

SC candidate 2022



**Candidate as member of the Steering Committee
Andrei Jvirblis, Journalists and Media Workers' Union (JMWU), Russia**

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I represent the independent Russian Journalists' and Media Workers' Union. Our organization is based in an exceptionally troubled and crisis-ridden region of Europe, which poses a clear threat to the fundamental values we all hold dear, especially freedom of speech and expression. I make such a broad statement because Russia's aggression against Ukraine, this terrible war we are witnessing today, will end sooner or later with a truce or peace, just as all wars do. But it is clear however that the problems that appeared long before February 24, 2022 are here to stay.

Russia has certainly become a leader in building a stunningly effective propaganda machine that skillfully mimics real journalism, while genuine independent press is eliminated and emasculated using force or by financial means. Although on a smaller scale, similar trends can be observed in several other countries, especially those with autocratic tendencies. This phenomenon, together with the massive spread of fakes and conspiracy theories propagated by social media, creates a situation of parallel informational reality, entirely disconnected from the actual reality, in which the majority of the Russian population and a significant proportion of citizens of some other countries now live.

This is why the professional community and the EFJ, which expresses its interests, must work hard to maintain public confidence in quality journalism that meets the standards we all know so well. Many of our colleagues are becoming more systematic in fact checking and exposing forgeries and propaganda. These efforts must be encouraged and supported in every way possible, because the poison of false information knows no boundaries. I also think it is

extremely important to support journalistic initiatives to counter SLAPP lawsuits. From my country's experience, I can say that not as much direct pressure by force, but more specifically the use of SLAPP lawsuits has often become a weapon of choice, an efficient pseudo-legal mechanism to destroy the independent press, either by intimidating it and forcing it to refrain from covering certain topics of public interest, or by causing a change of ownership and editorial policy. This is why maximum solidarity is needed to support initiatives such as the OCCRP's recently launched anti-SLAPP mutual insurance initiative, as well as in fighting for legislative changes.

But journalism doesn't only mean press outlets: it is our fellow journalists. And here I see a reassuring situation where dilapidated newsrooms are being revived, where our colleagues are continuing their work, especially in the field of opinion and investigative journalism, and where young journalists are entering the profession, which they see not just as a means of earning a living, but as an important social mission. This is encouraging, as we remember that in Chile, at the end of the 1980s, it was precisely the freedom of the press that was a key factor in that country's transition from autocracy to democracy.

In that regard, it is extremely important to increase confidence in quality journalism, for which we must by all possible means encourage educational initiatives for our young colleagues.

CV

Born in Moscow, Russia, in 1962, I studied philology. With a few interruptions, mainly for book publishing, I have been a journalist since 1989, mainly in radio, but also in the written press. Since few years I am a Russian correspondent of Reporters without Borders, as well a board member the Russian independent Journalists and member of Public Board of Press Complaints (presscouncil). For the past few years, I have been a Russian correspondent for Reporters Without Borders, as well as a member of the board of Journalists and Media Workers' Union and a member of the Public Council for Press Complaints (presscouncil).