

1-2 June 2023, Strasbourg

WORKSHOP

on the existing initiatives
on the safety of journalists



Concept Note

Introduction: The safety of journalists is a fundamental pillar of the freedom of the media and of democracy. However, over the past years, the safety of journalists has increasingly come under threat across the world. Journalists face harassment, intimidation and violence in their work, impeding their ability to perform their duties and ultimately, affecting the right of citizens to access accurate and reliable information. In response to this concerning trend, the Council of Europe has developed a wide set of tools and has undertaken a comprehensive approach to help its members states face the situation.

Council of Europe's [Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society](#) held in June 2021 called on the Organisation to carry out a comprehensive campaign to promote and support more effective protection of free, diverse and responsible journalism and the safety of journalists.

The Campaign will encourage States efforts towards coordinated multistakeholder action, to result in the adoption of national action plans and the setting up and implementation of specific protection mechanisms – this being the key impact anticipated from the Campaign.

While preparing the launch of the Campaign on October 2023, a broad range of actions, including knowledge sharing and joint efforts among countries is required.

As part of these efforts, the Secretariat of the Campaign is organising a workshop where experience related to existing national initiatives on the safety of journalists in the Council of Europe member states can be exchanged.

The Workshop

The 1.5 days' workshop will bring together a first selection¹ of existing national initiatives aiming at increasing the safety of journalists, for an exchange of the experiences, best practices and their impact on the environment in which journalists perform their activity

¹ The selected initiatives do not necessarily correspond or indicate anyhow all the existing initiatives of mechanisms.

including protocols specifically designed for their protection and remedies in case of harm or other damage.

Participants representing the selected mechanisms will have the opportunity to present information about their creation, structure, background and functioning, as well as their impact, taking into consideration the national specific circumstances and environment.

The workshop will provide an opportunity for countries to learn from each other about different approaches, strategies and methods that have been employed to ensure the safety of journalists.

During the workshop, panel discussions, presentations and interactive sessions will be conducted, where national initiatives, activities and practices will be presented. The discussions will also analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the different initiatives, learn from each other's experience and share recommendation for further improvements.

Results

The workshop will serve to:

- Create a network of existing practices and enable involved stakeholders to learn from each other, while sharing their experiences and results;
- Create a data base of concrete tools (strategies, memorandums, cooperation mechanisms) from different regional areas to be used in the future activities in the framework of the Council of Europe Campaign for the safety of journalists;
- Provide useful information for the subsequent drafting of a checklist of key requirements a national action plan for the safety of journalists should entail;
- The activities and themes explored during this workshop will subsequently be shared, discussed and replicated in more details during the future campaign activities. They should also serve as topics of discussion during the annual coordination meetings of the Campaign's national focal points and further proposed by these to the national committees formed in Council of Europe member states for the purpose of the Campaign.

Structure of the workshop

The structure of the workshop will foresee:

1. An **initial introduction and presentation by the Campaign Secretariat** of the aim of the Council of Europe Campaign for the safety of journalists and the purpose of the workshop.

It will be followed by a few roundtables discussing specific and concrete topics, among the following:

2. **National Action Plans (NAP) for the safety of journalists** (including a comprehensive framework for designing the national strategy/policy for the protection of journalists'

safety, the coordination of related implementation measures, and the assessment of its progress and the effectiveness of efforts made)

- a. *Examples and lessons learnt from countries* (presentations on successful (but also challenging) initiatives for designing, implementing and assessing progress and impact of NAPs. Examples should include specific objectives, timelines, funding sources and key stakeholders involved)
- b. *Best practices/challenges for developing and implementing NAPs* (key steps involved in creating and implementing a successful NAP, such as conducting a baseline assessment of the situation in a country or region, identifying key stakeholders and developing a coordinated approach to ensure effective implementation; use of innovative approaches and technologies to promote and ensure the safety of journalists)

3. Mechanisms and tools for ensuring journalists' safety (*examples and discussion of best practice but also related challenges/obstacles, and less successful experiences – concrete example of successful projects, or failure because of/which obstacles and constraints*)

- a. *Legal/regulatory mechanisms* (legal frameworks and protocols such as legislation that criminalises violence against journalists, codes of conduct for law enforcement and security forces when interacting with journalists; protocols for emergency response mechanisms to ensure quick and effective action in case of threats)
- b. *Training for members of the police forces* on the role and importance of journalism as well as on the protection of journalists in action
- c. *Training of members of the judiciary* on addressing cases of pressure and attacks against journalists and combating impunity of authors of such acts
- d. *Trainings for journalists and security best practices /how to operate in conflict and hostile environment* (digital security, physical safety, psychological wellbeing)
- e. *Resources that promote the protection of journalists* from violence, harassment, intimidation and other forms of attack and which aid in the protection and reporting of information (provision of equipment such as bullet proof vests, helmets, secure communication channels and platforms, secure storage for sensitive information)
- f. *Role of civil society organisations and advocacy groups in promoting the safety of journalists*: they can play a crucial role in monitoring, documenting and responding to threats against journalists, as well as ensuring that policies and mechanisms to protect are designed and implemented effectively.

4. Safety of women journalists

- a. *Challenges women journalists face, including online harassment, physical violence and gender-based discrimination*
- b. *Mechanisms and tools to ensure safety of women journalists* (including policies and protocols to address gender-based violence, access to gender sensitive

training and resources and development of gender-inclusive networks and support systems. Important also to explore the role of women journalists in promoting their own safety, importance of self-care, need to challenge gender stereotypes in reporting and importance to speak up against harassment and discrimination).