



Permanent Representation of Greece  
to the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 28 March 2024  
Ref. No. 6686/ 434


Dear Mr. Gruden,

Dear Matjaž,

Please find attached the response of the General Secretariat for Communication and Media of the Presidency of Government regarding the alert no. 280/2023, which was uploaded on the Platform for the Safety of Journalists and Protection of Journalism of the Council of Europe, in December 2023.

I would kindly request for the said response to be uploaded to the Platform and forwarded to the partner organisations.

Sincerely Yours,



Panayiotis Beglitis  
Ambassador

To: **Mr. Matjaž Gruden**  
Director  
Directorate of Democratic Participation  
Directorate General of Democracy  
Council of Europe

In town

**Reply by the Greek authorities to alert no. 280/2023 uploaded on the  
Platform for the Safety of Journalists and Protection of Journalism  
of the Council of Europe**

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press are guaranteed under article 14 of the Greek Constitution. The operation of the Press is central to our democratic state and is directly linked to the quality of Democracy. The Greek Constitution wisely and accurately describes the terms and conditions of its operation, in order to safeguard the Press and the Government, as well as the citizens against inaccurate, insulting and defamatory publications, while it also stipulates that the manner of protection is further determined by a relevant Law. Furthermore, editorial independence, autonomy and dignity of journalists are further ensured in public and private media by Codes of Conduct of the journalistic profession.

The General Secretariat for Communication and Media of the Presidency of Government initiated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalist and Other Media Professionals (May 23, 2022) with five co-signatories, as part of its effort to launch a series of initiatives aligned with the Council of Europe 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 the European Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1534 on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union. This MoU established a Task Force (created on July 27, 2022) with the aim of ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals; the stakeholders convene monthly and provide updates from their respective fields while cooperating in subgroups, each with their respective mandate covering various topics from secure working conditions, digital transformation, the safety of women journalists, SLAPPs, and more.

Within the Task Force, the Panhellenic Association of Journalists' Union - POESY - established a SLAPPs Observatory in Greece for monitoring corresponding incidents. Through the collection of data, the Observatory set up a communication channel with the persecuted journalists and the monitoring of corresponding incidents, and is able to provide assistance and formulate positions, in cooperation with POESY's members, aiming at contributing to the overall treatment of the SLAPP lawsuits phenomenon. All personal data are being treated with confidentiality for research reasons.

Furthermore, within the framework of the Task Force meetings, the representative of the Ministry of Justice gave a detailed presentation of the EU anti-SLAPP Directive and accompanying Recommendation, so that the members, and especially those representing Media Professionals' Federations are fully informed. In that context, as the Ministry of Justice called upon all Federations to submit their proposals in view of the transposition of the Directive into Greek legislation, it was decided to form subgroup upon this

matter, with the participation of the Ministry of Justice and the Panhellenic Association of Journalists' Union.

With the recently adopted law number 5090/2024, article 362 concerning the act of simple defamation was removed from the Greek Penal Code. Now only the act of libel concerning the dissemination of knowingly false information that may harm the honor or reputation of another, foreseen in article 363, remains punishable. In Greece, there is already an additional level of protection from lawsuits, as the filing of a lawsuit against an offensive publication is subject to a prior written out-of-court request by the aggrieved person to the printed medium, which must proceed to its correction within ten days. Lawsuits filed without following the stated procedure are not admissible, as provided for in Article 37 of Law 4356/2015.

Lastly, we would like to add that under law 5085/2024 article 15, anyone who issues public statements, announcements and publications, incites, urges, encourages or facilitates acts that may lead to violent offenses or threats of violence against journalists, who in the context of their capacity cover or comment on professional events sports, as well as related issues, shall be punished by imprisonment at least one (1) year and a fine.

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