
Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5 April 2024
at the 1494th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe (ETS No. 1),

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the ideals and principles which are their common heritage, *inter alia* by promoting common policies and standards;

Recalling the commitment of member States to the right to freedom of expression and information, as guaranteed by Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5, "the Convention") and as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights ("the Court") in its case law;

Recalling also the equal importance of other rights guaranteed by the Convention, including the right to a fair trial (Article 6), the right to respect for private and family life (Article 8), the right to freedom of assembly and association (Article 11) and the right to an effective remedy (Article 13);

Recalling and reaffirming that member States, in addition to their negative obligation to refrain from interfering with the right to freedom of expression, also have a positive obligation to ensure a safe and favourable environment for participation in public debate by everyone, without fear, even when their opinions run counter to those defended by official authorities or significant parts of the public;

Reiterating that free elections and freedom of expression, particularly freedom of political debate, together form the bedrock of any democratic system and that there is accordingly little scope for restrictions on political expression or debate on questions of public interest;

Stressing that the public interest is to be understood broadly as it covers all issues that affect and concern the public, including controversial issues, and that the public has the right to be informed about matters of public interest, and journalists and the media have the task of imparting information and ideas about such matters;

Underscoring that the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives, including minority and other opinions outside the mainstream, is essential for ensuring pluralistic public debate and a well-informed and active citizenry;

Being aware that asymmetries in political, financial and other forms of power in society can give rise to inequalities in public debate and that the misuse and abuse of power and privilege by threatening or taking legal action to harass, intimidate or silence minority or critical voices have a chilling effect on public participation;

Being gravely concerned at the persistence throughout Council of Europe member States of a wide range of intimidation, threats, violence, killings and other crimes against individuals or organisations acting as public watchdogs, and at the chilling effect that those threats have on public participation, especially when they go unpunished;

Being alarmed at the chilling effect on freedom of expression, public debate and public participation caused by legal actions that are threatened, initiated or pursued as a means of harassing or intimidating their target, and which seek to prevent, inhibit, restrict or penalise free expression on matters of public interest and the exercise of rights associated with public participation, which are often referred to as strategic lawsuits against public participation (“SLAPPs”);

Being aware that SLAPPs are often civil law actions, but that they appear in the administrative and criminal law context as well, and that when such proceedings provide for administrative measures and criminal sanctions they can be particularly restrictive and more easily weaponised against public watchdogs, resulting in a more severe impact on the individual and a greater chilling effect;

Noting with concern that women and persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics, face specific dangers in their capacity as journalists, human rights defenders and other public watchdogs, including when targeted by SLAPPs, and noting the need to address the differentiated impact of the risks and challenges they encounter;

Seeking to consolidate and build on the legal and political responses already taken by the Council of Europe, in line with the case law of the Court and recommendations and declarations of the Committee of Ministers, such as Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)7 on the protection of whistleblowers, Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors, Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)4 on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age, and the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the Desirability of International Standards dealing with Forum Shopping in respect of Defamation, “Libel Tourism”, to ensure Freedom of Expression (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2012 at the 1147th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), and recognising at the same time the importance of achieving consistency and coherence among different instruments and initiatives at the European and international levels;

Recognising the urgency of devising comprehensive and effective strategies to counter SLAPPs that further strengthen existing legislative and policy frameworks and practices,

Recommends that the governments of the member States:

- i. implement, as a matter of urgency and through all branches of State authorities within their competence, the guidelines set out in the appendix to this recommendation, taking full account of the principles included therein, in particular regarding structural and procedural safeguards, remedies, transparency, support for targets and victims, education, training, awareness raising as well as capacity building;
- ii. pay specific attention to SLAPPs in the context of their reviews of relevant domestic laws, policies and practices, including in accordance with Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors, to ensure full conformity with member States’ obligations under the Convention;
- iii. promote the goals of this recommendation at the national level, as well as in relevant European and international forums, and engage and co-operate with all interested parties to achieve those goals;
- iv. regularly review the status of implementation of this recommendation with a view to enhancing its impact, in particular improving support mechanisms for targets and victims, and inform the Committee of Ministers about the measures taken by member States and other stakeholders, the progress achieved and any remaining shortcomings.

Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

I. Scope and definitions

1. For the purposes of this recommendation, strategic lawsuits against public participation (“SLAPPs”) are understood as legal actions that are threatened, initiated or pursued as a means of harassing or intimidating their target, and which seek to prevent, inhibit, restrict or penalise free expression on matters of public interest and the exercise of rights associated with public participation.

