
Effective prevention and protection of journalists in Montenegro

Tasks and obligations to prevent physical attacks and threats for editors and journalists

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A HANDBOOK FOR JOURNALISTS AND EDITORS

The safety of journalists is a priority for the profession, for journalists (either employed or freelancers), editors and employers. Without safe working conditions, journalists cannot carry out their duty to investigate and to report to the public. However, journalists are facing increasing violence, threats and attacks in recent years.

This short handbook provides essential information and practical advice to journalists in their work, but any guideline and handbook can only be efficient with the necessary training and safety policy in newsrooms. A culture of newsroom safety among journalists and media managers is a prerequisite for journalist safety.

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT ?

Threat: The threat must be direct, not 'wishful thinking', and it must be considered at a time whether it is punishable

- With open violence
- With any crime that may endanger the general safety or health of persons or cause a general danger to property.
- With rape / actual assault of honour
- Targeted against life with any crime
- With hostage, severe mistreatment, arson or terrorism
- Via social media.

Physical violence:

- Pushing, pulling, grabbing; if it causes pain or injury
- Beating if there is pain or injury
- Kicking if there is pain or injury
- Injured if it happens intentionally

What are the various situations of high risks for journalists?

- **High Risk:** for example, the BBC¹ describes "high risk" as "work that carries a significantly higher than normal risk of death or serious injury as a consequence of operating" in, or being part of environments, events and activities
- **Hostile Environments:** a country, region or specified area subject to war, insurrection, civil unrest, terrorism or extreme levels of crime, banditry, lawlessness or public disorder; or areas with extreme climate or terrain.
- **High Risk Events:** it might be riots, civil disturbance or extreme public disorder, terrorist or armed criminal incidents such as hi-jacking or sieges, any event involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) substances, extreme climatic events and natural disasters such as hurricanes, severe floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. or outbreaks of serious diseases and pandemics. (Events will be designated as High Risk by the High Risk Team in discussion with News Group senior management)
- **High Risk Activities:** investigations involving covert surveillance or filming and/or confrontation of terrorist, serious organised criminal, extremist or violent political groups

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/safety/safetyguides/highrisk>

Before going to an assignment:

Stay Informed:

- Know your rights and know the environment: Familiarize yourself with local laws regarding press freedom and journalist protections.
- Participate in training: Engage in safety and self-defence training specifically tailored for journalists.

Conduct a safety self-assessment:

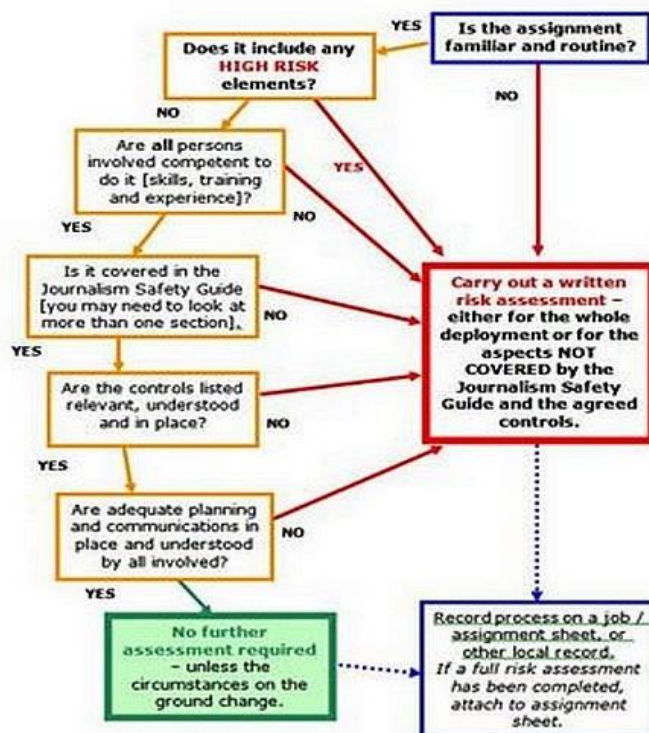
- Does your news organization have a safety and crisis management policy and relevant protocols in place? If no, why not? If yes, are these protocols written in a document and do you know them?
- Do you have a clear procedure or mechanism in place to raise safety concerns?
- A full risk self-assessment can be [found on the EFJ website](#). It is designed to help journalists and media workers to better prepare for risky assignments. After having completed the survey, journalists receive customised advice to help mitigate the risks that they might face during a specific assignment, along with rapid response mechanisms. They are also able to visualise these risks and download templates (personal pro-forma, cost price analysis, travel plans, communication plans, etc.). The risk assessment tool exists in several languages, including in Croatian, which can be useful for Montenegrin journalists. Such initiatives are concrete examples of how professional organisations contribute to the protection of journalists.

