## DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

DIRECTORATE FOR DEMOCRACY



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#### STEERING COMMITTEE ON MEDIA AND INFORMATION SOCIETY - CDMSI

27th meeting

18-20 June 2025

#### **Meeting report**

#### 1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), Maja Zarić (Serbia), welcomed the members, participants and observers to the 27<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting, held in Strasbourg on 18-20 June 2025. She invited Matjaz Gruden, Director for Democracy, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity, Council of Europe, to deliver introductory remarks.

The Director emphasised the significant progress made on two key documents developed by the Expert Committees under the authority of the CDMSI and encouraged the members' engagement for advancing the standard-setting instruments which are to be delivered by the end of the year 2025. He noted that both documents address highly relevant and timely issues that are the focus of considerable attention and expectations. Mr Gruden also commended the achievements of the 'Journalists Matter' Campaign on the Safety of Journalists, including the outcome of the international annual thematic conference, organised under the Luxembourg Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. He stressed that meeting the Campaign's expectations requires the implementation of significant measures to ensure its impact on journalists' safety.

He further noted how the work of the CDMSI is also at the heart of major Council of Europe initiatives, such as the *New Democratic Pact for Europe*, introduced by the <u>Secretary General Alain Berset in his 2025 Report</u>. He informed that the next phases are still being articulated yet these will require a transversal exercise involving the entire Organisation. In this framework, several areas of work of the CDMSI will prove crucial to the achievement of its objectives. He informed that part of a wider reflection through the New Democratic Pact for Europe is also a Convention on disinformation and foreign influence, which the Secretary General proposed for the sake of preserving information integrity and genuine democracy in Council of Europe member States.

Finally, he welcomed the CDMSI's members and Secretariat involvement in the <u>Democracy's Firewall Hackathon</u> Outsmart Disinformation, Protect Free Speech as well as the active participation of the Chair in the First Democratic Debate: Disinformation and Gender Equality session. The Director encouraged members to carry the key messages forward to keep the

#### 2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business

The CDMSI adopted the meeting agenda (Appendix 1). The list of participants and information on gender distribution appear in Appendix 2.

#### 3. Council of Europe 'Journalists matter' Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

Rodica Ciochina, Campaign manager, presented developments regarding the Council of Europe 'Journalists Matter' Campaign for the Safety of Journalists. Launched in October 2023, the Campaign counts 41 (out of 46) appointed National Focal Points, 27 national committees or dialogue forums to coordinate initiatives, 19 out of which created under the Campaign, and 11 countries implementing national action plans. 3 more countries informed about being in the process of drafting National Action plans as well. The Secretariat informed about significant progress reported during the Third Meeting of the National Focal Points (30 April 2025, Luxembourg), where participants exchanged around recent progress in member States, discussions on National Action Plans, indicators for journalists' safety and online safety challenges.

Other key activities in 2025 included the <u>Annual Thematic Conference</u>: <u>Building the paradigm against impunity of crimes against journalists - Freedom of Expression</u> (29 April 2025, Luxembourg) which focused on the Prosecution 'pillar' of the Committee of Ministers' <u>Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors</u> and tackled the issue of prosecution and sanctioning of crimes against journalists. The CDMSI was informed that the minutes of the Conference and of the third meeting of the national Focal points are available on the Campaign dedicated <u>webpage</u>.

Addressing next steps, CDMSI members were informed that the Campaign would continue with further activities around the "Prosecution pillar" of the Recommendation <u>CM/Rec(2016)4</u>, including a training of trainers on strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), to take place in the autumn. The Secretariat provided information also regarding next year's thematic annual conference and the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Focal Points, planned to take place in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, in spring 2026, under the member state's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. On this occasion, a mid-term report on the Campaign's progress will be presented.

The CDMSI members held a *tour de table* to share updates on actions inspired by the *Journalists Matter* Campaign and planned steps. Key highlights included: Monaco's establishment of an interministerial working group tasked with developing and implementing a national action plan in 2025; Bosnia and Herzegovina's ongoing work within the Campaign Committee and the development of a strategic document on journalists' safety; Latvia's focus on SLAPPs within its

broader work on journalists' safety, including a recent seminar addressing the role of society and the media in protecting journalists; Portugal's launch of its National Action Plan for the safety of journalists in March 2025; Austria's priorities of the new government, including the safety of journalists, and the efforts of Press Club Concordia, particularly with respect to legal and psychological support to journalists; Lithuania's commitment to update the National Action Plan once the current one ends (2023–2025); Greece's trainings and other activities through the International Training Center for the Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals (ICSJ); the United Kingdom's advancement on the implementation of its National Action Plan, updated in 2023, and new guidance issued on online safety; Slovenia's drafting process of a National Action Plan. Ukraine provided information in writing to raise awareness on the fact that journalists continue working under dangerous conditions, the National Coordination Committee is carrying on diverse activities to achieve the goals of the Campaign.

#### 4. Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists

Flutura Kusari, Representative of the Platform's <u>Partner Organisations</u>, presented the <u>Platform's Annual Report</u> "Europe Press Freedom Report: Confronting Political Pressure, Disinformation, and the Erosion of Media Independence". She noted that, according to the Report, in 2024 press freedom faced unprecedented threats globally, with the war in Ukraine remaining a central concern as journalists risked their lives amid ongoing Russian aggression. Similarly, media coverage of conflicts in Gaza and the broader Middle East was challenged by escalating violence and restrictions on press access. Across Europe and the United States, illiberal and populist parties gained influence, often undermining independent journalism through legal, financial, and rhetorical attacks. Despite some positive legislative developments — such as the adoption of the European Media Freedom Act and anti-SLAPP legislation — the Report notes that implementation remains inconsistent, leaving journalists vulnerable to both State's interference and transnational repression, including misuse of surveillance tools and international legal instruments like international arrest warrants.

Ms Kusari also stressed the growing problem of media capture and the challenges posed by the rise of artificial intelligence. Finally, she stressed the Report's recommendations to the Council of Europe member States and institutions, urging swift action to protect journalists, ensure editorial independence, and uphold media pluralism through legal, institutional, and technological safeguards. In her presentation, Ms Kusari expressed appreciation for the possibility to exchange with Focal points and to attend the annual thematic conference under the *Journalists Matter* Campaign, held in Luxembourg on 29-30 April 2025.

# Standard-setting (work progress). Expert committees of the CDMSI – <u>Committee</u> <u>of Experts online safety and empowerment of content creators and users (MSI-eSEC)</u>

Nicole Stellou (Greece), Chair of MSI-eSEC, informed the CDMSI of the main outcomes of the third meeting of the MSI-eSEC, held in Paris on 27–28 March 2025, underlining the progress made. Cesare Pitea, Secretary to the MSI-eSEC, outlined the timeframe for the consultations, as

well as the opportunity for member States to submit further comments on the draft text of the Recommendation, which is due to the CDMSI for approval by the end of 2025. He clarified that a draft Explanatory Memorandum will also be presented to the CDMSI ahead of its 28<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting. The CDMSI was informed that the fourth meeting of the MSI-eSEC will be held in Strasbourg on 21–22 October 2025.

