

MONITORING OF THE MEDIA SCENE IN SERBIA FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2024

INTRODUCTION

Monitoring of the media scene is carried out with the aim of continuous monitoring of events and processes affecting the state of media freedom in the Republic of Serbia. The authors of the monitoring deal with: freedom of expression; monitoring the implementation of existing regulations; adopting of new regulations, also by amending and supplementing the current ones - from the field of media as well as from other areas directly or indirectly affecting the freedom of the media; and also by analyzing SLAPP lawsuits (strategic lawsuits against public participation) directed against journalists and media.

Publicly available data, data obtained from journalists, editors and other media workers, journalist associations and media associations, as well as state and non-state bodies are used for monitoring.

I FREEDOM OF SPEECH

In the first half of April 2024, the [Freedom House](#) published the report "[Nations in Transit](#)" for the year 2023. The report examines the situation in 29 countries of Central Europe and Central Asia. When it comes to the freedom of the media in Serbia, a downward trajectory has been established, since the negative trends from previous years continued in 2023. Compared to the previous year, there was a significant increase in the number of cases in which pressures and attacks were made on journalists, while frequent targeting of journalists by officials of ruling parties and pro-government media was also noted. Journalists of media outlets owned by United Group were particularly exposed to attacks. One of them had to move abroad due to death threats. The report also stated that Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM) clearly demonstrated that it is at the service of the Government and the ruling party, when, as a regulator, it awarded four national licenses for broadcasting programs to pro-government TV stations in 2022, and postponed the decision on the fifth frequency for an indefinite period. The commercial competition between Telekom Srbija and United Group continued during 2023, with the Government clearly favoring Telekom Srbija. The report assessed that the conflict has significant implications for media freedom in Serbia, since the United Group includes media that are often very critical of the Government (primarily cable television Nova and the news channel N1, as well as the cable operator that broadcasts those media - Srbija Broadband (SBB)).¹

Attacks on journalists continue to cause concern. Following the database of the Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS), the number of attacks (from physical attacks, through threats, pressures directed at journalists and/or their property) has increased significantly compared to last year. Since the base was launched (2008), the year 2023 is the second with the highest number of attacks on journalists.²

It was noted that attacks on the media belonging to the United Group were particularly frequent - TV N1, Nova and the daily newspaper Danas. Members of the ruling party and tabloids often accused the media of working against the state. Prime Minister Ana Brnabić said of them that they are "waging a hybrid war against Serbia." MP Milenko Jovanov of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) labeled them as "fascist media" that the opposition uses to create an atmosphere that could cause a

¹ [Serbia: Nations in Transit 2024 Country Report | Freedom House](#)

² Ibid.

civil war. The police did not react regarding the gathering of demonstrators in front of the premises of TV N1 and Television Nova. Journalists working for United Group Media were personally targeted by officials and the tabloid media. The [PEN International](#), due to multiple serious death threats addressed to him, had to organize the relocation of the writer and Nova TV presenter Marko Vidojković abroad, the Report concluded.³

The use of SLAPP lawsuits against the media remains a concern. The network of organizations united in the fight against SLAPP lawsuits in Europe (CASE coalition) reported that in terms of the total number of filed SLAPP lawsuits in 2023, Serbia was in 10th place out of the 35 analyzed European countries, and in 8th place in terms of the number of cases per capita inhabitants.⁴

The case of the research site KRIK, which is facing 12 such lawsuits, was recorded, as well as the case of Vuk Cvijić, who was sued by lawyer Vladimir Đukanović, SNS MP and defense lawyer of Predrag Koluvića in the Jovanjica case.⁵

When it comes to changes in media legislation, it is stated in the Report that two key media laws were adopted: the Law on Electronic Media and the Law on Public Information and Media. Despite the claims of the Serbian Government that the laws are in line with the Media Strategy, and the assessment of the European Commission that their adoption has led to some progress in promoting freedom of expression, the Report points out that the laws were met with criticism from the media and civil society organizations. The reasons for the criticism lie in the fact that the laws strengthen the influence of the state on the media, by legalizing the ownership of them by state companies, including Telekom Srbija, which already has a strong position on the media market. The Report also mentions the repeated court proceedings conducted in connection with the burning of the house of journalist Milan Jovanović. Former high-ranking SNS official Dragoljub Simonović, as the principal, was sentenced to five years in prison by the first-instance verdict. At the time of writing the Report, the court case was in appeal proceedings, and the decision of the Court of Appeal was awaited. In addition to that case, there was information on the case of the murder of Slavko Ćuruvija. In the Report, it was pointed out that in February 2024, the Court of Appeal in Belgrade announced the judgment passed in April of the previous year. The judgment of the Appellate Court overturned the

³ Ibid.