2. The central aim of this recommendation, protecting public participation against SLAPPs and prevent the further use of SLAPPs in Council of Europe member States, is to be realised as part of member States’ fulfilment of their broader obligations under the Convention to ensure a safe and favourable environment for participation in public debate, which is an essential feature of pluralistic democratic societies that fully respect the rule of law and human rights. The fulfilment of those obligations is guided by an awareness that a range of different kinds of threats have a chilling effect on participation in public debate and lead to self-censorship, thereby depriving societies of the pluralistic offer of information and ideas that individuals need in order to make informed decisions. While action against SLAPPs is needed, a careful balance should also be struck between the parties concerned so as not to hamper the right of access to a court.

3. SLAPPs can take many different forms and are subject to various provisions in national legislative frameworks. One of the challenges for member States in their efforts to prevent SLAPPs and counter their harmful effects is to be able to identify SLAPPs expeditiously and ensure that legislative and other safeguards are in place for all such lawsuits. This recommendation therefore clarifies key terms and provides guidance on the definitional criteria of SLAPPs in order to help member States identify SLAPPs and calibrate appropriate and effective legal safeguards, responses and other measures to counter their harmful effects. It also sets out various indicators.

Key terms

4. For the purposes of this recommendation and in line with the rights enshrined in the Convention, as interpreted by the Court in its case law, the following key terms are understood in a comprehensive and inclusive manner:

a. “Public participation” refers to everyone’s democratic right to participate in public debate and public affairs, online and offline, without fear or discrimination. This includes the right to express opinions and ideas that run counter to or are critical of those defended by the official authorities or by a significant part of public opinion, or which offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population, as clarified by the Court. The notion of “everyone” encompasses all public watchdogs and contributors to public debate and all participants in public affairs, including, but not limited to: journalists, media organisations, media professionals and other media actors, such as citizen journalists; civil society organisations, for example environmental and anti-corruption associations and activists; unions; whistle-blowers; academics; bloggers; human rights defenders; legal professionals; users of social media; cultural actors and creative industry actors.

“Public participation” also refers to the right to freedom of assembly and association and the right to vote and stand in elections. Public participation can thus include a wide variety of activities such as advocacy, journalism, investigating and reporting violations of the law or ethical norms, academic research, teaching, debate, writing to government officials or corporate customers, circulating petitions, being parties in litigation designed to advance social change or protect existing rights or the environment, engaging in peaceful protests or boycotts, engaging with regional or international mechanisms, or simply speaking out against misuse or abuse of power, human rights abuses, corruption, fraud or indeed commenting on any matter of public interest. The scope of the term also covers actions preparing, supporting or assisting public participation.

b. “Public interest” refers to all matters which affect the public and in which the public may legitimately take an interest, especially those matters concerning important social issues or affecting the well-being of individuals or the life of the community or the environment. The public has the right to receive information and ideas and thus to be informed about matters of public interest, and journalists and the media have the task of imparting such information and ideas. Public interest extends to issues which may give rise to considerable controversy, but it cannot be reduced to the public’s thirst for information about the private lives of others, or to an audience’s wish for sensationalism or voyeurism. Politics, current affairs, human rights, justice, social welfare, education, gender equality, sexual orientation and gender identity, sexual or gender-based harassment or violence, health matters, religion, culture, history, corruption, climate and environmental issues are thus all examples of topics of public interest, unlike individuals’ private relationships or family affairs. Topics may be of public interest at the local, national or international level.

Definitional criteria of SLAPPs

5. Targeting public participation – The legal action seeks to misuse or abuse the legal process to prevent, inhibit, restrict or penalise free expression on matters of public interest and the exercise of rights associated with public participation.

6. Covering all causes of legal action – Legal actions may entail the misuse or abuse of all types of statutory or common law to prevent, inhibit, restrict or penalise contributions to public debate, including, but not limited to, defamation, insult, invasion of privacy, conspiracy, breach of intellectual property rights, economic interference or infliction of emotional harm. While this will generally mean a civil lawsuit, in some jurisdictions it is possible to trigger misdemeanours, administrative measures or criminal charges against their critics, including through the use of injunctions. This definition also extends to “legal intimidation tactics” – interlocutory or interim measures, aggressive subpoenas or simple threats designed to intimidate the other party into backing down.