Peter Noorlander and Martin Husovec, MSI-eSEC drafting co-rapporteurs, presented the key elements of the draft recommendation (doc. MSI-eSEC(2025)03rev.2). They emphasised that the draft instrument, while consistent with the Council of Europe's broader approach, introduces specific elements: it highlights that online safety and freedom of expression are mutually supportive; it calls for a new generation of regulatory and co-regulatory frameworks for online safety, user empowerment, and platform accountability; and it identifies specific measures to promote the empowerment of users and content creators through platform design, transparency, procedural rights, and collective user action.

Members commended the work done and expressed support for the draft produced by the Expert Committee. They welcomed the recognition that online safety supports and enhances freedom of expression. They also suggested that the complementarity of empowerment measures to other regulatory approaches focused on platform duties should be further emphasised. Additionally, members underlined the challenges in enforcing platforms' regulatory duties and called for strengthened provisions on international cooperation and enforcement powers of regulatory authorities. Specific comments and proposals were made concerning the responsibilities of content creators, the duty of platforms to facilitate compliance with domestic legal requirements, and the protection of minors.

The CDMSI agreed to submit the *draft Recommendation on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users* to public consultations during the summer, ahead of the last meeting of MSI-eSEC, expected to finalise the draft of the future recommendation.

## 6. Meeting of the Secretary General with Presidents of the Intergovernmental Committees of the Council of Europe

Irena Guidikova, Head of Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department, Directorate for Democracy, Council of Europe, and Maja Zarić, CDMSI Chair, provided information about the Meeting of the Secretary General with Presidents of the Intergovernmental Committees of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg on 24 April 2025. The meeting was also part of a consultation process on the New Democratic Pact for Europe launched by the Secretary General. Following the opening remarks by Alain Berset, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, discussions were held in working groups, focusing respectively on democratic participation, democratic governance and integrity and democratic resilience. The meeting ended with a plenary dedicated to the presentation of the working groups' conclusions and an exchange with the Secretary General.

Ms Guidikova underscored the opportunity for the Chairs of the Intergovernmental Committees to debrief together. She informed about the shared view amongst the Chairs that the New Democratic Pact represents a valuable occasion to explore innovative working methods, including

to raise awareness on Council of Europe standards, enhance efforts towards their effective implementation, and adopt a more pragmatic and inclusive approach. The CDMSI Chair further emphasised the importance of communicating the complexity of the work carried out within the Intergovernmental Committees to the public in a clear and accessible manner. In this context, she referred to the Hackathon as an outstanding example of how to engage a younger audience in a creative and impactful way.

#### 7. Standard setting (work progress). Further deliverables under CDMSI

#### <u>Ten steps to counter disinformation - Strategy and practical tools based on existing</u> Council of Europe standards and other instruments

The experts Konrad Bleyer-Simon and Urbano Reviglio, Research Associates at the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, <u>European University Institute</u>, presented the preliminary draft of this deliverable. They clarified the scope of the deliverable, the terminology used and presented each of the proposed step. These include: developing a structured national strategy; advancing research and monitoring of disinformation; enhancing media literacy and user empowerment; supporting quality journalism and media resilience; safeguarding election integrity; ensuring legal and policy measures to uphold freedom of expression; promoting international and cross-border cooperation; fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration; encouraging interoperable and diverse information infrastructures; and rebuilding trust in institutions and the media. The CDMSI was informed that the Secretariat was organising a consultation expert workshop to gather feedback on the best approach for further developing the document, to be held on 4 July 2025.

CDMSI members and other participants expressed appreciation for the work done by the experts and noted the high importance of this deliverable. They made suggestions for its development, in particular the need to further emphasise certain aspects, such as support for quality journalism and media independence, including financial one, as well as clarify the role of media and information literacy. Participants recommended including more examples of good practices that states could follow in combating disinformation. They also suggested that the language of the document could be more assertive.

#### Indicators for media and information literacy (MIL) strategies at national level

The Secretariat provided an update on the progress of the deliverable. In particular, it was noted that the questionnaires about Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the member States had been processed and will inform the development of the document. It was highlighted that a workshop to discuss the most appropriate ways to shape the structure, content, and methodology of this deliverable took place on 22–23 May 2025. The workshop brought together the Chair of the CDMSI, a CDMSI Bureau member, international experts from academia, civil society and government. The topics addressed included the core components of an effective national MIL strategy, actionable steps and guiding principles for MIL strategies, identification of relevant stakeholders and coordination/cooperation mechanisms, possible barriers to implementation, and other related issues. The overall conclusion of the workshop was that the final document should take a comprehensive approach to MIL, particularly covering questions related to new technologies, and go beyond the traditional notion of media education. Therefore, the Secretariat

will work with a qualified expert to finalise the document by early November 2025, with a view to its adoption by the CDMSI at its next Plenary on 3-5 December 2025.

CDMSI members were also informed that a conference on MIL, organised under the auspices of the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, is currently being planned and is expected to take place in March 2026 in Chisinau, Moldova. It was noted that the event would provide an excellent opportunity to launch the deliverable, following its adoption.

CDMSI members welcomed the broader scope of the document. They also mentioned that examples of good practices from member states could inform this forthcoming document, highlighting in particular the recent <a href="ERGA Handbook for ML">ERGA Handbook for ML</a> best practices in the <a href="EU">EU</a>. Finally, it was underlined that MIL is essential to combating disinformation and that the work on this deliverable should be coordinated with the deliverable on "10 Steps to Counter Disinformation."

As reminded by the Secretariat, final drafts of the two expected deliverables will be submitted to the CDMSI in due time for consideration and possible adoption at its 28<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting in December 2025.

#### 8. Mid-term review of the CDMSI Terms of reference for 2024-2027

Artemiza-Tatiana Chisca, CDSMI Secretary and Head of Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division, reported on the ongoing discussions about the mid-term review of the CDMSI's Terms of Reference for the 2024–2027. She clarified that, while the Terms of Reference cover a four-year period, the deliverables proposed for the second biennium (2026–2027) had only been adopted by the Committee of Ministers on a provisional basis, with the mid-term review serving as a structured opportunity to adapt priorities and outputs in response to evolving developments. A revised proposal of tasks and deliverables for the biennium 2026-2027 had been circulated to CDMSI members in March 2025 for consultation. The CDMSI was informed that the proposed revisions are currently under examination as part of the preparation of the Council of Europe's Programme and Budget for the next biennium. The adjustments made are intended to reflect shifts in the institutional and political context, particularly the priorities set out during the Reykjavík Summit and the Secretary General's initiative - Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe, while ensuring continuity in the CDMSI's core areas of work.

The CDMSI held an exchange, several delegations provided targeted input on CDMSI's current and future deliverables, including the proposal to discuss the opportunity of holding a Ministerial Conference on the areas of work of the CDMSI in the near future.

