



4th Meeting of National Focal Points – Minutes

22 April 2026, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

The 4th meeting of the national focal points of the *Journalists Matter* campaign took place in Chisinau, hosted under the Moldovan Presidency to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. It gathered representatives from 33 member States, out of the 41 nominated focal points, in addition to other participants invited to the meeting.

1. Mid-term evaluation: findings and reflections

The independent [mid-term evaluation](#) of the campaign was presented and discussed. The evaluation concluded that, despite limited financial and human resources, the campaign has had a significant catalytic effect across member States.

In particular, the campaign has:

- Increased the visibility of journalist safety as a policy priority at national and European levels;
- Supported the establishment of institutional structures and coordination mechanisms (e.g. national committees or working groups that reached the number of 28 by end of 2025);
- Facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue between journalists, public authorities, and civil society;
- Encouraged the development of national action plans and policy initiatives (12 in total).

Participants broadly endorsed these findings and confirmed that the campaign has contributed to embedding the issue of journalist safety within national policy frameworks (for example, through dedicated coordination bodies in Portugal and Greece, or structured dialogue platforms in Austria and Sweden).

At the same time, the evaluation identified several challenges requiring further attention. These include:

- Uneven levels of engagement and implementation across member States;
- The fragility of newly established structures, which are not yet fully institutionalised;
- Insufficient involvement of key stakeholders, notably among public authorities, such as national parliaments but also media owners and press councils and domestic media organizations;
- The need for increased focus on thematic issues, including online harassment, economic pressures, and mental health;
- The continued prevalence of threats and attacks against journalists, as reflected in the data of the Platform to promote the protection of journalism – which underlines the importance of an enabling environment and more effective safeguards for safe, free and diverse journalism.

Participants agreed that these findings provide a useful basis for defining priorities for the next phase of the campaign.

Institutional frameworks and coordination mechanisms

Many member States reported the establishment or consolidation of national coordination structures bringing together relevant stakeholders (ministries, law enforcement, journalists' associations, regulators and civil society).

Among the examples mentioned:

- The creation of a multi-stakeholder national committee with high-level participation (Portugal), including law enforcement and judicial authorities;
- The operation of a Task Force on the Safety of Journalists with broad institutional participation and regular meetings (Greece);
- The establishment of (informal) dialogue platforms involving editors-in-chief, media organisations and NGOs (Austria);
- Alternative coordination models based on designated authorities and thematic dialogue processes (Sweden).

In other countries, efforts are ongoing to establish such mechanisms, sometimes facing structural or political constraints (e.g. in highly polarised media environments or where institutional coordination is still evolving).

Participants underlined that even informal or emerging structures can play an important role as entry points for dialogue and cooperation.

Practical measures and initiatives

A wide range of concrete actions were reported, demonstrating the operational impact of the campaign. These include:

- Development of reporting and response mechanisms (e.g. dedicated hotlines or reporting channels for attacks against journalists in Portugal and the Czech Republic);
- Establishment of monitoring tools and databases (e.g. online mapping of attacks against women journalists in Ukraine);
- Introduction of training programmes for law enforcement and journalists (e.g. police training modules on media freedom in Greece; international training of trainers on anti-SLAPPs organized under the Campaign hosted by the Czechia);
- Creation of support structures for journalists, including legal and psychosocial assistance (e.g. support hotlines and peer-support schemes in Sweden);
- Implementation of public awareness and media literacy initiatives (e.g. efforts in Latvia to address societal distrust in journalism);
- Progress towards legislative and policy reforms, including anti-SLAPP measures and improved hate crime provisions (e.g. Czech Republic, Belgium).

Participants emphasised that these initiatives, although diverse, contribute to a common objective: strengthening the enabling environment for journalists to work safely.

Common challenges

Despite progress, several common challenges were highlighted:

- Ensuring sustained political support and resources;
- Engaging parliaments and political actors, particularly in contexts of electoral pressure or polarisation;
- Strengthening cooperation with media owners, media associations and the private sector;
- Maintaining momentum and coordination in the absence of dedicated structures or funding.

Thematic priorities for the next phase

Building on both the evaluation and national exchanges, participants identified a number of priority areas for further work.

