

Towards a checklist for dedicated national action plans on the safety and protection of journalists and other media actors

Prepared in the context of Council of Europe
Journalists Matter Campaign for the Safety of Journalists



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This document presents a practical checklist for developing dedicated **National Action Plans (NAPs)** on the safety and protection of journalists and other media actors. It is based on the Committee of Ministers' **Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media actors**.

The checklist aims to support policy-makers, public authorities and stakeholders in translating Council of Europe standards into **concrete, structured and measurable national action**.

It follows the four pillars of Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4: Prevention; Protection; Prosecution; Promotion of information, education and awareness-raising. It also reflects relevant Council of Europe implementation guidance, resolutions and good practices.

Each section outlines key elements that may be considered when **designing, implementing or reviewing** a National Action Plan, including institutional arrangements, procedural safeguards, operational measures, coordination mechanisms and follow-up processes.

The checklist is **not prescriptive**. It is intended as a flexible tool that can be adapted to different national contexts, legal systems and institutional frameworks.

PREVENTION

Key points in Recommendation	Key points for checklist
States should: ▶ Ensure a favourable environment for freedom of expression, including media pluralism and an independent public service broadcasting system ▶ Establish a comprehensive legislative framework protecting journalists, journalistic sources and whistleblowers ▶ Conduct regular independent and substantive reviews of national laws and practices, including attention to: - gender-related issues - anti-terrorism, extremism and national security measures - challenges arising from the digital environment ▶ Ensure that review mechanisms are independent, adequately resourced and have authoritative mandates ▶ Ensure defamation laws include safeguards for freedom of expression ▶ Provide safeguards and effective oversight mechanisms in relation to State surveillance	▶ Designation of an independent body to review legislative and policy frameworks and their implementation ▶ Formal mandate, clear objectives, working methods and planning for the review body ▶ Adequate financial and human resources ▶ Government commitment to support the review process and follow up on findings and recommendations ▶ Development of a detailed review template (e.g. based on the Pocket Guide: Key Actions for Improved Safety of Journalists) ▶ Roadmap for multi-stakeholder discussion, dissemination and follow-up of review findings

PROTECTION

Key points in Recommendation	Key points for checklist
States are called upon to: ▶ Adopt preventive operational measures, such as police protection or voluntary evacuation to safe locations ▶ Support the establishment of hotlines and 24-hour emergency contact points ▶ Provide effective responses to alerts on the Council of Europe Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists ▶ Develop protocols and training programmes for relevant authorities (including judges, legal professionals and law-enforcement officers) ▶ Publicly acknowledge and support the democratic role of journalism, especially in times of crisis, elections, public demonstrations and conflict situations ▶ Publicly condemn threats and violence against journalists ▶ Encourage media organisations to fulfil their institutional responsibilities regarding journalists' safety	▶ Adoption of a National Action Plan and establishment of a steering committee with coordination responsibilities ▶ Identification of action lines, responsible actors and implementation timelines ▶ Operational protocols for police protection and voluntary evacuation ▶ National hotline and 24-hour emergency contact mechanisms ▶ Independent, accessible and reliable system for registering threats and attacks ▶ Regular monitoring and reporting (e.g. around 3 May and 2 November), including disaggregated data and gender-specific analysis ▶ Communication channels with the Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists partner organisations to facilitate rapid alert processing ▶ Operational safety protocols for authorities in crisis situations, elections, demonstrations and conflict zones ▶ Designation of journalist safety liaison officers within relevant authorities ▶ Tailored training programmes across sectors ▶ Strategies to secure regular political condemnation of attacks (e.g. cross-party pledges, parliamentary working groups) ▶ Structured high-level multi-stakeholder dialogue to secure commitments from media organisations regarding institutional safety responsibilities ▶ Online safety advisers within media organisations and journalist associations ▶ Charter or collective agreement addressing freelancers' rights and working conditions ▶ Dedicated contact teams and fast-track alert mechanisms at large online platforms

PROSECUTION

Key points in Recommendation	Key points for checklist
States should: ▶ Establish specific rules and procedures for effective investigation and prosecution of crimes against journalists ▶ Ensure the involvement of victims and their families in investigative processes ▶ Adopt measures to prevent and combat impunity ▶ Consider establishing commissions of inquiry where killings remain unresolved ▶ Cooperate with other States in cross-border and online cases ▶ Engage actively with European and international human rights mechanisms	▶ Investigation protocols reflecting requirements set out in Guidelines 18–21¹, (effective, independent and prompt investigations; consideration of professional motives; protection of victims and witnesses; specialised capacity and coordination) ▶ Procedures for expedited case handling and, where appropriate, aggravating circumstances in sentencing ▶ Victim support schemes ensuring access to justice, remedies and psychosocial support ▶ Awareness-raising on available victim support mechanisms ▶ National anti-impunity strategy and, where relevant, dedicated working group or coordination mechanism ▶ Cooperation structures with authorities in neighbouring countries ▶ Engagement frameworks with European and international law-enforcement bodies ▶ Structured dialogue and fast communication channels with large online platforms ▶ Policy guidance for embassies and diplomatic missions on supporting journalists abroad ▶ Reporting calendar and engagement strategy with European and international monitoring bodies

1. Implementation Guide to selected topics under the Protection and Prosecution pillars of the Guidelines of Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors

PROMOTION OF INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING

Key points in Recommendation	Key points for checklist
States should: ▶ Promote translation and dissemination of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 ▶ Use international days promoting the safety of journalists (e.g. 3 May, 28 September, 2 November) for awareness-raising ▶ Encourage inclusion of journalist safety issues in education and media literacy initiatives ▶ Develop partnerships with civil society and media organisations	▶ Translation policy and funding (including minority languages) ▶ Public education strategy on the importance of journalism and journalist safety, including for vulnerable and marginalised groups ▶ Central contact point and online information portal ▶ Multi-media dissemination strategy ▶ Awareness-raising campaigns (including gender-related and digital safety issues) ▶ Review of journalism and education curricula addressing safety and Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 ▶ Biannual programmes of events and activities ▶ Database of cooperation with journalist associations and civil society organisations ▶ Political and financial support for the <i>Journalists Matter</i> Campaign



This initiative is a contribution towards the
New Democratic Pact for Europe

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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