of responding to the questionnaire easier for civil society.

Consultation

Access to the consultation can be obtained from the following link:

http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=DHRoFE

The first step is to provide your contact information, name, organisation, country and email; you can then start to answer the questions.

This online consultation will be open until July 15.

Responding to the questionnaire

This is a relatively short questionnaire divided into five parts.

You can choose to contribute to every section or only to specific parts. To respond to a specific part of the questionnaire, you then just have to click on the box next to the subject you want to address and a space for your answer will then be displayed.

1. **Introduction and Purpose of the EU guidelines on Freedom of Expression**

    For this first section, you are invited to provide information on what you believe should be the purpose of the EU guidelines on Freedom of expression and maybe mention the existing guidelines on this subject as an introduction in order to see what this new initiative can bring.

    You don't need to provide definition to freedom of expression at that stage since it will be asked for in the next section.

    Useful background reading:

    - Frank La Rue's, special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, reports for the UN:
        2012 Report
        2011 Report

    - Sector Guidelines on CSR and Human Rights

2. **Definition of Freedom of Expression**

    In this section you can provide a definition for three sub-parts of the definition of freedom of expression, namely freedom of opinion, the right to impart information and ideas and the right to seek and receive information.

    As mentioned before, you can decide to contribute to all or just some points by selecting the box(es) if you believe that some part does not relate to the freedom of expression or if you have no information to contribute.

    From a digital rights perspective, there are several Council of Europe documents and articles that provide useful analysis that is worth taking into account, including:

    - Net Neutrality
    - Committee of Miniters of the Council of Europe's declaration on the protection of Freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association with regard to privately operated Internet platforms and online service providers
    - Danger of Prism surveillance

3. **Scope of freedom of expression**

    In this third section you are being asked to define the scope of the freedom of expression. It is divided into two sub-sections, which are further sub-divided into narrower aspects of the topic.

    The first sub-section is about the scope of freedom of expression as enabler for the meaningful realisation of other human rights and you can decide to contribute to five sub-parts if you believe they fall into this scope.

The second sub-section deals with the scope of protection and legitimate restrictions.

Useful analysis on the link between freedom of expression and the Internet can be found in the UNESCO report on the [freedom of connection, freedom of expression: the changing legal and regulatory ecology shaping the Internet](#).

4. Operational Guidelines

This fourth section is about the content of the guidelines itself. It is divided into three parts in which you are invited to choose, first, what should be the EU priorities among the priorities listed, second, what can be the possible actions of the EU in several areas and third, to give some examples of potentially abusive restrictions on freedom of expression as well as media freedom and pluralisms which EU should tackle.

Either you decide to keep all priorities or to choose some that you believe are the most relevant. You will be invited to justify your choice.

Regarding the possible EU actions, you should select the ones that you believe are the most important, which might be all of them, and then provide information or ideas for every subject you have selected.

Eventually, in the third part, you can give information on various forms of restrictions on freedom of expression which the EU should tackle. The [Reporters without borders annual report](#) can help to answer this section.

Useful material can be found in [Article 19 website](#) to answer these three sub-parts. Article 19 is an EDRi member, fighting for freedom of expression in all platforms around the world.

5. Implementation and evaluation

In this final section you are asked to share your ideas on how the implementation and evaluation stages should be done.