The five basic strategies to risk management

- Risk Acceptance: control of risk factors must be in the hands of the journalist at all times so that there is an understanding of the present risk.
- Risk Avoidance: a journalist can carry out a task successfully by avoiding a risk, such as covering combat operations from a distance or covering a public disorder event from an elevated distance.
- Risk Transfer: risk is personally unacceptable, professionals who are able to deal more proficiently with the situation must handle the task.
- Risk Reduction: standard operating procedures and training may reduce the occurrence of risk. The use of physical protection and risk management systems should be considered in areas of conflict.
- Ignoring the risk: risks are not taken into account and/or bypassed in favour of editorial considerations.

In case of specific threats, conduct a specific threat assessment:

- Evaluate the nature of the threat: ask the right questions and source information from relevant people
- Check if there is a pattern that led to the current threat: location, time, and target group. What are the past and present factors leading to the threat?
- Assess the objective of the threat: establish a clear definition may help to pre-empt incoming threats.
- Investigate who are the direct and indirect people or organisations that are involved in the threat; try to be as specific as possible.
- Reach a reasonable conclusion about whether or not the threat is **tangible**.



An example of risk management is the flowchart from the [Journalism Safety Guide of the BBC](#). It starts from the familiarity of the assignment (or not) and the various elements to take into consideration before starting the risk assessment itself, such as the competences of other persons, planning and communication, available information in the safety guides, etc.

During the assignment:

Think about the five Standard Operating procedures (SOPs)

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is a detailed explanation of how the safety procedure is implemented, according to the following points:

- **Who** is assigned to the task
- **What** materials are necessary
- **Where** the task takes place
- **When** the task is performed
- **How** the person executes the task in a safe and professional manner

Prioritize safety

- Assess the situation: Determine whether it's safe to remain or if immediate evacuation is necessary.
- Have an "exit plan": In volatile situations, always have a strategy to exit safely.
- Stay aware of your surroundings: Recognizing potential threats can help mitigate risks.

When a journalist is working alone

- Foresee appropriate and effective means of communication, and means of raising the alarm
- Know of where people are, their routes and what time they are expected to be back
- Maintain contact and know how to raise alarm if they get into trouble
- Have a plan of action ready if the lone worker fails to check-in

- The manager of a person working alone must respect their decision to withdraw from an activity if this is for safety or security reasons
- These procedures should be known to all relevant people, in case of emergencies including “out of usual working hours”.

TIPS FOR RISK ZONES:

- *Always carry a press ID ... but only show it when safe*
- *Avoid items with a large media logo on it (e.g. t-shirts, baseball caps, microphone covers)*
- *Wear loose cotton-based fabric clothing as this will not burn as readily as synthetic ones*
- *Wear distinctive clothing that differs from police forces and army uniforms*
- *Set your cell phone to rapid dial to an emergency number*
- *Stay upwind of tear gas and bring eye protection*
- *Carry first aid kits ... and learn how to use them*
- *Cover arms, legs and neck. Carry enough food and water*
- *Never run with a crowd and do not pick any objects as this could implicate involvement in a protest*
- *Report to your news office regularly, as the situation requires*
- *Establish pre-arranged contact points with the rest of the team (photographer, camera operator, producer, etc.) if separated*

If you are attacked :