7. All stages of legal action – All stages of legal action are relevant, including an initial threat of legal action, which is in itself capable of having a chilling effect on public participation, as well as enforcement proceedings.

SLAPP indicators

8. SLAPPs manifest themselves in different ways and various indicators can be used to identify them. Such indicators include, but are not limited to, the following elements:

- a. the claimant tries to exploit an imbalance of power, such as their financial advantage or political or societal influence, to put pressure on the defendant;
- b. the arguments put forward by the claimant are partially or fully unfounded;
- c. the remedies requested by the claimant are disproportionate, excessive or unreasonable;
- d. the claims amount to abuse of laws or procedures;
- e. the claimant engages in procedural and litigation tactics designed to drive up costs for the defendant, such as delaying proceedings, selecting a forum that is unfavourable to public participation or vexatious to the defendant, provoking an onerous workload and pursuing appeals with little or no prospect of success;
- f. the legal action deliberately targets individuals rather than the organisations responsible for the challenged action;
- g. the legal action is accompanied by a public relations offensive designed to bully, discredit or intimidate actors participating in public debate or aimed at diverting attention from the substantial issue at stake;
- h. the claimant or their representatives engage in legal intimidation, harassment or threats, or have a history of doing so;
- i. the claimant or associated parties engage in multiple and co-ordinated or cross-border legal actions on the basis of the same set of facts or in relation to similar matters;
- j. the claimant systematically refuses to engage with non-judicial mechanisms to resolve the claim.

9. While SLAPPs do not necessarily include all these indicators, the more of them that are present or the more acute the behaviour, the more likely the legal action can be considered as a SLAPP.

Specific forms/types of SLAPPs

10. In addition to the general characteristics of SLAPPs, member States should take due account of the distinctive characteristics of specific types of SLAPPs and their legal consequences and take appropriate and effective measures to address the specific threats posed.

i. Cross-border SLAPPs

11. Compared to domestic SLAPPs pursued within one national legal system, cross-border SLAPPs, or SLAPPs pursued in different jurisdictions, involve additional layers of complexity, costs and stress. Successfully defending cross-border SLAPPs requires expert knowledge of multiple national legal systems. This typically involves engaging lawyers who are professionally active in or who have expertise of the relevant jurisdictions, thereby increasing the overall time and costs spent on preparing and defending the legal actions and exacerbating the chilling effect.

12. Member States should take appropriate and effective measures to limit forum shopping that is unfavourable to public participation or vexatious to the defendant, including as set out in the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the Desirability of International Standards dealing with Forum Shopping in respect of Defamation, "Libel Tourism", to Ensure Freedom of Expression.

13. Member States should also provide effective protection against third-country judgments, bearing in mind, as relevant, emerging European and international standards in this respect.

14. Member States are encouraged to introduce rules to ensure that, where SLAPPs have been brought before judicial or other authorities of a third country against a natural or legal person domiciled in a member State, that person may seek, before judicial or other authorities of the place where they are domiciled, compensation of the damages and the costs incurred in connection with the proceedings before the judicial or other authorities of the third country, irrespective of the domicile of the claimant in the proceedings in the third country.

ii. Multiple or co-ordinated SLAPPs

15. The pressure and harassment caused by the misuse or abuse of the law and legal process are compounded and aggravated, and the legal costs increased, when a defendant or a group of defendants is subjected to multiple or co-ordinated SLAPPs.

16. The judicial or other authorities of member States should, when assessing whether a legal claim constitutes a SLAPP, or when considering a SLAPP case, take due account of and take appropriate and effective measures to eliminate or at least reduce the aggravating impact of multiple or co-ordinated SLAPPs against defendants.

17. Member States should also introduce rules to prevent the claimant from initiating additional proceedings related to the same matter, as well as rules to enable judicial or other authorities to effectively manage co-ordinated proceedings that are closely related, in order to avoid the exposure of the defendant to multiple proceedings.

iii. SLAPPs targeting anonymous public participation

18. A distinctive feature of SLAPPs targeting anonymous public participation is that the claimant seeks to force the disclosure of the identity of the defendant whose participation has been done anonymously or under a pseudonym, often due to fears for their safety if they were to speak out under their real names. Once the public participant's identity has been revealed, they are more susceptible to threats, intimidation, abuse and attacks.