- **Safety of women journalists (e.g. online harassment, gender-based violence):** Participants stressed the increasing prevalence of gender-based threats, particularly in the online sphere. Initiatives such as monitoring platforms (Ukraine) and targeted training programmes were highlighted as promising practices.
- **Mental health and psychosocial support (e.g. trauma, stress management):** The importance of addressing the psychological impact of threats and working conditions was emphasised, particularly in conflict-affected contexts (such as Ukraine) and through structured training and peer-support mechanisms (Sweden, Greece, Norway).
- **Economic conditions and role of media owners (e.g. financial sustainability, working conditions):** Several participants underlined that economic pressures on the media sector directly affect journalist safety and independence (Italy). Beyond public support through various types of measures, duly respectful of the independence of journalists and media, greater engagement of media owners was considered essential.
- **Engagement of public authorities more generally, starting with parliaments (e.g. legislative reforms, oversight):** The limited involvement of parliaments was identified as a key gap, given their role in adopting legal frameworks and ensuring accountability.
- **Media literacy and public trust (e.g. societal awareness, disinformation):** Participants noted the need to address declining trust in journalism and to strengthen public understanding of the role of media in democratic societies (Latvia).
- **Youth engagement (e.g. awareness-raising, education initiatives):** The involvement of young people was highlighted as an important dimension for profound and long-term impact, including through cooperation with universities and educational institutions (Greece, Monaco).
- **Journalistic community engagement:** a recurring theme in the discussions was the need to ensure that the campaign effectively reaches journalists themselves as end beneficiaries. While cooperation with institutions and associations is well established, participants acknowledged that awareness among individual journalists remains uneven. Additional efforts are needed to improve communication and outreach beyond institutional actors to include journalists at all levels.

Finally, the importance of strengthening cooperation with other international frameworks was highlighted, such as:

- Enhance synergies with European Union initiatives (e.g. anti-SLAPP [Directive](#), [Recommendation 2021/1534](#) on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union); and
- Ensure complementarity with [Council of Europe cooperation projects](#), including those funded by the European Commission.
- Coordinate with UNESCO, OSCE and other international actors;

It was underlined that such cooperation can help maximise impact, avoid duplication and/or inconsistent messages, and support sustainability, particularly in contexts where external funding plays a key role.

2. National Action Plans

The Secretariat presented guidance on the development of effective national action plans on the safety of journalists (in attachment).

Participants agreed that action plans should be based on a comprehensive assessment of the national context (e.g. data collection, surveys); ensure strong political ownership and leadership; involve relevant stakeholders at all stages (including journalists and civil society); define clear objectives, responsibilities, timelines and monitoring mechanisms.

While several countries have already [adopted](#) or are developing such plans, it was emphasised that their effectiveness depends on implementation and follow-up, rather than formal adoption alone.

3. Exchange with youth representatives and Youth Dimension of the Campaign

Following the presentation by the Campaign Secretariat of the upcoming initiative *“Youth facing disinformation – why journalists matter”*, participants held an exchange with a member of the [Advisory Council on Youth](#) (ACY). The discussion focused on strengthening the integration of a youth perspective in national efforts on the safety of journalists, including through consultations in the development of national action plans, the implementation of concrete measures, and awareness-raising activities.

In this context, the ACY representative drew attention to [Reference Framework on a Youth Perspective](#), encouraging Focal Points to use this tool when designing and implementing relevant policies and measures. Member States were invited to more systematically involve youth representatives in national coordination mechanisms (e.g. steering committees or stakeholder groups) and to reflect youth-related considerations in national action plans, beyond a focus limited to university students.

The Advisory Council on Youth expressed its readiness to support these efforts, including by facilitating contacts with relevant youth organisations at national level.

The discussion highlighted both opportunities and challenges in engaging young people:

- Several countries shared positive experiences (e.g. Ukraine involving youth in activities; Belgium organising school-based initiatives where journalists engage directly with students; Czechia noting strong youth engagement in media-related activities).

- Others pointed to difficulties in attracting interest (e.g. Portugal), while emphasising the importance of media literacy initiatives and innovative approaches such as free access to news content.
- Some countries highlighted creative approaches (e.g. Georgia organising competitions reaching youth beyond capital cities; Serbia exploring reverse learning models where youth share perspectives with institutions).
- Participants also stressed the importance of addressing trust in media among young people (e.g. Norway) and promoting critical thinking (e.g. Romania).