Document the Attack

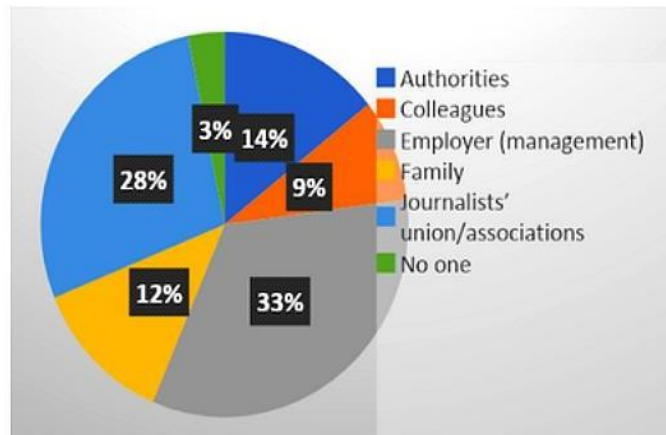
- **Gather evidence:** Whenever safe to do so, record details of the incident, including time, location, and witnesses.
- **Use technology:** Employ cameras or smartphones to document attacks or threats. This can serve as crucial evidence for legal or organizational follow-up.

Seek Support

- **Contact colleagues:** Alert other journalists and trusted individuals to your situation for support and back up.
- **Engage with professional organizations:** Reach out to press freedom groups or unions for assistance and resources.
- **Legal counsel:** In cases of threats, consult with a lawyer specializing in media law. In some cases, a better solution can be found without taking legal action. There are also costs to pursuing legal action, this can be in the form of increased stress, time and money.

Report the Incident

- Notify authorities: If the attack is severe or poses ongoing threats, file a report with local law enforcement.
- Inform your organization: Let your employer or media outlet know about the attack so they can offer support or take necessary action.
- Publicize through channels: If safe, consider informing the public or using social media to raise awareness of the attack.



Person or body journalists report to following an incident.
© EFJ/Marc Gruber (Safety4Journalists, 2022)

After the attack : Beware of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Detect the signs and seek mental health support

- Monitor your colleagues for signs that they have been affected by a traumatic event. Also talk to others involved or other colleagues.
- Journalists should talk to their manager at the earliest opportunity if they are experiencing problems after a traumatic event or have concerns
- Seek counselling. Experiencing an attack can have psychological effects. Professional support, including therapy, can help process these experiences.²
- Consider peer support groups. Connect with other journalists who have faced similar situations for emotional support and shared coping strategies.

"When you come back from an assignment, you unpack, and you do your laundry. (...) Counselling should be no different than having your laundry done, except it's your head laundry. Some people might choose to have it done, others won't."

Chris Cramer, Former President of CNN International, speaking at the IFJ seminar "Conflicts and War Crimes: Challenges for Coverage", May 2000.

Review the incident and the protocols

- Analyze the incident: Think critically about what happened and why, and how it could be prevented in the future.
- Update safety plans: Work with your organization to improve existing safety measures or protocols based on the incident.

Get engaged and advocate for press freedom:

- Engage in activism: Work with organisations defending press freedom to raise awareness about the threats journalists face.
- Share your story: Consider writing about the experience to highlight the challenges journalists encounter, contributing to a broader conversation about safety in journalism.

Recommendations

Governments and public authorities

- Ratify international agreements and implement European standards: Commit to and implement instruments that protect journalists.
- Enforce laws: Create and enforce robust legal protections for journalists, including stringent penalties for those who attack them.
- Investigate attacks: Promptly, thoroughly, and impartially investigate any attacks against journalists and hold perpetrators accountable.
- Organise and / or provide training: Offer training for law enforcement and security forces on the importance of press freedom and how to protect journalists.
- Promote a safe environment: Foster a media environment where free expression is encouraged, and attacks are publicly denounced.
- Create or support independent “focal points” for reporting security incidents for journalists, in collaboration between journalists’ organisations, employers and public authorities;
- Educate journalists on safety issues – e.g. academic level at universities / journalism schools

Media Organisations (employers)

- Commit to safety issues and establish contact points: Editors and editors-in-chief should be the gate keepers to ensure the safety of journalists
- Implement safety policies: Establish and enforce safety protocols for journalists, including risk assessments and emergency response plans³.
- Provide training and resources: Offer safety training, conflict resolution, and self-defence courses for staff, especially those reporting in high-risk areas. Top managers / editors who have power to make a cultural shift should also receive training.
- Mental health support: Ensure access to mental health resources for journalists who experience threats or violence.
- Facilitate communication: Foster an environment where journalists can report threats or violence without fear of retribution.
- Advocate for press freedom: Actively engage in advocacy efforts to promote the safety of journalists and press freedom.

