

**Bureau of the Steering Committee on  
Media and Information  
26<sup>th</sup> meeting (17 May 2024)**

**Report**

*Hybrid meeting - in person and via Teams*

**1. Opening of the meeting**

The CDMSI Chair, Maja ZARIC, opened the meeting. All Bureau members were present at this meeting; the gender distribution was four women (57%) and three men (43%). The list of participants appears in Appendix 1.

Matjaz GRUDEN, Director, Directorate for Democracy, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity, welcomed the members of the Bureau of the CDMSI. He remarked that the transition of the Freedom of Expression and CDMSI division in the Directorate for Democracy, operational since January 2024, progressed smoothly and that continuity was assured in progressing with the Terms of Reference agreed under the previous framework. In this context he noted that this new setting enables increased cooperation with related bodies and committees, including the newly established Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM), the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, and the Division for Cooperation on Freedom of Expression. He also welcomed important achievements with regards to the progress made within the Journalists Matter Campaign and the adoption of the Recommendation Countering the Use of SLAPPs by the Committee of Ministers. He concluded by stressing that during this “election year”, it is imperative to uphold and safeguard the fundamental principle of freedom of expression.

Irena GUIDIKOVA, Head of Democratic Institutions and Freedoms Department greeted participants and praised the innovative work carried out by the CDMSI. She expressed her commitment to support the mandate of the Steering Committee and to ensure that appropriate connection is established between standard-setting work and the cooperation and monitoring-like branches of the Council of Europe, with a view to mutually reinforce all three activities.

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

The Bureau members adopted the agenda of the meeting, in Appendix 2, and agreed on minor changes in the order of business.

### **3. Ongoing standard-setting work**

#### **3.1. CDMSI expert committees' work progress**

##### **3.1.1. Committee of Experts on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users (MSI-eSEC)**

The MSI-eSEC Secretary informed the Bureau about the first meeting of the MSI-eSEC, held on 9-10 April 2024 (hybrid). The MSI-eSEC is tasked with elaborating a draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users, by the end of 2025.

At the meeting, the Committee of Experts elected Nicole STELLOU (Greece) as Chair of the MSI-eSEC and Marijana GRBESA-ZENZEROVIC (Croatia) as Vice-Chair. Jennifer ADAMS was appointed as Gender Equality Rapporteur. Martin HUSOVEC and Peter NOORLANDER were designated as drafting Rapporteurs.

The MSI-eSEC discussed and preliminary agreed on the scope and main elements of the deliverable. Members noted that online safety is a broad topic, aspects of which are already addressed in several regional and international instruments. With a view to providing added value, they agreed to narrow down the scope of the future Recommendation and to strictly link it to freedom of expression online. The Expert Committee also noted that aim of the draft Recommendation should not be to define what is harmful or illegal - largely dependent on cultural, societal, and historical background – but rather to identify main principles and address responsibilities and possible responses by States and intermediaries. The MSI-eSEC also agreed to adopt a principled and technology-neutral approach. It was decided to take a users' centred perspective, focusing on how to promote effective empowerment of users and content creators to improve online safety in a human-rights compliant manner.

The Committee of Experts further agreed on the future work roadmap; the second meeting of the MSI-eSEC will be held on 24-25 September 2024 and a proposed detailed outline of the future recommendation will be presented to the CDMSI at its 26<sup>th</sup> plenary, to be held in December 2024.

##### **3.1.2. Committee of Experts on the implications of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Freedom of Expression (MSI-AI)**

The MSI-AI Secretary informed the Bureau about the first meeting of the MSI-AI, held on 23-24 April 2024 (hybrid). The MSI-AI is tasked to draft a Guidance Note on the implications of generative artificial intelligence for freedom of expression, by the end of 2025.

At the meeting, the Committee of Experts elected Andrin EICHIN (Switzerland) as Chair and Katerina MANTZOU (Greece) as Vice-Chair of the MSI-AI. Raphael KIES (Luxembourg) was appointed as Gender Equality Rapporteur. Iva NENADIC (Croatia), Murielle POPA-FABRE and Patricia SHAW were designated as drafting co-Rapporteurs.