⁴ [SLAPPS: A threat to democracy continues to grow – A 2023 report update](#), report published in August 2023 at Case coalition portal

⁵ [Serbia: Nations in Transit 2024 Country Report | Freedom House](#)

decision of the High Court, by which members of the security service were sentenced to a total of 100 years for the murder of a journalist. With the new verdict, they were acquitted. Unconfirmed news about the decision of the Court of Appeal appeared unofficially during September 2023. The trial in the case of Ćuruvija was the most important trial in the history of Serbia regarding attacks on journalists. As stated in the Report, it was previously the only successful prosecution of the murder of a journalist.⁶

Three new cases of attacks on journalists were recorded on [the Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists \(COE platform\)](#).⁷

The threats received by the [TV N1](#) newsroom in February 2024 were recorded in the comments section ("We know where you live and what cars you drive", "We will kill you all soon"). The case of campaigns against journalists [Ana Lalić and Dinko Gruhonjić](#) were also included (more information about this can be found in [Monitoring of the Media Scene in Serbia for March 2024](#)).

Threats addressed to journalists [Vanja Đurić \(N1\)](#) and [Željko Veljković \(Nova S\)](#) were also noted on the Platform (more on this in [Monitoring of the Media Scene in Serbia for February 2024](#)).

The Platform also analyses the [speech of the President of the Republic of Serbia](#), who, in a guest appearance on TV Happy, stated that he is a victim of the "hybrid war" waged by the international print media. Citing articles from the Guardian, Bild and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), the President of the Republic said that the Guardian is a "criminal newspaper". What foreign newspapers said and did "supposedly in connection with the elections and the state of democracy in Serbia", was actually, according to him, aimed at weakening the country.

In the second half of April, a meeting of the Permanent Working Group for the Safety of Journalists (PWG) was held in Novi Sad. The meeting was attended by contact points in the police and prosecutor's office, as well as media workers who experienced threats and violence in local environment. The reason why the meeting was organized in Novi Sad lies in the fact that in the past period in Vojvodina (Novi Sad, Indija, Sombor and Stara Pazova) there has been an increased threat to the safety of journalists. Veran Matić, a member of the PWG, informed the audience that, despite the promise, the police had not yet carried out a safety assessment of journalist and university

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ [Savet Evrope: Dva nova slučaja iz Srbije na Platformi za zaštitu novinarstva i bezbednost novinara](#), article published on April 2, 2024 at NUNS portal

professor Dinko Gruhonjić and the president of the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina, Ana Lalić Hegediš. Thus the European Federation of Journalists funded private security for both of them, while Ana Lalić was moved to a safe location, where she has been for last two months.⁸

Evaluating the failure of the police as worrying,⁹ Matić said:

A safety assessment has not been done yet, although it has been said that an assessment will be done in 10-15 days. It is absolutely necessary for the police to find a mechanism and to guarantee the safety of Ana Lalić, Dinko Gruhonjić and other endangered journalists.

The information on the deadline for the security assessment of Gruhonjić and Lalić Hegediš was presented by the the Ministry of Internal Affairs representative in the PWG, at the regular quarterly meeting of the group, held on March 26, 2024. Jan Braatu, head of the OSCE Mission in Serbia, also attended that meeting, while Gruhonjić joined it via video link.

At the mentioned meeting in Novi Sad, journalists spoke about the threats and pressures they and their family members face almost every day. Even the memories of their loved ones who are no longer with us were not spared from the attack.¹⁰ The meeting also pointed out the threats that are published in groups on the Telegram communication service. One of these groups has around 80,000 members.¹¹

Due to the traumas that journalists have and are going through, it is important to provide them with psychological support, and that support, according to Matić, has started to be provided to them.