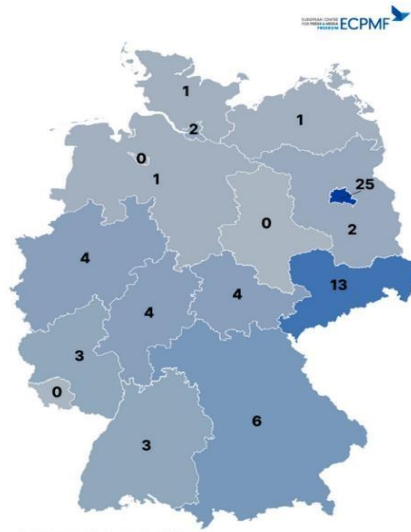
Civil Society and NGOs

- Monitor and report: Keep track of instances of violence against journalists and publish reports to raise awareness.
- Create awareness campaigns: Launch initiatives to educate the public on the importance of press freedom and the challenges journalists face.
- Support legal reforms: Advocate for better legal frameworks to protect journalists and punish those who attack them.
- Provide resources: Offer shelter, legal assistance, and psychological support for journalists under threat.

³ An example of news organization self-assessment can be found here:
<https://www.acosalliance.org/safety-management>

Background information 1 : identification and classification of the risks

In Germany, increasing attacks lead to self-censorship



Number of attacks against journalists in Germany in 2023. Source: ECPMF/BDZV

According to the study “The Journalist as the Enemy” (*Feindbild Journalist*), produced recently by the European Center for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) and the Federal Union of German Newspaper Publishers (BDZV)⁴, the number of attacks on journalists keeps growing in Germany. In 2023, a total of 69 incidents were reported compared to 56 cases in 2022. Between 2015 and 2019, there was “only” an approximate average of 23 such cases annually. One third of all the recorded cases since 2015 (117 of 390 cases total) are happening in the East, mostly in the state of Saxony, followed by Berlin, Bavaria and Thuringia.

The study also found that aggressivity is not only verbal (displayed by those shouting “Lügenpresse” - “the lying press”), but increasingly physical. Journalists are literally obstructed in their work, with people covering cameras with different objects, hitting mobile phones and striking journalists’ bodies with objects such as flagpoles. The figures produced by RSF show that physical attacks consist

mainly of hand blows, brutal pulling, foot kicks, hits with objects and painful grips.

The “*Feindbild Journalist*” study warns that self-censorship, above all in the local media, is increasing in Germany among reporters as a result of these aggressive assaults. It is both a democratic problem in terms of local information, and a professional problem since local media workers cannot “disappear into anonymity” or change working habits like their colleagues in large cities. Local journalists therefore do not report on some actors and movements out of fear. Journalists often deplore the lack of police protection at demonstrations.

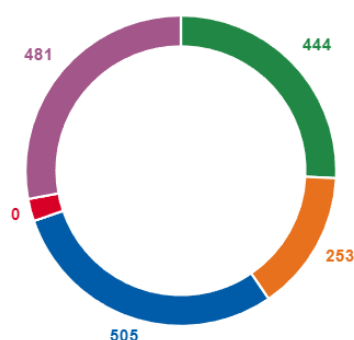


⁴ <https://www.ecpmf.eu/feindbild-journalistin-8-angst-vor-der-selbstzensur/#english>

Elsewhere in Europe, physical threats and attacks also on the rise

When looking at a broader picture at European level, according to the annual report on "Press Freedom in Europe: Time to Turn the Tide"⁵ issued on 5 March 2024 by the Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists of the Council of Europe (the Platform), the major threats to media are, **attacks (and threats) on physical safety and integrity of journalists represented around one quarter of the general safety issues for journalist** on a cumulative basis between 2015 and 2024. In terms of annual evolution, physical threats and attacks reached a peak in 2021 and are still significantly higher than before 2020.