Committee's members and participants held constructive discussions on the scope, purpose and main elements of the future instrument. The MSI-AI agreed that the Guidance Note should acknowledge the different phases in the lifecycle of Generative AI as well as its multimodality. Members decided to keep a narrow focus on implications for freedom of expressions, to elaborate a functional definition of Generative AI and to analyse its multiple layers. They also shared the view that the Guidance Note should both identify systemic risks and potential benefits and provide assistance as to how to mitigate the former and capitalise on the latter.

The MSI-AI agreed on the roadmap; the second meeting will be held on 17-18 October 2024. A first outline of the future guidance note will be presented to the CDMSI at its 26<sup>th</sup> plenary, to be held in December 2024.

### **3.2. Work progress related to the further expected deliverables under CDMSI Terms of Reference**

The Secretariat provided information on the modalities envisage to organize the work on the other deliverables under the CDMSI Terms of Reference for 2024-2025.

#### **3.2.1. 10 steps to counter disinformation – Strategy and practical tools based on existing Council of Europe standards and other instruments**

The Secretariat informed that the deliverable would build on existing standards while aiming to provide a more practical approach. Therefore, it will identify main areas in which the member States and other stakeholders can operate to build a society and media environment more resilient to disinformation.

To this scope, the Bureau entrusted the Secretariat to prepare a questionnaire to be distributed to CDMSI Plenary representatives, by end of July, to report about challenges faced in countering disinformation as well as good practices at national level. The outcome of the questionnaire is intended to enable the Secretariat, and a possible consultant, to identify key areas, challenges and practices which should be addressed in the deliverable.

#### **3.2.2. Feasibility study on immersive realities applications and their implication from freedom of expression**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau that the Report on the Metaverse that has been jointly prepared with IEEE has been finalised, it will be printed and publicly launched in June at the occasion of the EuroDIG forum (17-19 June, Vilnius). The Bureau took note that the feasibility study foreseen by the CDMSI terms of reference has a broader scope, focusing on immersive realities in general. Preliminary discussions with experts in the field – likely to contribute to the elaboration of the feasibility study - were initiated. Since the launch of the Report as well as the work of the future feasibility study will coincide with the release by PACE of their own report on the metaverse, that could reinforce the relevance and importance of the future work of the Committee in the area.

#### **3.2.3. Indicators for Media and Information Literacy (MIL) strategies at national level**

The Secretariat reported on developments concerning the elaboration of the MIL deliverable and informed about ongoing reflection regarding best ways to gather relevant information, including by sharing a questionnaire to collect feedbacks on national measures in the field from CDMSI Plenary members. The Bureau noted that extensive practices in terms of policy and projects are already available in some member States.

### **4. Council of Europe ‘Journalists matter’ Campaign for the Safety of Journalists**

The Secretariat provided an overview of several notable country-specific activities and high-level events which took place since the launch of the Campaign and other activities that are planned under the campaign until the end of the year. Information was provided with regards to voluntary contributions received from the member State, namely from: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Malta; the current number of appointed national focal points (37), and the aims of their second meeting, taking place back-to-back with the CDMSI Plenary in June.

Update also concerned the creation of national campaign committees and developments concerning the online webpage on national chapters of the Campaign including steps taken in the field at domestic level and the creation of related database. The Secretariat reported on plans to hold a focus-specific workshop on the role of the police in safeguarding the safety of journalists, as well as on the organisation of the thematic annual event on “protection”, the latter to be held in Strasbourg on 29-30 October 2024.

The Bureau took note of the coordination ensured between the Campaign Secretariat and other relevant international governmental and non-governmental organisations and stakeholders and entrusted the Secretariat to invite a representative of the European Commission to the CDMSI Plenary, with a view to further align the efforts in this area, including with respect to the assistance and co-operation joint activities and projects in the field.

