

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 constitution and the Constitution wisely and accurately describes the terms and conditions of its operation, for the protection of the press and the Government, and stipulates that the manner of protection is further defined by a relevant law. In addition, the editorial independence, autonomy and dignity of journalists are further ensured in public and private media by Codes of Conduct for the journalistic profession.

Greece has initiated a series of actions aligned with Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1534 on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union, and Recommendation (CoR) CM/Rec (2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media professionals, the first of which is the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation initiated by the General Secretariat of the Communication & Media of the Presidency of Government and the participation of five more competent Ministries (the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Citizen Protection, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Digital Governance, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), which took place on May 23, 2022.

Also, in the framework of the Memorandum, a Task Force on Ensuring the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalists and other Media Professionals was created, which meets regularly, with representatives not only from the Ministries that signed the Memorandum, but also from universities and journalists' associations renewed its annual mandate for the third consecutive year (Government Gazette B' 5716/2024).

It is worth noting that there is now an academic course in the curriculum of Greek University Schools of Journalism on the safety of journalists and other media professionals, which began in the 2023-24 academic year, and it is offered every spring semester.

In the same context, the International Training Centre for the Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals (ICSJ) (<http://icsj.net/index.php/en/>) was established in January 2023 in Thessaloniki. Its main objective is to leverage the expertise and resources of the academic and professional community, to provide specialized practical training to journalists and media professionals. In June 2024, a four-day training course was held for Greek police officers, organized by the ICSJ in cooperation with UNESCO and media representatives in Veria. Journalists and police officers from all over Greece as well UNESCO officials attended the training session. A total of 29 officers and 14 journalists participated. The purpose was to improve the way police interact with journalists regarding their work and the freedom of the press, but also their proper preparation to prevent attacks against journalists by violent groups with political or criminal motives.

The country has ensured that the National School of Judicial Officers conducts special seminars on SLAPPs, in order to inform and train judges, while the National Plan for Open-Air Assemblies (Ministry of Citizen Protection) includes the safeguarding of the physical integrity of journalists, who may find themselves at the centre of incidents. In this context, the police designate a specific

area for journalists, to which they may, if they so wish, voluntarily go in the event of incidents, for protection purposes. In the event of injury, first aid services can be provided in this area. A designated officer shall act as a liaison and channel of communication with them throughout the assembly.

It is also noted that since August 2022, Collective Labour Agreements (CLAs) are signed between the Greek State and the journalists' associations and subsequently renewed for a two-year period, most recently in May, 2024. It determines the terms of employment of journalists employed by the State, NGOs, local self-governing bodies, and public entities. The agreement is binding and obligatory for the employer, which provides for personal protection and safety measures for journalists who are on journalistic assignments in war zones or areas affected by natural disasters and humanitarian crises or where epidemics have occurred or are endemic. This new agreement is in fact the continuation – with several beneficial additions – of the previous two-year CLA, and is a very important step in the cooperation between the Unions of editors and the State, but also in terms of practical improvement of the working conditions of journalists in the wider public sector, establishing important non-salary benefits for them and their families. It also introduces significant inclusion policies, gender equality, equal opportunity and harassment-combatting provisions.

Finally, in the direction of preventing violence against journalists, the Greek Government began legislative interventions, firstly with a provision regarding crimes of violence on the occasion of sports events or sporting background. 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.