19. Member States should put in place appropriate and effective safeguards to protect the identity of anonymous public participants and confidential sources in order to limit the disclosure of their identity to the extent necessary for the proper administration of justice, in line with the Convention, including the principle of equality of arms, the Modernised Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (CETS No. 223), Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of whistleblowers and other relevant standards on privacy and data protection.

II. Safeguards, remedies and transparency

20. Member States should ensure that their national legal systems and their implementation provide a comprehensive legal framework and coherent set of structural and procedural safeguards to prevent and minimise the harmful effects of SLAPPs, as well as a full set of remedies and support measures for the harms caused by SLAPPs. They should also take necessary and appropriate measures to ensure a culture of transparency around legal claims that have been found to constitute SLAPPs.

A. Legal framework

21. Member States should put in place a comprehensive legislative framework that enables everyone to participate in public debate and public affairs effectively, in safety and without fear.

22. Member States should maintain or take, as appropriate, the necessary legislative or other measures to prevent legal actions that are threatened, initiated or pursued to prevent, inhibit, restrict or penalise the free expression of any legal or natural persons on matters of public interest and the exercise of rights associated with public participation. They should also exercise vigilance to ensure that legislation and sanctions and remedies are not applied in a discriminatory or arbitrary fashion against public participation.

23. The legislative framework should be kept under regular review to assess and ensure the compliance of the framework and its application with the Convention. The reviews should cover all existing and draft legislation and secondary legislation, as well as legal practice, that concerns the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and other participatory rights. Member States should, where relevant, take any legislative and other appropriate measures to safeguard those rights.

B. Procedural safeguards

Effective case management

24. Member States should empower the judicial and other competent authorities to manage actively and effectively the proceedings in order to enable effective termination of the case and to avoid any delaying tactics. To achieve effective case management, the judicial and other competent authorities should ensure that parties present their claims, defences, factual allegations and offers of evidence as early and completely as possible and as appropriate to the careful conduct of litigation in order to secure procedural expediency.

Early dismissal of claims against public participation

25. Member States should make adequate and appropriate provisions in their national legal frameworks in line with the European Convention on Human Rights and the principles of the case law of the Court to enable:

- a. courts, on their own initiative, to dismiss a claim as a SLAPP early in the proceedings; and,
- b. defendants to file applications for early dismissal of claims against public participation, in order to counter the harmful effects of SLAPPs on debate of public interest matters.

Such provisions should require claimants targeting public participation to establish a reasonable cause of action at the earliest possible stage in proceedings in order to advance to trial.

26. Judicial and other competent authorities should have the legal powers to make an assessment of the indicators in paragraph 8 (above) and fully or partly discontinue the claim.
27. The conditions for the admissibility of applications for early dismissal should be determined by national law and could, for instance, include judicial consideration of the following cumulative criteria:
- a. whether the claim is unlikely to succeed at trial; and
 - b. whether the proceeding amounts to abuse of process, in light of the SLAPP indicators set out in paragraph 8 (above).
28. Where time limits for the exercise of the right to file an application for early dismissal are established by law, they should be proportionate and not render it impossible or excessively difficult to exercise this right.
29. Applications for early dismissal of SLAPPs should include the right for both parties to be heard based on the adversarial principle and should be treated with due expediency by judicial and other competent authorities, taking into account the circumstances of the case, the right to an effective remedy and the right to a fair trial, and applying the SLAPP indicators set out in paragraph 8 (above).
30. Member States should equally enable administrative bodies to dismiss administrative claims against public participation early in the proceedings.
31. When the defendant files an application for dismissal of claims against public participation, bringing evidence that the claim arises from public participation on a matter of public interest and a number of the SLAPP indicators are present, and when the judicial and other competent authorities accept the application, it should be for the claimant to provide evidence against dismissal. This does not prevent member States from introducing rules of evidence that are more favourable to defendants.
32. The claimant should be given the same possibility to prove that the legal action is likely to succeed at trial or in an administrative procedure and does not aim to prevent, restrict or penalise the exercise of rights associated with public participation.
33. Member States should ensure that the decision on early dismissal is appealable.
34. Member States should ensure that an application for early dismissal or any appeal therefrom is treated in an accelerated procedure, taking into account the circumstances of the case, the right to an effective remedy and the right to a fair trial.

