

First Meeting of National Focal Points for the Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists

6 October 2023, Riga, National Library of Latvia

Minutes

The First meeting of National Focal Points appointed by member states for the **Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists took place** at the National Library of Latvia on 6 October 2023. It offered a first opportunity for introduction and exchanges between focal points, as well as with the Council of Europe Campaign Secretariat, on the aims, roadmap and specific activities at the Campaign, at European and domestic level.

The meeting followed the Conference “The Pen is mightier than the sword? Meeting today’s challenges to freedom of expression and the safety of journalists”, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Latvian Presidency to the Committee of Ministers. The Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists was launched in the margins of the conference.

During the meeting, the following points were raised:

- **Introduction of National Focal Points:** A *tour de table* was conducted with the National Focal Points from participating MS, during which the representatives introduced themselves, highlighted national measures aimed at safeguarding journalists’ safety, articulated current challenges, and expressed their expectations from the Campaign.
- **Introduction of the Campaign:** The Secretariat presented the scope of the Campaign, its roadmap, the role of the National Focal Points and that of the national coordination mechanisms responsible for implementing the Campaign at the national level. Emphasis was placed on the expectation that tangible measures to implement existing standards should be put in place as part of the Campaign. It was clarified that different countries would progress at varying speed, according to their national realities, needs and possibilities. National coordination structures – to be established for the Campaign - are to be assigned with the responsibility of identifying areas that could benefit from Campaign activities and, where applicable and useful, drafting national action plans or strategies for journalists’ safety, with the assistance and expertise of the Council of Europe. It was stressed that raising awareness through tailored messages aimed at all

relevant actors involved in journalists' safety was of paramount importance. Shifting societal attitudes towards journalists was deemed a societal-wide endeavour and one of the ultimate aims of the Campaign.

- **Existing best practices:** An interactive session with experts featured examples of existing safety initiatives for journalists in MS. This included:
 1. Peter ter Velde, Security Coordinator at NOS, Persveilig, the Netherlands, who provided insights into the mechanism established in the Netherlands to offer protection for the safety of journalists'. He referred to its different dimensions, including the involved actors, resources and coordination.
 2. Milan Spirovski, Project Researcher, Association of Journalists of Macedonia, presented the information on safety initiatives in North Macedonia. The Association provides legal and advocacy support to staff journalists, editors, media outlets and freelance journalists.
 3. Espen Brynsrud, Head of Department at the Norwegian Union of Journalists provided examples of safety initiatives in Norway, such as training programs for journalists including specific digital trainings to face cases of harassment, threats, and violence.
- **Presentation of Implementation Guides to Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the Protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors:** Mr Peter Noorlander, Expert in media law and human rights, delivered a presentation of the Implementation Guide "How to protect journalists and other media actors?" to "Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the Protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors". The Guide refers to practices developed in MS to enhance the protection of journalists and containing concrete suggestions for implementation of the all four pillars of the 2016 Recommendation, in support to actionable measures by member States.
- The Secretariat of the Campaign presented the "**Pocket Guide for key actions for improved safety of journalists**". The document is a synthetic tool aimed at providing support to State authorities in their effort to set up, implement and boost national frameworks for the effective protection of the safety of journalists and it is intended to serve for the elaboration of national action plans or strategies in the field, offering MS an overview of the most relevant areas of action from which they may select the measures needed to address their specific country situations.

Conclusions and Upcoming Actions:

- **Meeting documents:** Documents of the meeting, including the updated list of participants, as well as other relevant materials are to be circulated to all focal points and made available on the [Campaign's website](#).
- **Online Workspace:** The National Focal Points discussed the possibility of establishing an online platform for information sharing and discussion on national and other measures and issues related to the Campaign. The Campaign's Secretariat will explore its feasibility.
- **List of National Focal Points:** It was agreed to have the list of national Focal Points published on the Campaign's webpage, including the country, name/title and the represented authority.
- **Next Focal Points Meeting:** The date for the next meeting of Focal Points could align with the Steering Committee for Media and Information Society (CDMSI) plenary meeting in June 2024. This timing would allow members of both structures to participate and interact.
- **Communication on Campaign Progress:** In the next meeting, Focal Points will be invited to share information on the steps taken under the Campaign, notably the initiation of a national dialogue with relevant actors to establish cooperation mechanisms and structures for transposing the Campaign at the national level, and agreed plans and measures for the implementation of the 'national chapter' of the Campaign.
- **Thematic Meeting:** The date for first the first thematic meeting out of the series of four foreseen throughout the duration of the Campaign, focusing on the 'protection' pillar of the CM/Rec(2016)4 could be scheduled for around November 2024. An option is to hold it close to the Anti-SLAPPs conference, enabling focal points to participate in the conference as well.
- **National and other initiatives under the Campaign:** National Focal Points were encouraged to put forward proposals for further meetings, exchanges or their activities, at national, regional and/or European level, which would enable sharing promising practices, mutual support and communication and awareness-raising around the Campaign, as well as to engage in dialogue between themselves around the Campaign purposes. The Council of Europe will act as a facilitator and will provide, as appropriate, expertise and other forms of support.

Annex:

Agenda of the meeting

List of participants to the meeting

List of appointed National Focal Points

Role of National Focal Points

Coordination mechanisms

Background documents

CM/Rec(2016)4

Implementation guides to the CM/Rec(2016)4: first edition (2020) and extended version (2023)

Pocket Guide on key actions to enhance journalist safety

Campaign concept note

Campaign leaflet