

Action

PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF THE MEDIA IN NORTH MACEDONIA (PRO-FREX)

Thematic discussion for
**Upholding Journalistic Integrity: Safeguarding Journalists and Media Actors in North
Macedonia**

Draft Programme

17 April 2024

Venue: Hotel Aleksandar Palace

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This thematic discussion is organised under the action "Protecting freedom of expression and freedom of the media in North Macedonia (PRO-FREX)", which is part of the joint European Union and Council of Europe programme "[Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye](#)" (Horizontal Facility III).

This thematic discussion aims to bring together journalists, media professionals, public prosecutors, lawyers and judges, as well as other representatives from media CSOs. The discussions aims at taking stock of recent developments in the field of protection and safety of journalists and providing elements of analysis for future action.

The first panel will analyse the emerging European legal framework to counter SLAPPs, including latest standards and tools from the European Commission and the Council of Europe, and discuss the domestic legislation and case-law on defamation and SLAPPs.

Against the backdrop of the ongoing campaign on safety of journalists "Journalists Matter" launched by the Council of Europe, the second panel will present the objectives of the campaign, as well as the domestic initiatives towards safety and protection of journalists in North Macedonia.

This event shall serve as a platform for informed discussions, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative efforts toward fortifying the protection and safety of journalists in North Macedonia in line with European standards.

This event seeks to:

1. Enhance awareness of the challenges encountered by journalists.;
2. Champion the implementation of pertinent recommendations and the incorporation of European standards at the domestic level.;
3. Catalyse a collective dedication to the need of crafting a National Action Plan for the Protection and Safety of Journalists.
4. Strengthen the partnership with the civil society for improved collaboration and joint advocacy efforts.

DRAFT AGENDA



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Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89686096352>

Meeting ID: 896 8609 6352

Passcode: 000000

10:00 – 10:30 Registration of participants

Moderator: Aleksandra BOGDANOVSKA, Senior Project Officer, PRO-FREX North Macedonia

10:30 – 10:50 Opening session: Welcome and Introduction

1. **Oleg SOLDATOV**, Head of Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje
2. **Alina TATARENKO**, Head of Division on Co-operation and Capacity Building on Freedom of Expression
3. **Snezana KOLEKESKA**, Programme Manager/ Twinning&TAIEX Coordinator, Delegation of the European Union of North Macedonia
4. **Dragan SEKULOVSKI**, Executive Director of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia

10:50 – 11:30 Panel 1: European standards and domestic legislation for protection against SLAPPs

1. "Empowering journalistic resilience: exploring the Council of Europe's latest tools against SLAPPs and the Extended Implementation Guide on protection of journalism and safety of journalists"
Giulia LUCCHESI, Secretary to the Former Expert Committee on Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation, Council of Europe (online)
2. "Fighting back SLAPPs – recent European instruments, role of civil society and the way forward in implementing Anti-SLAPPs standards at national level"
Flutura KUSARI, Council of Europe international consultant
3. "Unveiling truths: navigating the world of investigative journalism in North Macedonia"
Sashka CVETKOVSKA, Journalist, Investigative Reporting Lab (IRL),
4. "Shielding the guardians of democracy: a critical analysis of journalist safety laws with a focus on the new Law on Civil liability for Insult and Defamation"
Lazar SANDEV, Lawyer
5. "Unveiling legal tactics: identifying SLAPPs in domestic case law"
Aleksandar SHOPOV, Judge, Appellate Court Skopje

11:30 – 11:45 Discussion

11:45 – 12:00

Coffee break



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12:00 – 12:40

Panel 2: Strengthening journalists' safety: Utilising European and domestic standards and resources

1. "Championing journalistic integrity: unveiling the objectives of the Council of Europe's 'Journalists Matter' Campaign"
Rodica CIOCHINA, *Program Specialist, Manager of the Campaign for the Safety of Journalists, Freedom of Expression and CDMSI, Council of Europe (online)*
2. "Uncovering press freedom challenges in North Macedonia"
Dragan SEKULOVSKI, *Executive director at Association of Journalists of Macedonia*
3. "Strengthening journalist safety: the imperative for focal points for protection and safety of journalists"
Toni ANGELOVSKI, *Assistant Minister – Spokesperson, Ministry for Internal Affairs*
4. "Unity in protection: collaborative efforts to safeguard journalism and journalist safety"
Dejan PETRESKI, *Public Prosecutor, National Focal Point for Protection and Safety of Journalists,*

12:40 – 13:00

Discussion

13:00 – 13:15

Conclusions and closing

Aleksandra BOGDANOVSKA, *Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje*

13:15 – 14:30

Lunch and informal exchange