In mid-April, a meeting of representatives of journalist and media associations was held with Ian Borg, Chairman of the OSCE and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta. Minister Borg reminded the audience of the importance of the right to freedom of expression, the importance of which is fundamental for peace, security and justice in a country.¹²

In the same month, the 25th anniversary of the murder of Slavko Ćuruvija was marked. The President

⁸ [Pet minuta sa Anom Lalić Hegediš](#), article published on May 16, 2024 at Javni servis portalu (source: Novi magazin)

⁹ [Matić: Zabrinjavajuće što policija još nije uradila procenu bezbednosti Lalić i Gruhonjića](#), author Lea Apro (FoNet), article published on April 19, 2024 at N1 portal.

¹⁰ [Onda su krenuli na pokojnike](#), author Branko Čečen, article published on March 30, 2024 at Bezbedni novinari portal

¹¹ [Porast broja pretnji novinarkama i novinarima, najviše u Vojvodini](#), article published on April 20, 2024 at Bezbedni novinari portal

¹² [OSCE Chair-in-Office Borg concludes visit to Serbia, reaffirms continued partnership with the country](#), announcement published on April 10, 2024 at OSCE portal

of the Commission for Investigating Murders of Journalists, Veran Matić, pointed out that, although there is no one criminally responsible in Serbia, "there is no one" who does not know who organized and carried out the murder of journalist Slavko Ćuruvija.¹³

In the second half of April, the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS) held a public presentation of the research carried out by UNS journalists "What have journalists discovered decades since the murders of journalists and where is the judiciary?"¹⁴ They talked about the media workers killed during the 1990s on the battlefields of the former Yugoslavia, as well as the activities undertaken by the Commission for Investigating Murders of Journalists dealing with the murders of Slavko Ćuruvija, Milan Pantić and Dada Vujasinović.¹⁵

The case of Nenad Kulačin and Marko Vidojković, authors of the "Good, Bad, Evil" podcast

Nenad Kulačin and Marko Vidojković were once again the target of threats sent via the Internet. The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS) in its Database of Attacks on Journalists published information that Kulačin and Vidojković were threatened on several occasions - in comments on the YouTube channel and via the Instagram social network. The comments were made after the show was published. In April, Nenad Kulačin also received threatening messages via the Facebook social network. NUNS reported the cases to the Special Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime. The reports were submitted due to the existence of grounds for suspicion that the reported persons committed the criminal offense of Endangering security. In the case of comments directed (only) to Nenad Kulačin, the criminal offense of Endangering security was added to the criminal offense of Persecution, since the author of the disputed comments is the same person.

The case of Marko Dragoslavić, FoNet photojournalist

A request to initiate misdemeanor proceedings was filed against FoNet photojournalist Marko Dragoslavić. As reported by the FoNet agency, the police accuse him of kicking and breaking the metal

¹³ [Obeležena godišnjica ubistva Slavka Ćuruvije: Ubili ste pravdu, ali je istina živa](#), author Dimitrije Đurić, article published on April 11, 2024 at N1 portal

¹⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0C5NX0XDz_0

¹⁵ [Veran Matić: Važno je da svi slučajevi ubistava novinara budu pod okom javnosti](#), article published on April 17, 2024 at N1 portal

fence of the construction site, which was already knocked down, on February 17, around 6:30 p.m., in the park next to the "Shell" gas station with a group of masked young people. The accusation states that "with his insolent and reckless behavior, he threatened the peace and tranquility of the citizens". Dragoslavić's hearing is scheduled for May 14.¹⁶

On the mentioned day, as on previous days, Dragoslavić reported from the peaceful protests of citizens in Block 63 in New Belgrade. He denied all the allegations from the request to initiate misdemeanor proceedings and explained that the demolition of the fence took place two days earlier, as evidenced by the videos he took and forwarded to the FoNet news agency for publication. A day later, a plainclothes policeman filmed him reporting again from another peaceful citizen protest. According to Dragoslavić, the policeman did not show his identity card, took his ID card, took a photo of it, and threw his journalist ID card on the floor. FoNet states that their reporter also has a video recording of the identification, "when the policeman focused on him, even though there were young men walking by with phantoms and metal pipes".¹⁷

The case of media within the United Group

The journalists of the N1 television received several threatening comments under the report on the Serbian President's visit to New York on the occasion of the United Nations Security Council session on Kosovo. Igor Božić, TV N1 program director, singled out some of the threats they received, and emphasized that the moderators noticed more threatening comments, but did not publish them. Journalists were also threatened that "soon they will be liquidated, neutralized and nothing will be left of them"; the editorial office was called "the worst gang", a group of "paid traitors from foreign powers"; and one of the comments contained the statement that "there are more villains", and the media Nova S and Danas were also mentioned. The threats were immediately forwarded to the Special Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime.