## 9. Exchange of views with the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) – Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Francisco Cabrera, from the <u>PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media</u> Secretariat, presented an overview of the Committee's work on media and information society issues. He started by presenting two recent resolutions: <u>Resolution 2567(2024) on propaganda and freedom of information in Europe</u>, and the <u>Resolution 2590 (2025) on regulating content moderation on social media to safeguard freedom of expression</u>. Both texts build upon existing

Council of Europe standards and draw inspiration from recent EU legislation, including the Digital Services Act and the European Media Freedom Act. He outlined ongoing work, including a report about Ukrainian journalists held in captivity by the Russian Federation, and an opinion on the Draft convention on the co-production of audiovisual works in the form of series, which are due to be adopted in October. Other issues the Committee is currently working on are media concentration and threats to media pluralism and independence, and media freedom in sports. Mr Cabrera also informed the CDMSI about potential future work on a resolution titled <u>Upholding our diverse culture, freedom of expression and information by effective enforcement of copyright (Doc. 16165, 05 May 2025)</u>, and a possible <u>European Convention on Freedom of the Media (Doc 16188, 04 June 2025)</u>.

The CDMSI held an exchange, some delegations expressed interest in the proposed Convention and emphasised that, should such an instrument be elaborated, it should also address the role of digital platforms and other relevant actors in today's media landscape.

#### 10. Recent country-specific developments in the field of freedom of expression

Members of the CDMSI shared -during the plenary meeting and/or subsequently, in written, information about the following country-specific developments of relevance, such as:

Greece reported on recent legislative developments concerning media registries, which have been in place for the past two years. These registries apply to both the electronic and traditional press and aim to enhance transparency and accountability in the media sector. During this period, 380 print publications and 550 websites have been certified. Registration is voluntary. However, unregistered media outlets are ineligible for state advertising or state aid. The initiative has been broadly welcomed by the domestic media market. A new draft bill aimed at updating and improving the registry framework was recently debated in parliamentary committees, with adoption expected before the summer recess.

#### Portugal

A National Plan on Media Literacy (PNLM), approved in March 2025 following a public consultation, sets a national direction and establishes priorities for action in this area. The PNLM is structured around four strategic objectives: i) promoting media literacy among all audiences; ii) combating disinformation and fake news; iii) encouraging responsible and informed consumption of content; iv) promoting informed and active citizenship.

In May 2025, the government also <u>launched a program</u> offering a digital subscription to news media to all young people aged 15 to 18 in order to promote media literacy and combat disinformation.

The obligation for the licensee to develop and implement an action plan to promote media literacy was included in the revised <u>public service media license agreement</u> signed in March 2025.

# 11. Standard-setting (work progress). Expert committees of the CDMSI: Committee of Experts on the Impacts of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Freedom of Expression (MSI-AI)

Andrin Eichin (Switzerland), Chair of MSI-AI, and Iva Nenadic, Murielle Popa-Fabre and Patricia Shaw, drafting co-rapporteurs, informed about the outcome of the third meeting of the Experts Committee, held in Paris on 25-26 March 2026, and provided an update on the progress of the draft Guidance Note, which the Expert Committee is tasked to deliver by the end of 2025.

They noted that the Guidance Note is conceived as a first essential step towards defining the issue at stake, examining its impact on freedom of expression and identifying the necessary measures to address it. They emphasised that the document provides a foundational framework to initiate policy and legal discussions in response to emerging challenges in generative AI. The methodology used in the analysis was clarified, being grounded in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The draft Guidance Note acknowledges the complex technological aspects of Generative Al models, categorised in three layers of the Technology Stack: foundational, tool and product - each having significant effects on freedom of expression. The structural implications of Generative AI on freedom of expression were examined, an analytical section of the document focusing mostly on known use cases and outlining benefits and risks stemming from both the design and the use, or misuse, of this technology. Six key thematic areas are identified: enhancing expression and content access; diversity and standardisation of expression; integrity of human expression and its attribution; agency and opinion formation; media and informational pluralism; and market dynamics. The MSI-AI acknowledges a pressing need for action to foster an environment where freedom of expression can thrive, even amidst the fastevolving development of technologies such as Generative AI. Therefore, the draft Guidance Note proposes a set of actionable guidelines. It identifies four interlocking action areas: to observe, to assess, to enable and to empower. Each of these is deigned to inform and advance the other action areas.

The CDMSI exchanged with the MSI-AI Chair and co-rapporteurs and addressed issues including copyright and traceability; the promotion and update of digital skills amongst information professionals; the adoption of voluntary code of conducts by the different actors involved in the value chain; the connection with other CDMSI themes such as disinformation, MIL and quality journalism; the issue of regulation; and the implications of using media outlets for data training of Generative AI systems. The CDMSI took note that the fourth meeting of the MSI-AI will take place in Strasbourg on 15-16 October 2025.

The CDMSI agreed to submit the *draft Guidance Note on the Implications of Generative AI for Freedom of Expression* to public consultations during the summer, ahead of the last meeting of MSI-eSEC, expected to finalize the draft of the future recommendation.

## 12. Exchange of views with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)

lain Cameron, Rapporteur of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (<u>Venice Commission</u>), presented the main findings of the "<u>Report on a rule of law and human rights</u>

compliant regulation of spyware", including on measures affecting journalists. Mr Cameron explained that the report, published in December 2024, examines the legal frameworks and practices of various States concerning the use of spyware, with particular emphasis on European countries. It was developed in response to a series of scandals involving the use of spyware often targeting journalists. He further clarified that the report identifies best practices across different jurisdictions and puts forward a series of recommendations aimed at ensuring that the deployment of spyware is consistent with human rights standards and the principles of the rule of law. It emphasises that spyware should only be used for clearly defined and legitimate purposes, and must be subject to strict oversight and accountability mechanisms. In particular, the report underscores that journalists and other media actors should be targeted only in highly exceptional and narrowly defined circumstances, and only where adequate procedural safeguards and independent oversight mechanisms are in place. Mr Cameron further explained that the report also addresses the technical dimensions of spyware. While it acknowledges that spyware can be lawfully employed in democratic States, for example to break encryption in the course of legitimate investigations, it highlights the significant risks of abuse — such as transforming a mobile device into a continuous surveillance tool. To address these risks, the report explores technical measures that can limit spyware's functionality to the collection of specific and necessary information only.

The members stressed the importance of a regulated use of spyware, within clearly defined and lawful circumstances, accompanied by essential legal safeguards such as judicial oversight. They also shared examples of good practices from their respective national systems. In particular, the United Kingdom and France highlighted their joint initiative to develop <u>The Pall Mall Process Code of Practice for States</u> — a voluntary and non-binding framework aimed at addressing the risks associated with the proliferation and irresponsible use of commercial cyber intrusion capabilities (CCICs). They called on other member States to join and support the initiative, which promotes accountability and responsible state conduct.