There was broad agreement that the relationship between youth and journalism is essential for the future of media freedom (e.g. Italy) and that of European democratic societies and that targeted efforts are needed to engage young audiences effectively. Representatives of the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists ([Platform](#)) partners also expressed interest in contributing to youth-related activities.

3. Exchange with Platform Partners

An exchange was held with representatives of the partners of the Platform, following the presentation of the Platform's [annual report](#).

This session was appreciated by both sides and highlighted the Campaign's contribution to strengthening the relationship between member States and Platform partners. Participants noted that dialogue has become more open, constructive and regular.

Discussions included frank exchanges on challenges related to the handling of alerts. Member States underlined the need for alerts to be more clearly formulated, including clearer indication of the authorities to whom they are addressed and improved clarity in drafting.

Platform partners reiterated their role as partners in the process, emphasising their willingness to support member States by providing documentation, expertise and contextual information. The exchange confirmed the added value of continued cooperation and mutual understanding between the two sides.

4. Next steps and legacy of the Campaign

The Secretariat informed participants of upcoming activities and next steps under the campaign:

- On 18 June, under the Campaign, in the margins on the 'No Hate Speech Week' in Strasbourg and part of the plenary meeting of the Steering Committee for Media and Information Society (CDMSI), a seminar on Hate speech against women journalists will be organised. A link will be shared with Focal points, enabling online participation.
- 9-10 November: the 'Youth facing disinformation- Why Journalists Matter' conference will take place in Strasbourg. The initiative includes a call for participation and grants (to be launched by end of April), as well as the above-mentioned high-level event bringing together over 30 young participants from across member States. Activities will continue in 2027, culminating in the presentation of final youth-led projects at the conclusion of the campaign.

- Spring 2027 will gather the Focal points to the 5th and last meeting under the Campaign in Montenegro, under the country's Presidency to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.
- November 2027- the final conference of the Campaign to take place in the Netherlands, under the Dutch Presidency to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.

Future perspectives and sustainability

Participants expressed strong support for continuing the work initiated under the campaign after its end. The importance of avoiding a loss of momentum after 2027 was emphasized. In particular, there was general agreement on the importance of the establishment of a **permanent Council of Europe network of Focal Points** as a continuation of the work done under the Campaign; the need to ensure **continuity of activities and structures at national level** beyond the current campaign cycle; adoption of National Action Plans for the safety of journalists.

5. Conclusions

The meeting confirmed that the *Journalists Matter Campaign* has generated significant political momentum and has contributed to strengthening dialogue, cooperation and practical action on issues related to the safety of journalists across member States.

At the same time, participants agreed on the need to further focus efforts in the areas identified by the mid-term evaluation, in particular (uneven engagement across member States; fragility of coordination structures; insufficient involvement of key stakeholders, such as parliaments or media owners ; thematic coverage including issues such as online harassment, economic pressures and mental health; and the continued prevalence of threats and attacks against journalists).

In this regard, participants highlighted the importance of:

- **Consolidating and institutionalising national coordination structures**, ensuring their sustainability beyond the campaign and strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement, including journalists, civil society, media owners and public authorities;
- **Advancing the development and effective implementation of national action plans**, ensuring they are operational, inclusive and result-oriented;
- **Further integrating the youth dimension** into the work of the campaign, including by involving youth representatives in national coordination mechanisms, consultations and awareness-raising activities, and by supporting the implementation of the “Youth facing disinformation – why journalists matter” initiative;
- **Recognising the importance of open and effective cooperation with Platform partners**, including continued dialogue on the handling of alerts;
- **Enhancing outreach to the journalistic community**, ensuring that the campaign more effectively reaches journalists as its primary beneficiaries;
- **Focusing on tangible results in priority thematic areas**, including the safety of women journalists, online harassment, mental health and psychosocial support, economic conditions of journalists, and media literacy and public trust.



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Participants expressed strong support for ensuring the legacy of the campaign, notably through **making permanent the already established Council of Europe network of Focal Points.**

The importance of maintaining momentum beyond 2027 was emphasised, both at national and European level, in order to ensure that the progress achieved translates **into sustainable and measurable improvements in the safety of journalists and media freedom.**