Stay of proceedings

35. When national law permits, member States should ensure that, if the defendant applies for early dismissal, the main proceedings are stayed until a final decision on that application is taken. Furthermore, the rules on stay of proceedings should not allow the claimant to amend the pleadings in the proceeding with the aim of avoiding a dismissal order. Any amendment of pleadings should be subject to the approval of the judicial or other competent authority. Amendment of pleadings should not be allowed once the application for early dismissal is filed by the defendant.
36. The refusal of a request for early dismissal of the proceedings should not have the effect of preventing the defendant from arguing again, before the judge deciding on the merits, that the proceedings against them constitute a SLAPP.

Security for procedural costs and damages

37. Member States should introduce rules, in line with national law and practice, to ensure that in court proceedings against public participation, judicial and other competent authorities have the power to require the claimant to provide security for procedural costs, or for procedural costs and damages, if it considers such security appropriate in view of the presence of SLAPP indicators, as set out in paragraph 8 (above).

Restitution of legal costs

38. Member States are encouraged to make appropriate provisions in their national legal systems to enable courts, upon determination that a legal claim constitutes a SLAPP, to order the claimants to bear all the costs of the proceedings, including the full costs of legal representation incurred by the defendant.

Death or loss of legal capacity of the defendant

39. Member States should ensure that where, upon the death or loss of legal capacity of the defendant, in a pending case against public participation, family members and associates of the original defendant who continue the court proceedings have access to the same remedies and support as the original defendant. Member States are encouraged to provide further protection, as necessary, as these new defendants may be less equipped to deal with the original claim.

C. Remedies

Legal and other procedural costs

40. Member States should make appropriate legislative or other provisions to ensure that costs for SLAPP claims are kept to an absolute minimum.

Acknowledgement of SLAPP victim status and compensation for damages

41. Member States should make adequate provision for SLAPP victims to be acknowledged as such and to be fully compensated for damages incurred as a result of the SLAPP, covering both pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages, such as loss of income and emotional distress as well as compensation for costs and expenses, for example to cover legal and administrative costs.

Capping of damages for the claimant

42. Member States should, within the possibilities of their national legal systems, provide for the capping of damages, in order to pre-empt abusive or disproportionate financial penalties for the defendants, which would have a chilling effect on their public participation, and to avoid creating financial incentives for filing legal action.

Capping of costs

43. Member States should, within the possibilities of their national legal systems, provide for the capping of costs, to ensure defendants are able to mount an effective defence and protect against court procedures being drawn out to exhaust the financial resources of defendants, which would have a chilling effect on their public participation.

Dissuasive measures

44. Member States should put in place a system of effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties to deter SLAPPs. This must be proportionate to the resources available to the claimant so as to provide an effective deterrent to potential future SLAPP claimants. Member States should consider providing for damages and fines for cases where the claimant has exhibited particularly egregious conduct, and where the time lost by, and psychological harm caused to, the defendant should be compensated. Member States should also consider, as further deterrence, the possibility of imposing aggravated penalties for claimants who recurrently file SLAPPs.

45. Member States should make appropriate legislative provisions to ensure that, in case of legal action deemed to be a SLAPP, judicial or other authorities may order, at the request of the defendant and at the expense of the claimant, appropriate measures for the dissemination of the information concerning the decision, including publishing it in full or in part and the names of the legal or natural persons who filed the SLAPP, in compliance with relevant European human rights and data-protection standards.

Facilitation of non-judicial remedies

46. Member States should ensure by appropriate means the conditions for effective access to non-judicial remedies, such as alternative dispute resolution, mediation and press councils, while fully respecting the independence of the same mechanisms, for the resolution of SLAPP cases.

D. Culture of transparency

47. Member States should take appropriate measures to ensure full transparency and publicity around cases which are found by national judicial and other authorities to constitute SLAPPs, including by providing the possibility for the publication of courts' findings.

48. Member States should enable the collection of data concerning SLAPP cases. To this end, they should provide for the establishment of a public register of cases that have been classified as SLAPPs. The registers should be kept up to date and made available to the public free of charge and without delay. With a view to guaranteeing full access to the data, member States should make the register accessible, ideally offline and online, in compliance with relevant European human rights and data-protection standards.

49. Member States should consider taking appropriate measures to ensure that judicial or other competent authorities provide information to bar associations about the outcome of SLAPP cases.