## 13. Exchange of views with the Secretariat of the <u>European Audiovisual Observatory</u> (EAO) and of the <u>European Platform of Regulatory Authorities</u> (EPRA)

Susanne Nikoltchev, Executive Director of the European Audiovisual Observatory, informed the Committee that <u>Ukraine joined the Observatory</u>, with the support of other members. Sophie Valais, Deputy Head of Department for Legal Information, provided an update on recent work of the Observatory, including the recent <u>report on the legal status of influencers</u> and the comparative study on the <u>definition of independent film and TV production</u>, the upcoming ones on <u>state aid to audiovisual sector</u> and <u>jurisdictional dynamics in the audiovisual services</u> and the redesigned <u>VERBO</u> and <u>OPUS</u> data bases. She also informed that ongoing and future work covers the status of artists, the independence of regulatory authorities, illegal content and disinformation, resilience to foreign information manipulation, and digital news sector.

Emmanuelle Machet, Head of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) Secretariat, informed the Committee of the 61st meeting hosted by the Moldovan Audiovisual Council in Chisinau (Republic of Moldova), in which EPRA celebrated its 30th anniversary. A new Executive Board, including a new Chair, was elected. The EPRA members discussed and shared

practices on the protection of minors online, including through age-verification systems, and the challenges of effective implementation and enforcement of such systems, while preserving children's agency and rights. They also discussed their practices in ensuring evidence-based action of regulators. Data collection remains a challenge, especially due to the information asymmetry between regulators and platforms, lack of enforcement powers to obtain information, as well as persistent jurisdictional issues. She underlined the fruitful cooperation with the CDMSI and CDMSI's future work on the role and functions of regulators in the platform-dominated environment.

Upcoming activities include the 62<sup>nd</sup> EPRA meeting in Yerevan (22-24 October 2025), focused on media pluralism and strategic priority-setting, alongside continued work of the EMIL Task Force and the relaunch of the AI Task Force in the autumn of 2025.

CDMSI members thanked and congratulated Susanne Nikoltchev for the work done over the years as Director of the Observatory. Further exchanges took place on perspectives on strengthening cooperation between regulators beyond the European Union.

**14.** Criminal Law and Freedom of Expression: Council of Europe Guide on Limiting the Use of Criminal Law to Restrict Freedom of Expression – Draft expert study

The Secretariat presented the draft study, which was originally prepared by a consultant under the project Enhancing Institutional Capacities on Freedom of Expression and Information (EFEx) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although commissioned within the context of this project, the study it is not country-specific; rather, it is intended as a policy-oriented resource for a broad audience, including policymakers, parliamentarians, civil society actors, and non-governmental organizations in Council of Europe member states and beyond. The study was developed in response to legislative proposals in several member states seeking to introduce or maintain criminal sanctions for expression protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. These developments underscored the need to clarify and inform public debate concerning the appropriate use of criminal law in this domain and to reaffirm the Council of Europe's established standards. The study therefore systematises existing Council of Europe standards, including Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 and relevant opinions of the Venice Commission. It presents this material in a practical and accessible format designed to support informed policymaking.

The CDMSI took note of the study and agreed to its dissemination once published, appreciating its potential use as a reference resource for national legislative and policy discussions.

15. Hate Speech and Media Seminar: "Old habit, new fronts: tackling hate speech against journalists and other media actors" – thematic session with the participants to the "No Hate Speech Week"

The CDMSI participated in the seminar on Hate Speech and Media, organised at the occasion of the No Hate Speech Week 2025 and in the framework of the Campaign for the Safety of Journalists of the Council of Europe. The seminar was held in the format of a joint session with

the participants in the No Hate Speech Week. It followed a first edition held in 2024 and focused on hate speech against the media, addressing *inter alia* online harassment, gender-based violence, and targeted disinformation campaigns. The aim was to contribute to the advancement of coordinated responses at both the national and European levels, in line with relevant sections of Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors and Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech.

The event saw the participation of experts and practitioners in the field, including an intervention by Maja Zarić, Chair of the CDMSI.

The CDMSI engaged in a Q&A session and addressed the issue of hate speech against journalists from diverse angles, including the perspective of existing case-law – or the current lack of – on the issue; the journalists' status with respect to hate speech-specific protection measures; and challenges in identifying effective measures and remedies tailored to journalists' risk profiles.

#### 16. Council of Europe Cooperation activities on freedom of expression

Alina Tatarenko, Head of <u>Division for Cooperation on Freedom of Expression</u>, presented <u>recent activities and cooperation projects</u> of the Council of Europe in the field of freedom of expression and media freedom; these include actions related to the protection of journalists and the role of police in this field in Albania, as well as safeguards of media freedom during wartime in Ukraine. Ms Tatarenko highlighted the importance of maintaining a close link between standard-setting and cooperation activities.

She informed that three standardised training programmes to counter SLAPP, targeting judges, prosecutors, and journalists in the Balkans and Eastern Europe will soon be available online, enabling future trainers to deliver themselves those courses. Existing trainings cover access to information, as well as the denial of access to information related to judicial cases. Future topics include quality and green journalism, journalistic ethics, and the use of Artificial Intelligence in journalism. The Division is also providing legal and policy advice to various Member States on media legislation compliance, including a pending legal opinion for Poland on anti-SLAPP legislation.

Further support activities include: a media literacy barometer in the Republic of Moldova assessing disinformation resilience, supporting journalist safety action plans in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; support for a documentary on journalist safety in Eastern Europe with the Moldovan Public Broadcaster, for the first <a href="environmental journalism">environmental journalism</a> training which will be held in Azerbaijan, support to civil society and media financial sustainability in Georgia, as well as the launch of the RESIST project (Norway Grants), focusing on societal resilience to disinformation in several EU member States.

#### 17. Cooperation with the European Commission

Audrius Perkauskas, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Connect, Audiovisual and Media Services Policy, presented the latest developments related to the <u>Audiovisual Media Services Directive</u> (AVSMSD) and the <u>European Media Freedom Act</u> (EMFA), and the <u>2025 Rule of Law Report</u>. As to the first, he informed the CDMSI of the ongoing process for the evaluation and the potential review of the directive, to be completed by the end of 2026. As to the EMFA, he provided updates on the ongoing work in preparation of the coming into effect of most of its provisions on 8 August 2025: the Commission is actively working with EU Member States to promote alignment of their legal frameworks with the requirements of the Act and is preparing guidelines for its implementation, in particular in relation to article 18 on the protection of media content on very large online platforms, on which <u>public consultations</u> will be launched. The <u>European Board for Media Services</u>, established by the EMFA as a successor of the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA), has started to function and is actively working on inputs to the Commission's work.