Alerts by category



- Attacks on physical safety and integrity of journalists
- Detention and imprisonment of journalists
- Harassment and intimidation of journalists
- Impunity
- Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

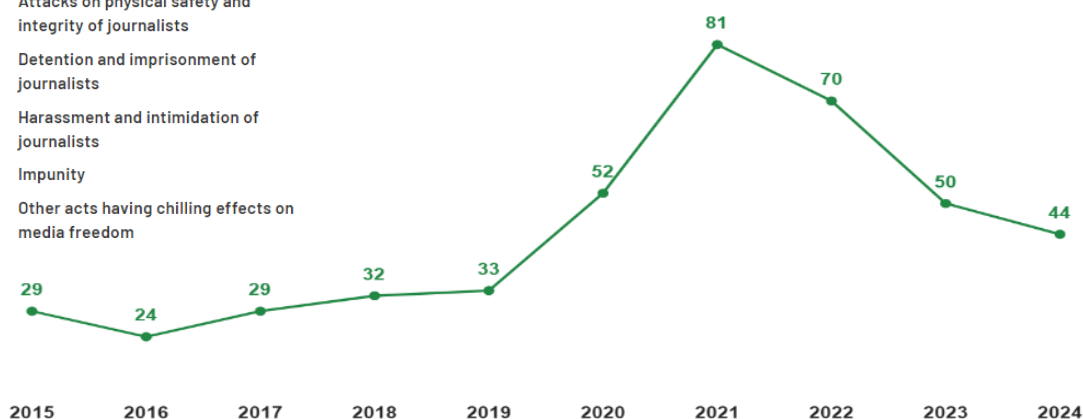


Figure on top: Categories of alerts in 2023. Figure at bottom: Evolution of attacks on physical safety of journalists in Europe. Source: Platform of the Council of Europe.

Background information 2: Obligations of various stakeholders

General regulations/obligations (Council of Europe and EU standards, Germany and other selected countries)

Safety of journalists is considered by international, European and national standards as being part of the obligation to respect and enforce press freedom. In addition to the general principle of media freedom, the following standards and obligations can be identified for the safety of journalists:

International standards

⁵ [Press Freedom in Europe: Time to Turn the Tide \(Council of Europe\)](#)

- **United nations (UN)** : In 2012, the UN developed its [Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists](#), which addresses prevention, protection, and prosecution. It includes six areas: raising awareness; standard setting and policy making; monitoring and reporting; capacity-building and research. It also set up the [Observatory of Killed Journalists](#) and it developed UN-based Journalists Safety Indicators (JSIs).
- **International Labour Organization (ILO)**: On 10 June 2022, the ILO adopted “a safe and healthy work environment” as one of its five fundamental principles and rights at work for all⁶. ILO Member States, regardless of their level of economic development, commit to respect and promote these principles and rights, whether or not they have ratified the relevant Conventions.

European standards

- **Council of Europe (CoE)**: To complement the general principles of Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights, a key text of the Council of Europe is [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)4\[1\] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors](#), stating that “positive obligations include, among others: to create a favourable environment for participation in public debate for everyone and to enable the expression of ideas and opinions without fear; to put in place an effective system of protection for authors and journalists; to afford protection against physical violence and intimidation; to protect life; to investigate fatalities; and the duty to prevent torture and ill-treatment” (paragraph 12) and that “states are under a positive obligation to protect journalists and other media actors against intimidation, threats and violence irrespective of their source, whether governmental, judicial, religious, economic or criminal” (paragraph 28). In October 2023, the Council of Europe launched its campaign for the safety of journalists entitled “Journalists Matter”⁷. Each member state designated a National Focal Point to act as the interface between the domestic stakeholders and the Council of Europe Secretariat of the campaign.
- **The police**: Although the police is supposed to protect journalists in their work, sometimes they are at the sources of threats and attacks against journalists. In 2019, the ECPMF published its [Press Freedom Police Codex](#)⁸. It covers questions of accreditation, confiscation of journalists’ materials, police brutality and police surveillance. The creators of the codex based it on their research in the area of conflicts between the members of these professions Europe-wide. The ECPMF aims to establish dialogue between journalists and police, provide instruction through the codex, and thereby contribute to smoother cooperation between the professions.

⁶ [ILO Conference adds safety and health to Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#)

⁷ [Journalists Matter : Council of Europe Campaign for the Safety of Journalists](#)

⁸ Other contributors to the Codex were the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Index on Censorship, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT), Ossigeno per l’informazione (O2) and the South-East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO).

