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Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

Minutes of the meeting

3rd meeting of the National Focal Points to the *Journalists Matter* Campaign 30 April 2025, Luxembourg

The third meeting of the National Focal Points to the *Journalists Matter* Campaign took place in Luxembourg on 30 April 2025. In addition to the outcomes of the [annual thematic conference](#) held the day before on the Prosecution of crimes against journalists, the meeting focused on recent progress in member States, discussions on National Action Plans, indicators for journalists' safety and online safety challenges.

Journalists Matter Campaign – progress update

An overview of the Campaign's developments was shared, highlighting significant milestones:

- 41 out of 46 member States have appointed National Focal Points.
- 27 national committees or dialogue platforms (both formal and informal) have been established, with 19 created under the Campaign.
- 11 countries have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) for the safety of journalists, 6 of which have been adopted since the Campaign's launch; several others are currently under development.
- The 2025 focus on the Prosecution pillar of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)4 on the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media actors](#) builds on the 2024 focus on Protection. A dedicated seminar with prosecutors and judges is planned for autumn 2025.
- The 2026 annual conference, focusing on the Prevention pillar, is tentatively scheduled for spring (22-24 April) in the Republic of Moldova, under the country's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The Campaign Secretariat also announced the launch of an [online collaborative space for the focal points](#), enabling them to continue exchanging and sharing information and practices, even outside the organised meetings. Access and instructions for use are to be sent by email.

Exchange with the Partner associations of the Council of Europe's [Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists](#) (Platform)

The meeting also enabled Focal Points to exchange with [partners](#) of the Platform. Platform partners presented key findings from their recent [Europe Press Freedom Report - 2024: Confronting Political Pressure, Disinformation, and the Erosion of Media Independence \(2025\)](#). Key concerns included:

- Increased digital surveillance threatening journalists' source confidentiality.
- Transnational repression of journalists, particularly from Russia and Belarus.
- Rising media capture by governments.
- The spread of disinformation, including AI-generated content used to manipulate public discourse.



JOURNALISTS MATTER

Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

Overall alerts posted on the Platform on violations of/threats to journalists' safety remain a concern. States are encouraged to respond, and cases are marked as resolved when adequate replies or mitigation measures are adopted. However, in some cases, States cannot respond due to ongoing court proceedings. It was stressed that it would be important for the Platform partners to be at least informed that an alert is under examination by national authorities.

Representatives of partner associations to the Platform praised the efforts made in countering strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), especially the adoption of the [Council of Europe recommendation on countering SLAPPs](#), and its added value in complementing the [EU anti-SLAPP directive and recommendation](#).

They appreciated the opportunity for direct exchanges with national focal points. A regular interaction with Focal points and Platform Partners was welcomed by both sides.

Current challenges and positive practices

- Several focal points discussed the **shared responsibility of all actors** in minimising risks to journalists. Training programmes to help journalists implement personal safety measures were considered crucial. However, trust between journalists and public authorities remains a barrier in some countries.
- **Indicators for measuring safety of journalists** on the national level have also been discussed.
 - Council of Europe offers a series of tools to help that process, such as the [Self-assessment tool for member states on selected topics regarding the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors - under the Protection and Prosecution pillars of the Guidelines of Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#) and the [Pocket guide: Key actions for improved safety of journalists](#).
 - Some countries have experience in assessing the situation. In **the Netherlands the PersVeilig** project also monitors and records reported safety threats against journalists – and is the only actor in the Netherlands to do so (although the Public Prosecutor records cases of violence and resulting proceedings). This data is often discussed at the monthly meetings within PersVeilig to ensure its work is evidence-based.
 - To establish an evidence base about media professionals in **Switzerland**, the Swiss OFCOM conducted an initial survey on the safety of media professionals as part of the National Action Plan. The aim was also to improve an overall assessment of the situation and inform potential follow-up actions to the National Action Plan. A pre-study on the focus and methodology has already been conducted and the study will be awarded shortly. The study is scheduled to be published in Q2 2025.
 - **Switzerland** launched a **risk-monitoring tool** for different journalist profiles. One year into the project, the first batch of raw data will be analysed and used to inform the existing National Action Plan (adopted in 2021).
 - Country size plays a role in multi-stakeholder cooperation. Smaller states such as **Montenegro** and **Luxembourg** find it easier to initiate inclusive discussions.



JOURNALISTS MATTER

Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

- Participants underlined the value of Council of Europe tools for **building National Action Plans**. The issue of involving various institutions and making sure the action plans to be adopted will also be properly implemented was raised. The inclusion of journalists themselves in the drafting of National Action Plans was strongly recommended to ensure ownership and practical relevance.
 - **Luxembourg** presented in detail the newly launched [National Action Plan](#) for the safety of journalists.
 - **Ukraine** went in depth into the aspects of the [National Action Plan](#) adopted in a time of crisis and conflict.
 - **Montenegro** informed about a separate chapter on the Safety of journalists in the [Media Strategy](#) and about the intention to adopt a specific Action plan on the Safety of journalists.
 - It was agreed that the Campaign Secretariat will create a repository for national Action plans on the Campaign website for an easier overview of the existing frameworks.
 - **Croatia** established thematic working groups involving journalists and launched a platform to promote **transparency of media ownership**.
 - **Italy** reported the organisation of roundtables on the safety of journalists travelling to conflict zones. Domestically, Italy is advancing legislative reforms to transpose the EMFA and Anti-SLAPP Directive and is working on a draft defamation law that includes aggravating circumstances.

Online threats

- **Online threats to journalists** are increasing and can lead to physical violence. A major challenge is the lack of engagement from social media platforms, which hampers the implementation of effective solutions.
- In Ireland, there is no journalist-specific legislation for online harassment. However, journalists are protected under the broader [Online Safety and Media Regulation](#) (OSMR) Act. A new [Online Safety Code](#), adopted in October 2024, outlines responsibilities of private platforms in regulating content. While authorities cannot remove harmful content directly, they can impose fines up to €10 million. Reporting mechanisms via a single point of contact have been effective, and journalists are encouraged to report all incidents, even minor ones. The dedicated office established in 2022 aims to begin trend mapping soon.
- In the United Kingdom, the [Online Safety Act](#) was passed in October 2023. Efforts are ongoing to ensure that legitimate news content is not arbitrarily removed. A legal definition of news publishers has been included. A [Safety Tracker](#), developed jointly by the Government and the National Union of Journalists, was launched in autumn 2024.

Conclusion

The third meeting of the National Focal Points to the *Journalists Matter* Campaign highlighted continued progress and a shared commitment to improving journalists' safety across Europe. Participants emphasized the urgent need to address impunity through more effective prosecution and appropriate sanctioning of crimes against journalists, building on last year's focus on protection.



JOURNALISTS MATTER

Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

Several countries reported advances in adopting National Action Plans and establishing dialogue platforms. Data-driven approaches—such as risk-monitoring tools and national surveys—are helping shape more targeted policies.

Trust and collaboration remain essential, with participants calling for the active inclusion of journalists in planning and implementation efforts. Direct engagement between focal points and civil society partners was seen as key to improving transparency and joint problem-solving.

While legal reforms like anti-SLAPP measures are moving forward, online threats remain a serious concern, especially in the face of limited cooperation from tech platforms.

New tools, including a [collaborative online space](#) and a [repository for National Action Plans](#), will further support peer learning and coordination. The meeting confirmed that, despite persistent challenges, progress is underway and collective efforts are making a difference for media freedom across the region.