Upon requests by CDMSI members, Perkauskas clarified that the review process of the AVMSD does not focus on specific areas but is comprehensive and will look at the instrument, while specific areas of interest may emerge during the process. He also explained how the initial reporting on State advertising under Article 25 of EMFA will take place and that some flexibility in this respect can be expected. The issue of regulation of political advertising was raised and it was proposed to have a dedicated session at the next CDMSI Plenary, including a presentation of progress on the EU Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising from the relevant services of the European Commission.

#### 18. Standard setting (work progress)

## <u>Feasibility study on immersive reality applications and their implications for freedom of expression</u>

The CDMSI took note of the progress on the Draft Feasibility Study on the Freedom of expression in Virtual realities (XR), which has been revised by the author Brittan Heller, International Law, Technology, Human Rights expert and external consultant, after the input received from legal, technical, and human rights experts.

The study builds on the previous Council of Europe and IEEE's report on The Metaverse and its Impact on Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Democracy, but now focuses specifically on the challenges posed to freedom of expression by extended reality (XR) technologies — such as virtual, augmented, and mixed reality. It evaluates the relevance of existing Council of Europe legal instruments, notably Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and points, *inter alia*, to the potential need to reinterpret protections to cover embodied and spatial expression in immersive environments. The study also highlights issues related to biometric data privacy, behavioural content moderation, and algorithmic influence that may affect user

autonomy. Feedback has been collected from representatives of the secretariat of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), of the civil society, academia, and Meta.

The study makes two main recommendations: first, to consider specific guidelines on the application of Article 10 to XR technologies; and second, to create a rights-based governance framework tailored to immersive environments.

The CDMSI was invited to submit feedback on the draft. These will inform next steps, including discussions in an expert workshop on the topic, to be held in October 2025. The finalised draft study will be sent for consideration by CDMSI members at the beginning of November in view of its possible adoption at the next CDMSI Plenary.

#### 19. Participation in past and future events of relevance for the CDMSI

Upon agreement of the CDMSI, the Secretariat provided in writing information about a selection of recent engagements in relevant events. These include:

- Internet Governance Forum (<u>IGF</u>), <u>Open Forum #58</u> Safety of Journalists online, Riyadh, 15-19 December 2024;
- European Commission Expert Group on Media Literacy Education, Brussels, 20 February 2025:
- RightsCon, online Council of Europe roundtable "Scarier than eco-anxiety: how the law is abused to silence information on the environment", 24-27 February 2025;
- <u>UK Media Freedom Forum</u>, London, 4-5 March 2025;
- Advancing Civic Space and Media Freedom through anti-SLAPPs Legislation | OGP Europe Dialogues series, online, 18 March 2025;
- Global Multistakeholder High Level Conference on Governance of Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds, Co-organised by the European Commission and the 2025 Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 31 March-1 April 2025;
- Conference "Strengthening the Reliability of News and Journalism: Council of Europe Actions Against Disinformation" of the Swiss Presidency of the Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists, Strasbourg, 31 March 2025;
- DG Just anti-SLAPP Meeting on the transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive with stakeholders, online, 8 April 2025;
- World Press Freedom Day: side event on 'SLAPPs as an increasing threat to public interest journalism in Europe: initiatives, challenges and opportunities from across the region'; sideevent on Press Freedom and the Global Fight Against Disinformation organised by the Flemish Parliament, Brussels, 5-7 May 2025;
- European Dialogue on Internet Governance (<u>EuroDIG</u>), workshop on '<u>Generative AI and Freedom of Expression: mutual reinforcement or forced exclusion</u>', Strasbourg, 11-13 May 2025:
- DG Just 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop on the Transposition of the Anti-Slapp Directive, online, 14 May 2025;
- 61st Meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA), Chisinau, 14-16 May 2025:

- Roundtable on "Information Integrity and Disinformation in the EEA and Norway Grants", Brussels, 15 May 2025;
- Panel "Protecting Media Freedom and Combatting Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)", side event to the <u>European Youth Event</u>, EU Delegation in Strasbourg, 12 June 2025;
- Upcoming: Internet Governance Forum (<u>IGF</u>), <u>Open Forum #16</u> "Al and Disinformation: Countering the Threats to Democratic Dialogue", Lillestrøm, 23-27 June 2025.

#### 20. Date and place of the next meeting

The CDMSI agreed to hold its next plenary meeting on 3-5 December 2025, in the premises of the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg.

The CDMSI adopted by written procedure the present meeting report.

21. Council of Europe Hackathon – <u>Democracy's Firewall, Outsmart Disinformation,</u>
Protect Free Speech

CDMSI members participated in the morning session of the Hackathon on 20 June.

#### Appendix 1

#### 27th Meeting

18-20 June 2025

18 June 2024, (9:30–12:30; 14:00–17:30), Room G2, Agora
19 June 2024 (9:30-12:30), Room G2, Agora
19 June 2024 (14:00-17:30), Room 1, Palais de l'Europe
20 June 2024, (9:30-12:30), Hackathon, Hemicycle, the Palais de l'Europe
Hybrid

#### DRAFT AGENDA

#### 18 June - Morning session 09:30 - 12:30

#### 1. Opening of the meeting

Matjaz Gruden, Director, Directorate for Democracy, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity, Council of Europe

- 2. Adoption of the agenda and order of business
- 3. Council of Europe 'Journalists matter' Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

Progress report on most recent developments and forthcoming work, including outcome of:

- Annual thematic conference: Effective Prosecution of crimes against journalists Building the paradigm against impunity - (29 April 2025, Luxembourg)
- Third meeting of the National Focal Points (30 April 2025, Luxembourg)

Steps taken by member states - Information by CDMSI members (Tour de table)

Future steps under the Campaign – further initiatives under the 'prosecution pillar'; preparations of the Campaign's mid-term review

For Information and discussion

4. Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists

Presentation of the Platform's Annual Report "<u>Europe Press Freedom Report</u>: Confronting Political Pressure, Disinformation, and the Erosion of Media Independence"

Exchange of views with Flutura Kusari, representative of the Platform's Partner Organisations

10:40 - 11:10 Coffee break

- 5. Standard-setting (work progress). Expert committees of the CDMSI <u>Committee of Experts online safety and empowerment of content creators and users (MSI-eSEC)</u>
- o <u>Draft recommendation on online safety and empowerment of users and content creators</u>

Presentation by Nicole Stellou, Chair of MSI-eSEC, Martin Husovec and Peter Noorlander, drafting rapporteurs of the recommendation

For information, discussion and decision on public consultation

6. Third Meeting of the Secretary General with Presidents of the Intergovernmental Committees of the Council of Europe

Presentation by Maja Zaric, CDMSI Chair, and Irena Guidikova, Head of the Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department, Directorate for Democracy, Council of Europe

For information and discussion

Lunch Break 12:30-14:00

#### Afternoon session 14:00 - 17:30

- 7. Standard setting (work progress). Further deliverables under CDMSI.
- Disinformation

Ten steps to counter disinformation - Strategy and practical tools based on existing Council of Europe standards and other instruments.

Presentation by Konrad Bleyer-Simon and Urbano Reviglio, Research Associates at the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, <u>European University Institute</u>, and by the Secretariat.