German law

The Constitution (*Grundgesetz*)

provides the main general protection for freedom of expression and freedom of the press⁹. Furthermore, according to Section 240 of the **Criminal Code**, anyone who unlawfully coerces another person into an act, tolerance or omission by force or by threatening serious harm will be punished with a prison sentence of up to three years or a fine. Criminal liability is foreseen for the destruction of “important work equipment” as article 305 of the Criminal Code provides for some professions, but this does not come into consideration when destroying journalists' work equipment. Bodily injury (Section 223 of the Criminal Code) as well as threat (Section 241 of the Criminal Code) constitute a criminal offence which are investigated and prosecuted upon the victim's request or if the prosecution authorities find a particular public interest warranting prosecution.

In June 2023, an amendment to the Swedish Criminal Code gave enhanced protection to journalists under the criminal law. Crimes committed against a person because of their role as a journalist are assessed more harshly and carry higher penalties.

In 2021, the German *Land* of Hesse proposed a new criminal paragraph against “*disturbing the activities of the press*” in order to punish unauthorized nonviolent obstructions to the press, for example demonstrators who stand next to a radio team with whistles to disrupt an interview, or flags or banners held in front of cameras in such a way that image reporting is no longer possible. However, the idea was criticized and was not implemented.

According to the distribution of powers in the Constitution, measures for the specific protection of media workers are fundamentally the responsibility of the states. Accordingly, the federal government cannot provide any compulsory policy or guidelines that the states may have for the protection of media workers.

Special criminal offences to physically protect journalists are therefore **not foreseen** by the German Criminal Code. German legislation does not include mechanisms to ensure specific investigation and prosecution of attacks against journalists and other media actors. There are no non-judicial mechanisms, such as parliamentary or other public inquiries, ombudspersons or independent commissions specifically dealing with threats and crimes targeting journalists and other media actors.

Examples of rulings on violence against journalists in Germany:

The following examples provide illustrations of court decisions dealing with physical threats and attacks against journalists.

Prison for attacking journalists: In January 2024, the four defendants in the trial for an attack on a ZDF camera team were each sentenced to two years' imprisonment on probation for grievous bodily harm. They also have to pay a fine of €5.000 each. The six victims were knocked down and then the heads of those lying on the ground were violently kicked. Two of the victims temporarily lost consciousness. A cameraman suffered a broken nose. In December 2021, *Tagesspiegel* reporter Julius Geiler was attacked at a *Querdenker* (“alternative thinkers”), corona deniers and right-wing extremists demonstration. Two men have been convicted. One of them sentenced to two years and four months in prison for “robbery and bodily harm”, the other was fined with €9,600 euros (120 daily rates of €80) for “attempted coercion and attempted bodily harm”.

⁹ [Die Grundrechte, Artikel 5](#): “Everyone has the right to freely express and disseminate their opinions in speech, writing and images and to obtain information, without hindrance, from generally accessible sources. Freedom of the press and freedom of reporting by means of broadcasts and films shall be guaranteed. There shall be no censorship.”

“An attack on press freedom”: In August 2023, a 24-year-old man has been sentenced to prison for attacking a Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) reporter after a press conference on the corona vaccination in August 2022. The Munich district court imposed a prison sentence of ten months without parole. The man also described press representatives present at the start of the trial as “dirty journalists” (*Drecksjournalisten*). In her reasoning, the judge said that the attack “*was not directed solely against the BR journalist, but against the office he held at that moment - thus it was an attack on press freedom.*”

Doubts about the recognition of journalists: On 15 September 2022, two men in Thuringia were sentenced to 200 hours of work and to a suspended prison sentence sentences, which was significantly lower than what was demanded by the prosecution after an attack against two journalists with a wrench, a baseball bat and a knife. This provoked an outrage among media freedom groups and trade unions of journalists. The court was unable to determine that the crime was a targeted attack on journalists, because during the main hearing it was not clear that the defendants “recognized the two attacked as press representatives”. The co-prosecution harshly criticized the work of the police and the decision caused criticism, including from the regional branch of the journalists' union DJV which feared a “free pass for right-wing extremists”¹⁰. On 14 March 2024, the Federal Court of Justice (BGH) has overturned the ruling and announced that case would be re-examined.