Regarding the way the prosecutor's office reacted, Božić told the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS):

We were called today by the Prosecutor's Office and informed that they are carrying

¹⁶ [MUP tereti novinara](#), author Davor Lukač, article published on April 3, 2024 at FoNet portal

¹⁷ Ibid.

*out procedures related to the report. This is not the first time that the N1 newsroom has received such threats, a similar case happened a few weeks ago when we published the news about the discovery of a marijuana plantation in the north of Kosovo. And then we informed the Prosecutor's Office, but until today we have not received any feedback.*¹⁸

The threats directed at the N1 newsroom were condemned by professional associations. The SafeJournalists network, NUNS and UNS called on the competent institutions to identify and prosecute the person who threatened journalists as soon as possible.¹⁹

The case of Dinko Gruhonjić, journalist and professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad

The Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NDNV) informed the public about the incident in which an unknown man, aged around 40, insulted Gruhonjić in a chauvinist way on the street, threatening him with physical violence. When Gruhonjić turned towards him to face him, man ran away. The Association reported the incident to the police.²⁰

The case of Nikola Stevanović, Bujanovačke journalist

Nagip Arifi, President of the Bujanovac municipality, announced the decision to close the session of the Emergency Staff for the public, which was called because of the fire at the municipal landfill that lasted for three days, a few moments after Nikola Stevanović, a journalist from Bujanovac, appeared at the session. Stevanović noted that, despite the decision, one journalist remained at the session - a journalist employed by the Municipal authorities.

Due to this behavior, NUNS reacted with a statement that called on the President of the Municipality of Bujanovac and other members of the Staff for Emergency Situations to enable journalists to monitor the sessions, so that they could inform the public on time about issues concerning the quality of their lives, which the plan for remediation of the fire at the city landfill certainly was. A landfill fire

¹⁸ [UNS: Pronači i kazniti odgovorne za pretnje novinarima N1](#), announcement published on April 26, 2024 at UNS portal

¹⁹ [Novinarska udruženja osudila pretnje smrću novinarima N1](#), article published on April 26, 2024 at N1 portal

²⁰ [Dinko Gruhonjić verbalno napadnut na ulici na Limanu](#), article published on April 16, 2024 at O21 portal

significantly affects public health, therefore it is in the interest of the public to be informed about it.²¹

Legal conclusion of the proceedings over the burning of the house of Milan Jovanović, Žig Info portal journalist

At the end of April, the repeated criminal proceedings for the burning of Milan Jovanović's house were legally terminated. According to the judgment of the Appellate Court in Belgrade, Dragoljub Simonović, the former President of the Municipality of Grocka, the president of the Municipal Board of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party and a member of the Main Board of that party - the five-year prison sentence imposed by the first-instance verdict was reduced to four years. In addition to the prison sentence, he was also fined in the amount of 100,000 dinars. Vladimir Mihailović, a police officer who was encouraged by Simonović to find a person who would "warn" Jovanović also received the originally imposed four-year prison sentence reduced to three years of prison and fine of 100,000 dinars. To Igor Novaković, the person through whom Vladimir Mihailović reached Aleksandar Marinković, who threw a Molotov cocktail into the Milan Jovanović's garage - the original prison sentence of three and a half years was reduced to two and a half years, while Aleksandar Marinković's prison sentence of four and a half years, imposed by the first-instance verdict, was reduced to four years. He is also obliged to pay a fine of 100,000 dinars.²²

The explanation of the Appellate verdict states:

However, according to the opinion of the Appellate Court in Belgrade, the appeals of the defenders of the aforementioned defendants contest the correctness of the decision on the amount of the sentence, to which the defendants were sentenced by the first-instance judgment, bearing in mind first of all that this court carried out a requalification from a more serious to a milder crime in relation to the defendants Dragoljub Simonović, Vladimir Mihailović and Aleksandar Marinković, which certainly