## **5. Follow-up to the CDMSI’s previous work**

The CDMSI Chair reported on the Secretary General meeting with the Chairs of Council of Europe’s intergovernmental committees. With a view to ensuring interaction and boosting exchange on good practices, the Bureau members discussed the appointment of CDMSI rapporteurs on transversal issues (gender, children protection and youth) and liaison contacts with partner Committees. The Secretariat noted that the terms of reference of the CDDH, CDEDU, CDBIO, CDENF, CDADI, CDEJ, CDCPP, CDDEM contain deliverables of potential interest for the CDMSI work and activities.

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to ask CDMSI Plenary members for expressions of interest via email.

The Secretariat informed about the adoption of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2024\)2 on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation](#) (SLAPPs), by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 5 April 2024, and provided information on envisaged follow-up, including the organisation of a Council of Europe anti-SLAPP Conference, together with ECPMF and the CASE Coalition, to be held in Strasbourg on 14 November 2024.

## **6. Latest developments in the work of the Council of Europe and its partner institutions that are of relevance to CDMSI**

Thomas SCHNEIDER, in his capacity as Chair of the Council of Europe Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI), provided information on the Council of Europe Framework Convention on AI and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, adopted on the very same day of the Bureau, 17 May 2024, by the Committee of Ministers. He also highlighted the future work of the CAI.

The Secretariat provided the Bureau with a short presentation of the main elements of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) with reference to areas of relevance for the work of the CDMSI. The Bureau members welcomed the invitation accepted by Anna Herold, Head of Unit Audiovisual and Media Services Policy, DG Connect, at the CDMSI Plenary meeting, to further report on the EMFA and other EU legislative developments.

The Secretariat also highlighted the complementarity between the adopted Council of Europe Recommendation on SLAPPs and the EU legislative package on countering SLAPPs (“Commission [Recommendation \(EU\) 2022/758](#) of 27 April 2022 on protecting journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings” and “[Directive \(EU\) 2024/1069](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings”). The Bureau members welcomed the invitation

sent to DG JUST representatives to the CDMSI Plenary to present relevant instruments adopted in this field.

## **7. Preparation for the 25<sup>th</sup> CDMSI Plenary meeting (18-20 June, Strasbourg)**

### **Discussion and suggestions for agenda topics**

- **Council of Europe work towards a legal mechanism to support European drama series of production under CDCPP authority.**

Director GRUDEN provided information regarding the work of the Steering Committee for Culture, Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) and the development of a legal instrument for the co-production of audiovisual works in the form of series, on which selected members of the CDMSI had expressed interest. In this framework, the Director noted that the work of the CPPWG-Series drafting working group, established under the authority of the CDCPP and benefitting of the assistance and facilitation of EURIMAGE, has not concluded. The Director therefore noted that a discussion on the development of a legal instrument involving the CDMSI Plenary is premature and reminded the terms of reference of the respective Steering Committees.

The Bureau expressed appreciation for the comprehensive overview and clarification provided; invited the Secretariat to keep the CDMSI informed and decided to keep the item in the agenda of the next CDMSI Plenary meeting as a point of information. Having considered that a better communication was necessary at national level, including on how the work of the CDCPP intersects with that of the CDMSI, the Bureau further entrusted the Secretariat to include an item on the agenda to discuss domestic coordination on files under discussion within the Council of Europe.

- **Council of Europe work support to World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)**

Thomas SCHNEIDER informed the Bureau about the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). He reminded that in 2015, the Council of Europe issued a Declaration of the Committee of Ministers recognising the contribution made by information and communication technologies (ICTs), supporting the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS and the extension by the United Nations General Assembly of the mandate of the IGF until 2025. He therefore strongly encouraged the Council of Europe to do the same to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and express renewed support to WSIS.

The Bureau welcomed the initiative and instructed the Secretariat to prepare the draft text for endorsement by the CDMSI Plenary, in cooperation with relevant Council of Europe structures, as appropriate.

- **Freedom of expression in times of elections**

The Secretariat noted that several instruments adopted by the CDMSI and other relevant bodies of the Council of Europe address safeguards and other relevant aspects pertaining to media and electoral processes, therefore informed the Bureau members about the idea to set up a dedicated webpage. The Bureau members welcomed the initiative.