III. Support for targets and victims of SLAPPs

50. Member States are encouraged to organise, provide and ensure rapid access to a range of support and protective measures for targets and victims of SLAPPs. Procedures to ensure their physical protection from any potential harm should also be put in place. Member States should facilitate the provision of support by relevant actors to targets and victims of SLAPPs, such as those allocating adequate resources to provide such support. In order to be effective in practice, member States should consider organising support in consultation with victims and targets, including through their specific associations, adapt the support to their specific needs and situations and take fully into consideration their personal characteristics or status. This range of measures should also be made available for secondary or indirect victims of SLAPPs, such as family members, associates or lawyers of the targets and victims, who should be adequately protected against the harms caused by SLAPPs.

51. *Legal support* – Where necessary and according to national legislation, member States should consider providing adequate access to free legal assistance, including in the light of the indicators in paragraph 8 (above). Existing national mechanisms and instruments organising and providing legal support should also be made available. Member States should encourage and empower independent organisations specialising in legal support, associations of legal professionals, media and press councils, human rights defenders' organisations, journalists' unions and associations, academic institutions providing legal services and other non-governmental organisations to provide SLAPP targets with legal services. Member States should, in co-operation with relevant stakeholders, strive to ensure that natural and legal persons who are targets of SLAPPs are able to obtain access to insurance for legal support under fair conditions.

52. *Financial support* – Member States should consider providing financial support to SLAPP victims, in collaboration with national associations of journalists, trade unions and relevant civil society organisations, including by establishing national funds, grants and/or other targeted assistance, or supporting existing funds or projects aimed at financially assisting victims and targets of SLAPPs.

53. *Psychological support* – SLAPP targets and victims may have access to various types of confidential and professional psychological support such as direct advice, referral to relevant health authorities or financial help to independently and directly secure support. Member States should encourage public health authorities to give due consideration to, and dedicate resources for services to, SLAPP targets and victims.

54. *Practical support* – In cases where their physical safety is threatened, SLAPP targets and victims should have access to early warning mechanisms such as hotlines operated by civil society organisations or independent State agencies. In exceptional situations, member States should have in place effective and gender-specific mechanisms for voluntary evacuation to a safe place and police protection. Where feasible, existing national mechanisms and instruments that are available for other types of targets and victims should be made accessible to SLAPP targets as well.

55. *Private-sector support* – Member States should ensure that relevant private-sector actors comply with all applicable laws aimed at the protection of SLAPP targets and victims, and provide support as necessary. Such support should extend both to employees and to associates engaged in a freelance capacity.

56. *Informational support* – Member States should be encouraged to collect actively and on an ongoing basis, and disseminate free and easily accessible information about local and international organisations that provide various types of support to SLAPP targets and victims.

IV. Education, training and awareness raising

57. Member States should encourage relevant bodies to give prominence to this recommendation – and to educational materials dealing with the issues it addresses, including gender-specific issues – in educational and training programmes. Such programmes should include tailor-made training for the judiciary, legal professionals and relevant public authorities, taking into account the established case law of the Court, the existing procedural tools, the substantive standards and the core values and deontological rules of the profession.

58. Member States should encourage, while respecting the editorial freedom of journalists and the media, awareness-raising activities for the benefit of journalists, other media actors and other public watchdogs about the issues addressed in this recommendation. Such activities should stress the importance of acting in accordance with journalistic, legal or other professional ethics as the first shield against SLAPPs. Such activities should also facilitate access to resources and mechanisms, international, regional, national and local, for the protection of all actors when they are targeted by SLAPPs.

59. Member States should develop, or facilitate the development of, wider awareness-raising strategies and measures, such as campaigns aimed at the general public that focus on the democratic and societal value of public participation and the dangers of SLAPPs and their harmful effects.

V. National co-ordination and international co-operation

60. Member States should promote the goals of this recommendation at the national level, including in the national, regional and minority languages of the country, and engage and co-operate with all interested parties to achieve the widest possible dissemination of its content in a variety of publicity materials.

61. Member States should co-ordinate their implementation activities, including through existing or purpose-created national focal points, in a constructive and inclusive manner with competent national authorities and a wide range of actors, including targets and victims of SLAPPs.

62. To achieve the aims of this recommendation, and with a view to continue contributing to the development of relevant complementary standards and mechanisms against SLAPPs, member States should enhance the co-operation and exchange of information, expertise and best practices with other States and in relevant European and international forums.