²¹ [NUNS: Opština Bujanovac da omogući novinarima da nesmetano izveštavaju o pitanjima od javnog interesa](#), announcement published on April 11, 2024 at NUNS portal

²² The Appellate Court is of the opinion that during the first-instance proceedings, it was not established that damage of a large scale occurred as a result of the committed act. The first-instance court referred to the law from 2002, considering that it was a large-scale damage, since it was estimated at an amount higher than four million dinars, while the Court of Appeal referred to the decision of the Supreme Court of Serbia from 2006, concluding that damage exceeding the amount of six million dinars that is considered large-scale damage. All according to article [Apelacioni sud osudio bivšeg predsednika Opštine Grocka Dragoljuba Simonovića zbog paljenja kuće novinara na četiri godine zatvora](#), by author Perica Gunjić, that was published on April 26, 2024 at Cenzolovka portal.

justifies the imposition of a lighter sentence. In addition, the first-instance court in relation to the defendants Vladimir Mihailović, Igor Novaković and Aleksandar Marinković did not sufficiently appreciate the fact that in the previous proceedings they admitted to the commission of the criminal act, which significantly contributed to the establishment of the factual situation in this criminal proceeding, while in relation to of the defendant Dragoljub Simonović it failed to appreciate his age (the defendant was born in 1959), and in relation to the defendant Aleksandar Marinković, it did not appreciate the fact that he is the father of a minor child, which circumstances, in terms of the provision of Article 54 of the Criminal Code, are of importance when determining the sentence, as is rightly indicated in the appeals of his defenders.

II MONITORING OF THE PROCESS OF ADOPTION OF NEW LAWS

In the second half of April, the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media (REM) held a [Public hearing on 15 draft regulations](#) under its authority.²³ The subject of the public discussion were the following regulations:

1. [Rulebook on the protection of human rights in the field of providing media services;](#)
2. [Rulebook on the protection of the rights of minors in the field of providing media services;](#)
3. [Rulebook on the manner of performing the obligations of media service providers during the election campaign;](#)
4. [Rulebook on accessibility of program contents to persons with impaired hearing or sight;](#)
5. [Rulebook on mandatory measures of service providers of video content exchange platforms;](#)
6. [Rulebook on the manner of forming a list of the most important events of special importance for all citizens and exercising the right to access events of great interest to the public;](#)
7. [Rulebook on conducting award competitions in the field of media services;](#)
8. [Instructions on how to apply the provisions of the Law on Electronic Media, which govern own](#)

²³ [Održana javna rasprava o nacrtima pravilnika](#), article published on April 18, 2024 at REM portal

production;

9. Rulebook on the procedure for issuing consent to the act on the transfer of a license for the provision of media services and the procedure for reporting a change in the ownership structure;
10. Rulebook on obligations and criteria for the participation of European audio-visual works and the share of Serbian musical works in the programs of media service providers;
11. Rulebook on amount, change of amount and method of calculation of fee for providing media service;
12. Rulebook on urgent notification of the public about the disappearance of a minor;
13. Rulebook on conditions and criteria for issuing a license for the provision of media services;
14. Rulebook on conditions and criteria for issuing approval for the provision of media services on request;
15. Rulebook on the level, changes in the level and the method of calculating the fee for the provision of services under the jurisdiction of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media.

The public hearing lasting 20 days was conducted in the period from April 5th to 25th, 2024. Due to the short deadline for submission of suggestions on fifteen regulations, as well as the fact that only one discussion was organized in the premises of REM, the organizations that make up the Coalition for Media Freedom, the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) and organizations that deal with human rights, encouraging of the development of democracy and civil society - requested an extension of the deadline for submission of objections, proposals and suggestions on draft regulations. REM was also requested to hold at least one more oral hearing.²⁴ The signatories of the request²⁵ submitted that the Law on Electronic Media stipulates that the public hearing lasts at least 20 days and that there is a legal basis for it to be extended until May 25, 2024. That request was not

²⁴ [Organizacije civilnog društva: REM mora da produži rok za javnu raspravu o novim pravilnicima](#), article published on April 25, 2024 at Cenolovka portal

²⁵ Association of Media, Association of Online Media (AOM), Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV), Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia (NUNS), Business Association of Local and Independent Media Association "Local Press", Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation, GS KUM Independence, Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM), Civic Initiatives, CRTA, New Optimism, BIRODI, Trag foundation, Dijalog.net and Partners Serbia

adopted.