## Events during the week of the 25<sup>th</sup> CDMSI Plenary

The Secretariat provided an overview of the events taking place during and in the margins of the June CDMSI Plenary, including the second meeting of the National Focal Points of the 'Journalists Matter' Campaign for the Safety of Journalists, to be held on 20-21 June, and the Hate Speech Week, in which framework the CDMSI will organise a thematic seminar focusing on Media and Hate Speech to be held in the morning session of the CDMSI Plenary, on 19 June.

## Exchanges of views during the 25<sup>th</sup> CDMSI Plenary

The Bureau discussed and agreed the updates, developments and projects which are, as proposed by the Secretariat, to be discussed in the upcoming plenary meeting of the CDMSI.

### **8. Recent country-specific developments in the field of freedom of expression – *tour de table***

Members of the Bureau shared information about the following country-specific developments of relevance for the CDMSI:

- In Serbia: a new Government was elected in May. The Ministry of Information and Telecommunication continues to align its legislation with the European Media Freedom Act and the Digital Services Act (DSA). Through the Council of Europe Project Protecting Freedom of Expression and of the Media in Serbia PROFREX, CM/Rec(2024)2 will be translated into Serbian. Activities addressing media literacy are ongoing within formal and nonformal education.
- In Republic of Moldova: on 14 March, the Parliament gave final approval to the law establishing the Media subsidy fund. Important event related to media and information area are planned to take place in Chisinau, including on Information and Media Literacy. Republic of Moldova's Audiovisual Council has for the first-time imposed sanctions for disinformation to a regional TV station. On 2 May entered into force the decree of Moldovan President on the signing of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Audiovisual Heritage and its Protocol from November 2001. The Republic of Moldova also hosted the meeting of the presidents of delegations of francophone parliaments of Europe to discuss disinformation and hybrid war. Finally, work is ongoing to ensure the transposition of the EU legislation into the local one.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina: The European Council approved the opening of accession negotiations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union on 21 March 2024. One of the 14 priorities to be fulfilled is the guarantee of freedom of expression and the protection of journalists, including ensuring the financial sustainability of the public broadcasting service system. In this context, the Council of Europe campaign on the Protection of Journalists "*Journalists Matter*", the appointment of the Focal Point and the appointment of the Working Group for Support are crucial. In Greece: the International Training Center for the Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals (ICSJ) will organize: a specialised training sessions, in cooperation with UNESCO and the Hellenic Police (June 18-21, 2024 in Northern Greece); the third "Safety for Journalists" Training School (September); an international conference on "Safeguarding Journalists: Mapping the field" (20-22 September, Thessaloniki). Greece also appointed the Digital Services Coordinator and issued the implementing measures regarding the DSA. Under the coordination of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the occasion of the 75 years of the establishment of the Council of Europe, the Secretariat General for Communication and Media is preparing a video on work in the areas of freedom of expression, including the work of the CDMSI.

The Secretariat provided information regarding developments on two draft laws affecting freedom of expression in Slovakia, on foreign agents and on public service broadcasters respectively. It was further noted that the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner

addressed the Slovak parliamentary authorities expressing concern for the possible chilling effects these two laws may produce.

### **9. Co-operation with Council of Europe Partnership with Digital Companies**

The Secretariat informed the Bureau about the Digital Partnership workshop on 21-22 May in the Palais de l'Europe, including a thematic session on digital governance and freedom of expression, where the most recent instruments developed by the CDMSI would be presented and discussed.

### **10. Participation in events of relevance for the CDMSI**

Bureau members and the Secretariat exchanged on respective participation in events of relevance for the CDMSI, including involvement in the Journalism Excellence Awards - Ethical reporting on Roma and fight against racism and antigypsyism through the media; multilateral participation of Council of Europe in EuroDIG2024.

### **11. Any other business**

The Secretariat reminded that the next CDMSI Plenary meeting will take place on 18-20 June 2024 in Strasbourg.

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting on 31 October 2024.