



JOURNALISTS MATTER

Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists



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20-21 June 2024

Second Meeting of the National Focal Points to the "Journalists Matter" Campaign

20-21 June 2024, Agora Building, Strasbourg

Minutes

The second meeting of the National Focal Points to the Council of Europe Campaign "Journalists Matter" took place on 20-21 June 2024, in Strasbourg. Building upon the conclusions of the first meeting held on 6 October 2023, in Riga, this session aimed to further the dialogue between member states, and member states and the Council of Europe, on ways to enhance the safety of journalists, particularly to share information on steps taken at the domestic level in the member States since the previous meeting, to identify common concerns and ways to advance with concrete results under the Campaign.

The occasion also facilitated exchanges with interested Council of Europe bodies, on this occasion the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), and partners of the Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists. It also allowed for discussions on recent initiatives and potential cooperation opportunities throughout the campaign. Moreover, the meeting provided a platform to discuss subsequent steps under the protection pillar of the campaign for 2024 and the prospects for the prosecution pillar in 2025.

Regular reports on the advancement of the campaign are to be provided to the Committee of Ministers through the Steering Committee for Media and Information Society (CDMSI), ensuring continuous oversight and support for the campaign's objectives, including through member states' dedicated voluntary contributions.

Introduction:

Irena Guidikova, Head of the Department, Democratic Institutions and Freedoms, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity, opened the meeting, emphasising the critical role of National Focal Points in the "Journalists Matter" campaign. She highlighted the significant threats journalists face, especially independent ones, underscored by the Platform's alert mechanism, and pointed to gender-specific threats facing women journalists, exacerbated by the digital transformation of the media landscape. She stressed the importance of national action plans and their implementation through the inclusive campaign committees. She also raised the need for financial contributions to support the campaign.

Ms Guidikova highlighted the necessity of making the campaign highly visible at the national level to restore public trust in the media.

Overview of the latest activities:

Rodica Ciocina, Campaign Manager, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division, recalled the [conclusions](#) of the first meeting held in Riga and the progress made since, including examples of first activities held under the Campaign in a number member states. She noted the participation of 38 Focal Points and ongoing efforts to engage all relevant bodies within the Council of Europe. She highlighted examples of collaboration, for the purposes of the Campaign, with the Cooperation Division on Freedom of Expression and the potential for cooperation with the Council's [Platform](#) to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists. Finally, she stressed the importance of national consultations and inclusive committees to coordinate domestic efforts.

Steps taken at national level and prospects for future action:

Several focal points reported on the initiation of national consultations with relevant stakeholders; the setting up of national committees charged with assessing needs and setting activities under the campaign; as well as on already held and planned activities, such as training, legislative measures, and pilot projects.

During the exchanges, focal points addressed issues like lack of awareness of the importance of journalists' role and safety among the larger public, difficulties in engaging stakeholders, and the need for focused discussions according to the realities and needs in different countries.

Other issues addressed included cooperation with law enforcement and with civil society organisations; the increased attention to be paid, under the campaign, to issues like editorial independence, funding, hate speech, and gender perspective.

Also, it appears from the discussions that member States are adopting different strategies to address different needs, including: coordinating efforts to overcome mistrust among institutions; the need for specialised training on the safety of journalists in war zones, extreme climates, and polarised environments that result in tangible chilling effects.

The importance of enhancing communication and visibility regarding the campaign among public authorities, the journalistic community, and the larger public was also addressed.

Exchange with representatives of Partner Organisations to the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists (Platform):

Approaching its 10th anniversary, the Platform recorded a high number of alerts while facing a poor resolution rate. The Platform partners emphasised the necessity for the Council of Europe and member States to include journalists in their initiatives under the campaign. The importance of sharing information and building trust with journalists was highlighted.

The focal points welcomed the exchange with the Platform partners, which should become a regular practice. They underlined the importance of involving journalists in their activities, of building and/or re-building trust between public authorities and the journalistic community, as a key-condition for a successful campaign, where even on 'smaller victories' in such interactions have their importance. Finally, the crucial role of the Platform in raising awareness about the campaign was underlined, including the potential help in involving the journalistic communities at the national level.

21 June 2024

Exchange of views with Valentina Grippo, General Rapporteur on Media Freedom and Safety of Journalists, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE):

In her first exchange with the Group of National Focal Points to the Campaign, Ms Grippo emphasised the critical role of parliaments and parliamentarians in protecting journalism and ensuring the safety of journalists. She discussed venues of cooperation with PACE, its members, and national parliaments under the campaign. She also urged member States to develop holistic national strategies and analyse their relevant political and legal conditions. She underlined how public sensitivity to the issue of the safety of journalists is a key matter for parliaments to take effective action.

The participants expressed their willingness to work with parliamentarians and underlined issues of concern such as media plurality and ownership.

Exchange with Alina Tatarenko, Head of the Cooperation on Freedom of Expression Division:

Ms Tatarenko presented the work of the Division. The Division has cooperation and assistance projects in 16 countries, already conducting numerous activities focused on journalist safety, including training with police, prosecutors, and legal officials. She invited member States to request assistance for training and other activities and discussed potential future activities and collaborations.