Media and Information Literacy (MIL)

Presentation by the Secretariat. For information and discussion

8. Mid-term review of the CDMSI Terms of reference for 2024-2027

o CDMSI Terms of Reference for the second biennium (2026-2027)

Information provided by the Secretariat and discussion.

#### 15:50 - 16:20 Coffee Break

9. Exchange of views with the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) - Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Information provided by Francisco Cabrera, PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Report on public regulation of content moderation on social media

For information and discussion

10. Recent country-specific developments in the field of freedom of expression

Presentation by CDMSI members and other participants

For information and discussion

#### 19 JUNE - Morning session 09:30 - 12:30

- 11. Standard-setting (work progress). Expert committees of the CDMSI: Committee of Experts on the Impacts of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Freedom of Expression (MSI-AI)
  - o Draft Guidance Note on the implications of Generative AI for Freedom of Expression

Presentation by Andrin Eichin, Chair of MSI-AI, and by Iva Nenadic, Murielle Popa-Fabre and Patricia Shaw, drafting co-rapporteurs

For information, discussion and decision on public consultation

12. Exchange of views with the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission)

Presentation by Iain Cameron, Rapporteur "Report on a rule of law and human rights compliant regulation of spyware"

10:50 - 11:20 Coffee break

13. Exchange of views with the Secretariat of the <u>European Audiovisual Observatory</u> and of the <u>European Platform of Regulatory Authorities</u> (EPRA)

Information provided by Susanne Nikoltchev, Executive Director, and Maja Cappello, Head of Legal Information Department, European Audiovisual Observatory

Information provided by Emmanuelle Machet, Head of the EPRA Secretariat

For information and discussion

**14.** Criminal Law and Freedom of Expression: Council of Europe Guide on Limiting the Use of Criminal Law to Restrict Freedom of Expression – Draft expert study

Presentation by the Secretariat

To be taken note by the CDMSI

Lunch Break 12:30-14:00

#### Afternoon session 14:00 - 17:30

15. Hate Speech and Media Seminar "Old habit, new fronts: tackling hate speech against journalists and other media actors" - thematic session with the participants to the "No Hate Speech Week"

Theme for 2025: "Enhancing legal and non-legal measures against hate speech through a multi-stakeholder approach"

15:30 - 16:00 Coffee Break

16. Council of Europe Cooperation activities on freedom of expression

Presentation by Alina Tatarenko, Head of Division for Cooperation on Freedom of Expression

For information and discussion

17. Cooperation with the European Commission

Latest developments related to the <u>Audiovisual Media Services Directive</u> and the <u>European Media</u> Freedom Act

Presentation by Audrius Perkauskas, Deputy Head of Unit, DG Connect, Audiovisual and Media Services Policy

For information and discussion

18. Standard setting (work progress)

 Feasibility study on immersive reality applications and their implications for freedom of expression

Presentation by Brittan Heller, International Law, Technology, and Human Rights expert

For information and discussion

#### 19. Participation in events of relevance for the CDMSI

Information by the Secretariat and CDMSI Plenary members

#### 20. Date and place of next meeting

#### 20 JUNE - Morning session 09:30 - 12:30

21. Council of Europe Hackathon – <u>Democracy's Firewall, Outsmart Disinformation, Protect Free Speech</u>

CDMSI members are invited to participate in the morning session of the Hackathon on 20 June.

#### **GENERAL REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

Terms of reference	CDMSI terms of reference 2024-2027
CM/Res(2021)3	Resolution CM/Res(2021)3 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods
MSI-AI(2025)11	Report from MSI-AI 3 <sup>rd</sup> Meeting

#### Appendix 2

### Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) /

Comité directeur sur les médias et la société de l'information (CDMSI)

27th meeting - 18-20 June 2025 / 27e réunion – 18-20 juin 2025

#### List of participants / Liste de participant.e.s

Total number of participants: 86 / Nombre total des participants : 86

Gender distribution: 36 men (42 %) / 50 women (58 %) / Parité entre hommes : 36 hommes (42 %) / 50

femmes (58 %)

#### **MEMBERS/**MEMBRES

ARMENIA/ARMENIE	Nerses ZEYNALYAN Adviser to the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia/ Conseiller du ministre de la Justice de la République d'Arménie
AUSTRIA/AUTRICHE	Matthias TRAIMER Head of Department Media Affairs, Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport / Chef du département des affaires médiatiques, ministère fédéral du Logement, des Arts, de la Culture, des Médias et des Sports
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA/BOSNIE- HERZEGOVINE	Emir POVLAKIC Head of Audiovisual and Media Services, Communications Regulatory Agency / Chef des services audiovisuels et médias, Agence de régulation des communications
CROATIA/CROATIE	Nives ZVONARIĆ Head of Media Sector, Ministry of Culture and Media / Cheffe du secteur des médias, ministère de la Culture et des Médias
CYPRUS/CHYPRE	Maria STRATI Press and Information Officer, Press and Information Office (PIO), Ministry of Interior / Attaché de presse et d'information, Bureau de presse et d'information (PIO), ministère de l'Intérieur
CZECHIA/TCHÉQUIE	Artus REJENT Director, Media and Audio-Visual Department, Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic / Directeur, Département des médias et de l'audiovisuel, ministère de la Culture de la République Tchèque
FRANCE	Noemi DANOS Ministry of Culture / ministère de la Culture  Mathieu PRADIER

	Directorate for Cultural Diplomacy, Sub-Directorate for Culture and Media - Media and Cinema Division, Copyright, Audiovisual Regulation / Direction de la diplomatie culturelle Sous-direction de la culture et des médias - Pôle médias et cinéma Droit d'auteur, régulation audiovisuelle
GEORGIA/GEORGIE	Ivane MAKHARADZE Commissioner, Communications Commission of Georgia / Commissaire, Commission des communications de Géorgie
GERMANY/ALLEMAGNE	David NEJJAR Policy Officer, Federal Goverment Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Berlin / Chargé de mission, Commissaire du gouvernement fédéral à la culture et aux médias, Berlin
	Stephan PACHE Policy Officer, Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the European Union / Chargé de mission, Représentation de l'État libre de Bavière auprès de l'Union européenne
GREECE/GRECE	Aikaterini POLYZOU Head of Department for Audiovisual Media & Internet, Secretariat General for Communication & Media / Chef du département Médias audiovisuels et Internet, Direction des médias, Secrétariat général pour la communication et les média
HUNGARY/HONGRIE	György OCSKÓ International Legal Advisor, National Media and Infocommunications Authority / Conseiller juridique international, Autorité nationale des médias et des info-communications
IRELAND/IRLANDE	Kevin BYRNE Assistant Principal Officer, EU Presidency and Media Regulation Unit, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Broadcasting & Media Division / Adjoint au chef de l'unité « Présidence de l'UE et réglementation des médias », ministère du Tourisme, de la Culture, des Arts, du Gaeltacht, des Sports et des Médias, division de la radiodiffusion et des médias
ITALY/ITALIE	Claudia SARTORI Director General, Agency for the right to university education, Professor of Information and Communication, University of Rome / Directeur general, Agence pour le droit à l'éducation universitaire, Professeur d'information et de communication, Université de Rome
LATVIA/LETTONIE	Andris MELLAKAULS Head of Information Space Integration Division, Ministry of Culture / Chef de la Division de l'intégration de l'espace d'information, ministère de la Culture
	Gunta LIDAKA Head of the Media Policy Unit, Ministry of Culture / Cheffe de l'unité chargée de la politique des médias, ministère de la Culture