Specific media requirements/obligations, including company-based or industry-based

Employers in Germany

Almost all journalists are members of on the two professional unions, the German Federation of Journalists (*Deutscher Journalisten-Verband, DJV*) and the German Journalists' Union (*Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union, dju in ver.di*). They provide support, legal assistance, advocacy and training¹¹ for journalists facing threats or attacks and are powerful instruments of protection of journalists, including for freelancers. A survey issued by the EFJ in 2022¹² showed that following an incident of any type (physical, legal, online), journalists report to their professional organization in the first place.

The journalists' union dju in ver.di created an information campaign targeting the police.¹³ They distributed a flyer dedicated to the relations between journalists and the police during public events, clarifying the rights and responsibilities of each party in the process.

At the level of the Press Council also, proposal on common principles of conduct for the police and the media¹⁴ had been launched in 2020. This includes better police security concepts and agreements between reporters and emergency services. The aim is to be better protected at demonstrations and major events and to be able to work unhindered.

A new “Protection codex” since 2022

¹⁰ [Niedrige Strafen nach Angriff auf Journalisten in Thüringen \(2022\)](#)

¹¹ [Dju in ver.di - Sicherheitstraining für Journalist*innen \(2024\)](#)

¹² [Safety4Journalists \(2022\)](#)

¹³ [Journalismus und Polizeiarbeit](#)

¹⁴ [Gemeinsame Verhaltensregeln für Medien und Polizei \(2020\)](#) . The draft rules of conduct were drawn up by the German Press Council with its sponsoring associations dju, DJV, BDZV and VDZ as well as ARD, ZDF, Deutschlandradio and the Association of Private Media VAUNET.

With the “[Protection codex](#)” (Schutzkodex), a network of media organizations¹⁵ developed a framework for effective measures and standards for media houses to support journalists. The code includes a dozen practical measures such as fixed contact persons at employers and psychological and legal support for those affected in the event of physical and verbal violence. Major media outlets such as the press agency DPA, newspapers TAZ, die Zeit/Zeit online, Spiegel and Frankfurter Rundschau had already joined the protection code at the start, in 2022. The Süddeutsche Zeitung had joined later. However, more media employers should still commit to this codex.

Background information 3: Good practices

THE NETHERLANDS

[Persveilig](#) is a Dutch initiative gathering the police, the Public Prosecution Service, the Society of Editor-in-Chief and the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ). Since 2019, the various parties aim to reduce threat, violence and aggression against journalists and people in the media. The parties involved all signed a [Press Safety Protocol](#) for the purpose of this goal. The media has drawn up a [collective norm](#). This means that journalists always file a complaint by the police when something happens within the norm. In addition to acting as a liaison point between journalists, the media sector, the police, and the Public Prosecutor, PersVeilig’s everyday work consists of four key strands:



- research and monitoring;
- safety training;
- support for journalists following violence and abuse; and
- enhancing journalists’ safety online

For example, PersVeilig delivers free training sessions for journalists across the Netherlands on a regular basis (on average twice a week, depending on need), and trains media outlets and editors on how to establish a safety protocol in the newsroom and other methods of creating a culture of safety, and provides training to freelance journalists. PersVeilig provides direct support to journalists in the aftermath of violence and abuse, including supplying freelance journalists with a wide range of tools to enhance their digital and physical safety (e.g. safety buttons and surveillance systems). When a journalist reports violence via the hotline, PersVeilig advises them to file a complaint directly with the police, who must then urgently address it. PersVeilig has established contact points in all police units throughout the Netherlands.

Success: journalists are ‘generally satisfied’ with PersVeilig’s multi-pronged approach, services, and ability to respond quickly to journalists in need. Direct contact with journalists – a one-to-one approach – is an effective way of helping journalists in the aftermath of assaults. The success depends on every actor responsible – from a hotline adviser to the Public Prosecutor – asking themselves one key question: **How can I help?**

Challenges: PersVeilig has still limited human resources. It is no longer a pilot project and it should be structured, expanded, and resourced accordingly. Also, partners – especially law enforcement- also consistently lack resources. Finally, the changing nature of threats against

¹⁵ The initiative for the protection code includes the German Journalists’ Union in ver.di, the German Journalists’ Association (DJV), the New German Media Makers eV, Reporters Without Borders eV and the Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-Wing, Racist and anti-Semitic Violence eV (VBRG e.V.).

journalists in the Netherlands requires constant adaptation, such as polarisation and a decline in trust in journalists among some demographics – including politicians.

