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SCIJ (Ski Club International des Journalistes) was founded in 1955 to be a meeting place for journalists from East and West, to exchange experiences and ideas. In the light of "fake news", sensur and tabloid sensationalism, the club is still relevant, and more alive than ever.

In 1951, Frenchman Gilles de la Rocque attended a press conference with the foreign ministers of the four superpowers. When it was all over, all the journalists packed up their things, without in any way discussing what they had experienced, without in the main talking to each other. de la Rocque decided to do something about this, to bring together journalists from East and West, and chose the meeting place where he felt most at home, the Alpine hill.

Four years later, in 1955, SCIJ was a reality. The first meeting was held in Meribel, France, de la Rocque's homeland. 65 journalists from eight countries met in surroundings that inspired conversation, friendship and debate. The following year, the club had grown to 92 members, and in 2019, 130 journalists from 30 countries gathered, probably once in France, in Val d'Arly. Norway has also hosted the SCIJ, in 1980 in Oslo.

Opening ceremony in Bulgaria 2018 (Plovdiv was to be the city of culture in 2019). Photo: SCIJ
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Photo: SCIJ

Participants at SCIJ gatherings arrive with different backgrounds. Press freedom is high in Western Europe, much lower in Asia and Eastern Europe.

Turkish Barcin Yinanc writes for Hürriyet Daily News, and has been a member of SCIJ since 2011.

- Meeting colleagues who face the same challenges every day has a healing effect, she says.

Barcin and Tyrkia organised the SCIJ meeting in 2012, and she puts into words SCIJ's most important mission:

- Nothing can replace the importance of experiencing a country first-hand in order to understand another people and culture.

In 2020, the SCIJ will meet in Rosa Khutor, Russia. This will be the first time the club meets in Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1977 the meeting was held in Georgia, not without problems. The journalists from Israel were first refused entry. After strong pressure from the Soviet team, they were eventually accepted. One British journalist had forgotten his visa, and feared arrest as a spy for a long time.

Norwegian Tore Johannesen was president of the SCIJ from 1984 to 1990. Today, it is Canadian Frederick Wallace who has the legacy. "Genuine and trustworthy journalism has never been more important because the world has never before experienced the tension and misunderstandings it is experiencing today. Access to certified journalists from 30 countries

provides a unique approach to conversations and the exchange of ideas," says Wallace.
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