LITHUANIA/LITUANIE	Agné MIKSTIENE Chief Specialist, Media and Copyright Policy Unit, Ministry of Culture/ Spécialiste en chef, Unité de la politique des médias et des droits d'auteur, ministère de la Culture
LUXEMBOURG	Céline FLAMMANG Senior policy advisor, Department of Media, Connectivity and Digital Policy, Ministry of State / Conseillère principale, service des Médias, de la Connectivité et de la Politique numérique, ministère d'État
	Christophe LANGENBRINK Department of Media, Connectivity and Digital Policy, Ministry of State / service des Médias, de la Connectivité et de la Politique numérique, ministère d'État
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA/ REPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA	Aneta GONTA Vice-president of the Republic of Moldova Audiovisual Council / Vice- Présidente du Conseil de l'audiovisuel de la République de Moldova
MONACO	Serge ROBILLARD Head of Partnerships and Institutional Relations, Interministerial Delegation in charge of Digital Transition / Chargé des partenariats et des relations institutionnelles, Délégation Interministérielle chargée de la Transition Numérique
NETHERLANDS/PAYS-BAS	Inge WELBERGEN (Vice-Chair/ Vice-présidente) Legal officer Media, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Directorate-General of Culture and Media, Media and Creative Industries / Conseiller juridique Médias, ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et des Sciences, Direction générale de la Culture et des Médias, Médias et Industries créatives
POLAND/POLOGNE	Magda JAGIELLOWICZ Chief Specialist, Media Law Unit, Department of Media and Creative Sectors, Ministry of Culture and Hational Heritage (KRRIT) / Spécialiste en chef, Unité du droit des médias, Département de médias et des secteurs créatifs, ministère de la culture et du Patrimoine national
PORTUGAL	Charlotte SIMÕES Policy Officer, International Relations and Communication Department, General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers / Chargée de mission, Service des relations internationales et de la communication, Secrétariat général de la Présidence du Conseil des ministres
SAN MARINO	Simona PEDRELLA MORONI Press officer, Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of San Marino / Attaché de presse, ministère des Affaires étrangères de la République de Saint-Marin
SERBIA/SERBIE	Maja ZARIC (Chair/Présidente) Head of Division for International Cooperation in the Field of Media, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications/ Chef de la division

	de la coopération internationale dans le domaine des médias,
	ministère de l'Information et des Télécommunications
	Maja MILENKOVIC Head of normative Unit at Media Department, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications / Chef de l'unité normative au département des médias, ministère de l'Information et des Télécommunications
SLOVENIA/SLOVENIE	Skender ADEM Undersecretary, Ministry of Culture of Republic of Slovenia / Soussecrétaire, ministère de la Culture de la République de Slovénie
TÜRKIYE	Yusuf DEMİRTAŞ Head of Department (Acting)- International Relations Department, Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK), / Chef de département (par intérim) - Département des relations internationals, Conseil suprême de la radio et de la télévision (RTUK)
	Gülşah EKMEKÇİ Expert - Department of Press and Publications, Presidency of The Republic of Türkiye, Directorate of Communications / Experte – Service de la presse et des publications, Présidence de la République de Türkiye, Direction de la communication
UKRAINE	Olha HERASYMIUK Chair, National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine / Présidente, Conseil national de la télévision et de la radiodiffusion d'Ukraine
UNITED KINGDOM/ROYAUME-UNI	Marney CRAINEY Head of Multilateral Strategy, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology / Cheffe de la stratégie multilatérale, Service de la science, de l'innovation et de la technologie
	Isabella YERASSIMOU UN Policy Advisor, International Strategy and Economic Security Directorate / Conseillère politique des Nations Unies, Direction de la stratégie internationale et de la sécurité économique
	Gillian MURTAGH Senior Policy Adviser, International Media, Media and International / Conseiller principal en matière de politique internationale, Médias internationaux

### **OBSERVERS STATES / ÉTATS OBSERVATEURS**

HOLY SEE/SAINT SIEGE	Michael LUKAS Spokesman of the Order of Malta in the Diocese of Hildesheim / Porte-
	parole de l'Ordre de Malte dans le diocèse de Hildesheim

MOROCCO/MAROC	El Mahdi AROUSSI IDRISSI Director of the Legal Studies Department, focal point, High Authority for Audio-visual Communication (HACA) / Directeur du Département des études juridiques, point focal, Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (HACA)
	Chanaz EL AKRICHI Head of Division for Cooperation Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Department of Communication / Cheffe de division de la Coopération, ministère de la Culture, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, Département de la Communication

#### **OBSERVERS TO THE CDMSI / OBSERVATEURS AUPRES DU CDMSI**

ASSOCIATION OF COMMERCIAL TELEVISION AND VIDEO ON DEMAND SERVICES IN EUROPE (ACTE)/ ASSOCIATION DES SERVICES DE TÉLÉVISION COMMERCIALE ET DE VIDÉO À LA DEMANDE EN EUROPE (ACTE)	Erard GILLES Head of media and data taskforce / Chef de la taskforce médias et données
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR VIEWERS INTERESTS (EAVI) / ASSOCIATION EUROPEENNE POUR LES INTERETS DES TELESPECTATEURS	Paolo CELOT Founding Member and Secretary General/ Membre fondateur et secrétaire général  Semih SOLMAZ Projects and Development Manager/ Responsable des projets et du développement
EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION (EBU) / UNION EUROPEENNE DE RADIO- TELEVISION	Sophia WISTEHUBE Legal Counsel / Conseiller juridique
NEWS MEDIA COALITION (NMC)/ COALITION DES MEDIAS D'INFORMATION	Andrew MOGER Chief Executive of the News Media Coalition and former publishing managing editor/ Directeur general  Maia SAROYA WATSON Assistant / Assistante