Media organizations, as well as organizations that focus on human rights, encouraging the development of democracy and civil society - especially dealt with the drafts of the following regulations: the Draft Regulations on the protection of human rights in the field of media services; the Draft Rulebook on the manner of performing the obligations of media service providers during the election campaign and the Draft Rulebook on the conditions and criteria for issuing a license for the provision of media services. When it comes to [the Draft Rulebook on the protection of human rights in the field of providing media services](#), it was proposed to harmonize the used terminology with the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, in order to avoid misuse of insufficiently precise wording. In connection with [the Draft Rulebook on the manner of performing the obligations of media service providers during the election campaign](#) - it was insisted on harmonizing the terminology with the terminology used in the Law on Electronic Media, as well as on a clearer definition of the official campaign, in order not to eliminate the possibility of its implementation. When it comes to [the Draft Rulebook on the conditions and criteria for the granting of a license for the provision of media services](#), it was insisted that the mandatory minimum participation of a quality program be restored, which was foreseen in the rulebook in force until now.²⁶

The previous [Rulebook on the minimum conditions for the provision of media services and criteria for decision-making in the procedure for issuing a license for the provision of media services based on the conducted public tender](#), Article 11 paragraph 1, stipulates that the provider of general media services must have the following types of programs:

- 1) informative program;
- 2) scientific and educational program;
- 3) cultural and artistic program;
- 4) documentary program;
- 5) children's program and program for minors.

Article 29 paragraph 2 stipulates that a high-quality program is a scientific-educational, cultural-

²⁶ [Judita Popović: Kvalitetan program i do sada za REM bio poslednja rupa na svirali](#), author Danica Đokić, article published on April 26, 2024 at Cenzolovka portal

artistic, documentary or children's program, that is, a program for minors that, together or individually, carries a total of 20 published programs on an annual basis.

Article 9 of the draft makes a certain change, by deleting the legal assumption of a quality program. It is foreseen that the general media service provider is obliged to include several different media contents in its program (multiple types of programs, e.g. informative, educational, cultural, scientific, sports, entertainment and other program contents). Paragraph 2 of the same article prescribes the duty of the provider of specialized media services, and it is reflected in the obligation to include similar program contents in its program (informative, educational, cultural, scientific, sports, entertainment and other program contents).

III IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING LAWS

Project co-financing

The expert public continued to point to the fact that local governments have drastically reduced budgets for co-financing projects in the field of public information compared to last year (according to data available in the media, in some cities and municipalities the budget for media competitions has been reduced up to ten times), as well as continued with the practice of awarding funds to "propaganda newspapers of the current government".²⁷ The competent authorities have not yet given an answer to the question of the reason for the reduction of the budget, while media experts see one of the reasons for that decision in the motive to bypass the obligation to comply with the Code of Ethics of Serbian journalists, as one of the criteria taken into account when allocating the funds.²⁸

²⁷ [Vranjanci daju 27,7 miliona dinara prorežimskim medijima](#), article published on April 9, 2024 at Slobodna reč portal

²⁸ [Novi medijski zakoni u praksi: Lokalne vlasti nastavljaju da dodeljuju novac podobnim medijima?](#), article published on April 23, 2024 at European Western Balkans portal

IV SLAPP LAWSUITS DIRECTED AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA

On April 5, 2024, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the Recommendation on Suppressing the Use of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP). The newly adopted Recommendation defines SLAPP as legal activities that are threatened, initiated or conducted with the aim of harassing or intimidating the "target", and all in order to prevent, disable, limit or punish the freedom of expression regarding matters of public interest, as well as exercising rights related to public participation in those matters. The given guidelines refer to civil lawsuits, but also to procedures in the field of administrative and criminal law, as well as to procedures conducted with the intention of legal intimidation. In order to facilitate the identification of SLAPP proceedings, the Recommendation provides a list of 10 indicators that will help both in the identification of SLAPP proceedings and in the development of mechanisms for early rejection of requests to initiate them.²⁹

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²⁹ [Council of Europe adopts Recommendation on countering the use of SLAPPs – Freedom of Expression](#)