Follow-up action and forthcoming activities under the 'Protection Pillar':

Under forthcoming activities under the Protection pillar, the Secretariat of the Campaign informed about an upcoming seminar focused on the role of the police in the safety of journalists, scheduled for 26-27 September in Strasbourg. This seminar will address the police's role in journalists' safety, notably during public events, demonstrations, sports events, but not

only. The focal points were invited to select, domestically, a police representative from their countries to share existing practices but also issue of concern/difficulties faced in this respect and disseminate the outcomes of the seminar to concerned police services after the event.

Where needed, assistance could be asked from the Council of Europe Police Network Secretariat, which could help identify the appropriate representative for this event.

The campaign's annual conference on the "Protection Pillar" is scheduled for 29-30 October in Strasbourg. The 1.5-day event will bring together different target groups of the campaign (public authorities, civil society, journalists and their associations, Council of Europe bodies, and other partner organisations). The event will cover journalists' safety in different circumstances and according to the Protection pillar as per the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)4 on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors](#). The discussions will cover the protection of journalists in conflict zones, elections, sports events, etc., allowing for the sharing of best practices and existing initiatives in member States. The outcomes of the event will provide member States concrete points covering the protection component of a potential national action plan on the safety of journalists, or over coordination mechanisms created for the same purpose.

2025, the Prosecution Year of the Campaign, will see its annual conference on the "Prosecution Pillar" hosted by Luxembourg at the end of April 2025.

Finally, the Secretariat presented the webpage of the Campaign, the publication of updates under the National Chapters, and invited the focal points to regularly check the information. The focal points expressed their interest in having more focused discussions within the Campaign events, as well as a shared working space with the possibility of interactions among themselves.

Closing:

Artemiza-Tatiana Chisca, Head of Freedom of Expression and CDMSI Division, Secretary of the Steering Committee for Media and Information Society (CDMSI), closed the event by emphasising the increased attention, by member states, to issues related to journalist safety since the campaign's start, as it resulted from the discussions held. She highlighted the importance of dialogue, inclusiveness, and rebuilding trust. She stressed the importance of coordination between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and other international organisations engaged in activities related to the safety of journalists and encouraged ongoing collaborative efforts to address the complex landscape of journalist protection.

2nd Meeting of National Focal Points /*2ème réunion des points focaux nationaux*20-21 June 2024, Agora Building, Room G02, Strasbourg /
*20-21 juin 2024, Agora, Salle G02, Strasbourg***List of participants / Liste de participant.e.s****NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS / POINTS FOCAUX NATIONAUX**

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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA/BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE	Ms/Mme Nina MIŠKOVIĆ online Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina/ <i>Secrétaire du ministère des Droits de l'homme et des réfugiés de Bosnie-Herzégovine</i> Mr/M. Emir POVLAČIĆ Head of Audiovisual and Media Services, Communications Regulatory Agency / <i>Chef des services audiovisuels et médias, Agence de régulation des communications</i>
CROATIA / CROATIE	Ms/Mme Nives ZVONARIĆ Head of Media Sector, Ministry of Culture and Media / <i>Cheffe du secteur des médias, ministère de la Culture et des Médias</i>
CYPRUS / CHYPRE	Mr/M Kyriakos KONSTANTAKIS Press and Information Officer, Ministry of Interior, Republic of Cyprus / <i>Attachée de presse et d'information, ministère de l'Intérieur,</i>

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GEORGIA/GEORGIE	Ms/Mme Ketevan CHEMIA Deputy Permanent Representative of Georgia to the Council of Europe / <i>Adjoint au Représentant Permanent de la Georgie auprès du Conseil de l'Europe</i>
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IRELAND / IRLANDE	Ms/Mme Leah KIERAN Media Policy, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media / <i>Politique des médias, Service du tourisme, de la culture, des arts, du Gaeltacht, des sports et des médias</i>
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LATVIA / LETTONIE	Mr/M Klāvs RIMŠĀNS Expert of Information Space Integration Unit, Ministry of Culture / <i>Expert de l'unité d'intégration de l'espace d'information, ministère de la Culture</i>
LITHUANIA / LITUANIE	Ms/Mme Dzina DONAUSKAITE Director, Lithuanian Journalism Centre, NGO / <i>Directrice, Centre lituanien de journalisme, ONG</i>
LUXEMBOURG	Ms/Mme Julie BRÜCKLER Chargé de mission Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Cooperation and Foreign Trade / <i>Chargé de mission ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes, de la Défense, de la Coopération et du Commerce extérieur</i>

	<p>Ms/Mme Céline FLAMMANG Chargé de mission to the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade / <i>Chargé de mission au ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes, de la Défense, de la Coopération et du Commerce extérieur</i></p>
MONACO	<p>M/Mr Serge ROBILLARD Head of Partnerships and Institutional Relations, Interministerial Delegation in charge of Digital Transition / <i>Chargé des partenariats et des relations institutionnelles, Délégation Interministérielle chargée de la Transition Numérique</i></p>
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NETHERLANDS / PAYS-BAS	<p>Ms/Mme Charlotte WOLFF Journalism Team Coordinator, Media department, Ministry of Education Culture and Science / <i>Coordinatrice de l'équipe de journalisme, département des médias, ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et des Sciences</i></p>
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SERBIA / SERBIE	<p>Mr/M Dorde CICOVIĆ Deputy to the Permanent Representative / <i>Adjoint au représentant permanent</i></p>
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE SECRETARIAT / SECRETARIAT DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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