#### **OTHER PARTICIPANTS** / AUTRES PARTICIPANTS

ASSOCIATION OF SERBIA AND SAFEJOURNALISTS NETWORK/ ASSOCIATION DES JOURNALISTES INDEPENDANTS DE SERBIE ET RESEAU SAFEJOURNALISTS	Marija BABIC Legal advisor and researcher, Independent Journalists' /Conseillère juridique et chercheuse
ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN JOURNALISTS (AEJ)I ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES JOURNALISTES	William HORSLEY
ASSOCIATION OF LGBT JOURNALISTS (AJL)/ ASSOCIATION DES JOURNALISTES LGBT (AJL)	Camille REGACHE French independent journalist, member of the/Journaliste indépendante française
CARDIFF UNIVERSITY/UNIVERSITÉ DE CARDIFF	Sejal PARMAR Senior Lecturer, School of Law and Politics, Cardiff University/ Maître de conférences, École de droit et de sciences politiques, Université de Cardiff
CENTRE FOR MEDIA PLURALISM AND MEDIA FREEDOM / CENTRE POUR LE PLURALISME ET LA LIBERTÉ DES MÉDIAS	Konrad BLEYER-SIMON Research Associate/ Chercheur associés  Urbano REVIGLIO Research Associate/ Chercheur associés
EUROPEAN COMMISSION/ COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE	Audrius PERKAUSKAS Deputy of Unit, DG Connect, Audiovisual and Media Policy/ Adjoint de l'unité, DG Connect, Politique audiovisuelle et des médias
INTERNET RIGHTS AND PRINCIPLES COALITION (IRPC) STEERING COMMITTEE / COMITÉ DE PILOTAGE DE LA COALITION POUR LES DROITS ET PRINCIPES DE L'INTERNET (IRPC)	Dennis REDEKER Co-Chair/ Coprésident
	Brittan HELLER International Law, Technology, and Human Rights expert / Experte en droit international, technologie et droits 'humains
	Jean-Paul MARTHOZ Journalist, Editorial Coordinator of the Council of Europe Annual Report of the platform for the Safety of Journalists / Journaliste, coordinateur éditorial du Rapport annuel du Conseil de l'Europe sur la plateforme pour la sécurité des journalistes

#### **COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE**

**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS** ON THE IMPACTS OF **GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL** INTELLIGENCE FOR (MSI-AI) / COMITE

ARTIFICIELLE GENERATIVE **POUR LA LIBERTE** 

D'EXPRESSION (MSI-AI)

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION D'EXPERTS SUR LES IMPLICATIONS DE L'INTELLIGENCE

**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ONLINE SAFETY AND EMPOWERMENT OF** CONTENT CREATORS AND USERS (MSI-ESEC) /

COMITE D'EXPERTS SUR LA SECURITE EN LIGNE ET LA RESPONSABILISATION DES CREATEURS DE **CONTENUS ET DES UTILISATEURS** 

**EUROPEAN AUDIO-VISUAL** OBSERVATORY / **OBSERVATOIRE** 

EUROPEEN DE L'AUDIOVISUEL **Andrin EICHIN** 

Chair / President

Iva NENADIC

Drafting Co-rapporteur/ Co-rapporteur de rédaction

**Murielle POPA-FABRE** 

Senior Tech & Policy Advisor /

Conseillère principale en technologie et politique

**Patricia SHAW** 

CEO and Founder, Beyond Reach - a tech ethics (governance, policy & legal) consultancy / PDG et fondattice, Beyond Reach cabinet de conseil en éthique technologique (gouvernance, politique et droit)

**Nicole STELLOU** 

Chair / Présidente

**Martin HUSOVEC** 

Drafting Co-Rapporteur/ Co-rapporteur de rédaction

Peter NOORLANDER

Drafting Co-Rapporteur/ Co-rapporteur de rédaction

**Susanne NIKOLTCHEV** 

Director / directrice

**Maja CAPPELLO** 

Head of Department for Legal Information / Cheffe du département d'informatoin juridique

Sophie VALAIS

Deputy Head of department for Legal Information, European Audiovisual Observatory / Cheffe adjoints du servuce d'information juridique, Observatoire européen de l'audiovisuel

**Amélie LACOURT** 

Legal Advisor/ Conseillère juridique

**Olivier HERMANNS** 

Legal Advisor / Conseiller juridique

**Eric MUNCH** 

	Legal Advisor / Conseiller juridique
EUROPEAN PLATFORM OF REGULATORY AUTHORITIES (EPRA)/ LA PLATE-FORME EUROPÉENNE DES INSTANCES DE RÉGULATION	Emmanuelle MACHET Head of EPRA Secretariat / Cheffe du secrétariat de l'EPRA
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY / ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE	Francisco Cabrera Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media/ Commission de la culture, de la science, de l'éducation et des médias
VENICE COMMISSION / COMISSION DE VENISE	lain CAMERON Member of the Venice Commission in respect of Sweden, rapporteur on the Report on a Rule of Law and Human Rights Compliant Regulation of Spyware / Membre de la Commission de Venise pour la Suède, rapporteur sur le rapport sur une réglementation des logiciels espions conforme à l'état de droit et aux droits de l'homme

DGII – DIRECTORATE FOR DEMOCRACY - DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN DIGNITY / DIRECTION DE LA DEMOCRATIE - DIRECTION GENERALE DE LA DEMOCRATIE ET DE LA DIGNITE HUMAINE

#### Mr/M Matjaz GRUDEN

Director, Directorate for Democracy / Directeur, Direction de la Démocratie

#### Irena GUIDIKOVA

Head of the Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department / Cheffe du département des institutions démocratiques et des libertés

#### **Artemiza-Tatiana CHISCA**

Secretary to the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI), Head of Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division / Secrétaire du Comité Directeur Médias et Société de l'Information (CDMSI), Cheffe de la Division Liberté d'expression et CDMSI

#### **Giulia LUCCHESE**

Co- Secretary to the CDMSI, Secretary to the Committee of Experts on the Impacts of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Freedom of Expression (MSI-AI) / Co-secrétaire du CDMSI, Secrétaire du Comité d'experts sur les implications de l'intelligence artificielle générative pour la liberté d'expression (MSI-AI)

#### **Cesare PITEA**

Secretary to the Committee of Experts on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users (MSI-eSEC) / Secrétaire du Comité d'experts sur la sécurité en ligne et la responsabilisation des créateurs de contenus et des utilisateurs (MSI-eSEC)

#### Rodica CIOCHINA

Programme Manager, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division / Chargée de programme, Division Liberté d'expression et CDMSI

#### Elena BRODEALA

Programme Manager, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division / Chargée de programme, Division Liberté d'expression et CDMSI

#### Alina TATARENKO

Head of Division for Cooperation on Freedom of Expression / Cheffe de division pour la coopération en matière de liberté d'expression

#### Adrian EVTUHOVICI

Platform for the Safety of Journalists / Plateforme pour la sécurité des journalistes

#### Irina TOMOVA

Assistant, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division / Assistante, Division Liberté d'expression et CDMSI

#### **Roxana VENER**

Assistant, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division / Assistante, Division Liberté d'expression et CDMSI

#### Ketevan SAKHELASHVILI

Assistant, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division / Assistante, Division Liberté d'expression et CDMSI

#### **INTERPRETERS / INTERPRETES:**

Sara WEBSTER Célia MONCOQ Corinne MAGALLON Marie DELUMEAU