BELGIUM

The Flemish Association of Journalists (VVJ) has developed a similar approach to the Netherlands, limited for the moment to a “Reporting point” and various information to promote the safety of journalists: <https://www.persveilig.be/>

DENMARK

In Denmark, a “[National Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#)” (*Dansk handlingsplan for sikkerhed for journalister*) was launched in 2022, starting with monitoring all attacks against journalists and establishing a dedicated email address which can be used by journalists to report any abuse. The National Action Plan is an agreement between government agencies (the National Police, the Attorney General, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Culture and The Danish National Commission to UNESCO), the media industry, and other stakeholders to improve journalists’ safety. The Plan established that day-to-day tasks are managed by the Danish Union of Journalists (DJ) and Danish Media (DM) on an alternate basis every year. A response will be given to each reported attack with an email providing a recommendation about how to handle it. If an investigation is launched, the police may assign the victim a specific police contact, subject to assessment of the severity of the threats.

LITHUANIA

Lithuania’s [2023-2025 Action Plan for the Protection, Safety and Empowerment of Journalists](#) mandates law enforcement bodies to cooperate closely with journalists’ organisations, to set out deadlines, allocate responsibilities and detail specific reforms to be achieved in different areas of safety. Outcomes include coordinated mechanisms for journalists’ safety in times of crisis and emergency and promotion of best practices in the investigation of crimes against journalists with support from Europol and/or Eurojust.

ITALY

In 2017, the Ministry of Interior established the [Coordination Center for monitoring, analysis and permanent exchange of information on the phenomenon of acts of intimidation against journalists](#) (*Centro di coordinamento sul fenomeno degli atti intimidatori nei confronti dei giornalisti*). Furthermore, in September 2018 the Central Directorate of the Criminal Police created the Permanent support body to the Coordination Center. The Permanent support body issues quarterly reports and publishes them on the [website of the Ministry of Interior](#). In a typical year, about 20 journalists who face the most serious or imminent threats are provided with close police protection, while a larger number receive lesser levels of protection. Data for 2023 show that intimidating acts against journalists decreased by 36% in the first quarter of 2023. Two of the episodes recorded in the first three months of this year are attributable to organized crime contexts (7%), 12 to local political/social contexts (43%) and 14 to other causes (50%).

SERBIA

In Serbia, the independent association of journalists NUNS makes sure that during major public events¹⁶, someone is available for a special helpline for journalists in case of incidents. This is an ad hoc measure that can be applied by organisations with limited resources.

SWEDEN

Sweden adopted a [national action plan Defending Free Speech](#) in 2018 to “safeguard active democratic debate” through measures to protect journalists, elected representatives and artists from threats and hatred. Linnaeus University was commissioned to assist newsrooms and news media organisations to counter threats to journalists’ safety by strengthening their own capacities, backed by a dedicated database and a telephone helpline. The police were also mandated to open a dialogue to improve channels of communication with journalists’ groups and develop new means of ensuring their safety.

UNITED KINGDOM

A [National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists](#) was agreed in 2021 between the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The objectives are to increase the understanding of the problem; enhance the criminal justice system response in tackling crimes against journalists; support journalists and their employers to build the resources they need to protect personal safety; help online platforms to tackle the wider issue of abuse online and improve public recognition of the value of journalists.

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) created “[Story Smart](#)”, a specific online training course on safety of journalists, with interactive modules taking into account all aspects of safety, including psychological trauma. This comes in addition to the “[Safety toolkit](#)”, also available online and as an app for journalists who need it in the field.

At company-level, for example, the BBC developed a comprehensive [Journalism Safety Guide](#) (JSG) for its journalists. Anyone deployed or deploying, must undertake a mandatory 'Working Safely at the BBC' training course. A specific flowchart determines if risk assessment is needed or not. Apart from specific risky assignments, the BBC also developed “control measures” in case of [violence and aggression against journalists](#). The “[A-Z of BBC Safety Guidelines](#)” are a reference for health and safety of journalists at work.

UNIVERSITIES

Universities and NGOs also play a role. For example the Knight Center for Journalism (in the USA) created a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on “[Journalism and Mental Health Issues](#)”, in collaboration with the Carter Center and The Self Investigation.

¹⁶ Source : [Journalists not sufficiently trained in health and safety issues](#)