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MONTENEGRO **Indicators on the Level** **of Media Freedom and** **Journalists' Safety** **Index 2025**

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About the project

BACKGROUND OF THE INDICATORS

The journalists' associations from the Western Balkan countries, supported by the European Commission¹, have established the platform [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) to jointly monitor media legislation and practice in their countries and engage in advancing the legal and institutional environment in which journalists and other media professionals work. Every year, based on a carefully designed methodology², the [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) partners conduct advocacy research which has provided journalists' associations with evidence-based, reliable, and relevant data on the main problems and obstacles in the implementation of the EU standards in the field of media and journalists' freedom and safety in the Western Balkans. The results of the advocacy research give substance to partners' activities, providing them with new evidence and examples that refine and strengthen their advocacy positions.

The first qualitative research tool—*Indicators of the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety*—was initially developed in 2016 and has been gradually improved over the years. It consists of three groups of indicators: (A) Legal Protection, (B) Journalists' Position in the Newsroom, and (C) Journalists' Safety. Based on this monitoring tool, a total of seven assessments have been published, with the most recent covering the year 2022.

The quantitative research tool – the *Journalists' Safety Index*, was developed in 2020 and tested in 2021. It is designed to 'measure'

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- 1 In December 2022, the European Commission approved a new three-year cycle of the Project Safejournalists.net, which is a continuation of the previous two phases: the project Western Balkan's Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists' safety (01.2016–12.2018) and Safejournalist.net (02.2020–03.2023). The main objective of the Project is to empower and strengthen the role of the national journalists' associations, members of the Platform Safejournalists.net, to become effective and accountable independent actors in advocating and creating relevant media policies in their countries: Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (IJAS), Association of BH Journalists (BHJ), Croatian Journalists Association (CJA), Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK), Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) and the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (TUMM). The project is funded under the EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023 (IPA III).
 - 2 The advocacy research is designed and coordinated by Snezana Trpevska and Igor Micevski, research fellows of the Research Institute on Social Development RESIS, from North Macedonia (www.resis.mk).

the changes in the environment that have direct or indirect impact on how safe journalists and other media actors feel when practicing their profession. It is composed of four groups of indicators: (1) Legal and Organisational Environment, (2) Due Prevention, (3) Due Process, and (4) Actual Safety. Based on this tool, a total of three research cycles were implemented: 2020 (pilot year), 2021 and 2022.

Starting from 2023, [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) will combine the two (qualitative and quantitative) research tools into one single advocacy research project – *Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index*. The platform monitors the situation in seven countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo³ and Serbia.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The entire research process is divided into two phases: in the *first phase*, data is collected for all qualitative indicators – both for media freedoms and for the safety of journalists, while in the *second phase*, the qualitative indicators for the safety of journalists are converted into quantitative ones and the procedure of scoring and calculation of the Journalists' Safety Index is carried out.

A number of different research methods were applied to collect and analyze data related to each specific qualitative indicator:

- Review of studies, analyses, research reports, political documents, strategies, and other documents;
- Qualitative analysis of legal documents;
- Download and analysis of information published on the websites of public institutions and other organizations, and authorities;
- Finding and analyzing press releases, announcements, and other information issued by professional organizations;
- Secondary data collected by journalistic associations;
- In-depth interviews with experts, journalists, policy makers, etc.;
- Focus groups with journalists, and
- Polls with journalists (in some countries).

At the national level, advocacy research is conducted by national researchers who collect data and compile narrative reports, which are then reviewed by local media and legal experts and the lead researcher. In Montenegro,

³ This name is without prejudice to the status and in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the Tribunal on the Declaration and Independence of Kosovo.

the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro nominated Marijana Camovic-Velickovic as a national researcher and prof. Vuk Vukovic, Ph.D., as a media expert for reviewing reports, and Mirko Boskovic, M.Sc., as a legal expert.

QUALITATIVE INDICATORS OF THE LEVEL OF MEDIA FREEDOM AND SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

The following table presents all qualitative indicators for the level of media freedom and safety of journalists, divided into three areas. These qualitative indicators are presented in descriptive or narrative form. Part of the indicators that are used in the conceptual framework for the Journalist Safety Index are marked in red letters.

Overview of all qualitative indicators (Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety)

A. Legal safeguards and their implementation	B. Journalists' position in the newsrooms	C. Journalists' safety
A.1 Basic guarantees for media and journalists' freedom and their application in practice	B.1 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	C.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures
A.2 Independence and efficiency of the regulatory authority	B.2 Editorial independence in the private media	C.2 Journalists and other media actors have access to special protection or safety mechanisms
A.3 Independence and autonomy of the public service media	B.3 Editorial independence in the public service broadcasters	C.3 Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment or violence
A.4 Financial support to quality journalism and media content of public interest	B.4 Editorial independence in the not-for-profit media sector	C.4 Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media has been established
A.5 State advertising in the private media sector	B.5 Freedom of journalists in the news production process	C.5 Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue
A.6 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	B.6 Working position of women journalists	C.6 Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists
A.7 Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely		C.7 Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)
A.8 Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities		C.8 Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment
A.9 Journalists are free to pursuit their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations		C.9 Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently
A.10 Right to access official documents and information		C.10 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity
		C.11 Non-physical threats and harassments
		C.12 Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists
		C.13 Actual attacks
		C.14 Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations

JOURNALISTS SAFETY INDEX

Taking into consideration the standards and recommendations established by the Council of Europe and other international organisations, the concept of “journalists’ safety”⁴ was operationalized by considering the following four dimensions:

- I. **Legal and organisational environment** – the existence and implementation of legal safeguards relevant for the safety of journalists.
- II. **Due Prevention** – the existence and implementation of a range of preventative measures that have direct effects on journalists’ protection and safety.
- III. **Due Process** – the behaviour of state institutions and public officials towards journalists and the efficiency of the criminal and civil justice system concerning the investigations of threats and acts of violence against journalists.
- IV. **Actual Safety** – incidents and instances of various forms of threats and acts of violence against journalists and media.

The table below presents the four dimensions and indicators that make up the theoretical model of the “journalists’ safety” concept. Data for all these indicators were collected in the first phase of the research, and in the second phase, based on the collected research evidence, nine members of the Advisory Panel from each of the countries⁵ assessed the situation and assigned scores for each of the 19 indicators:

Overview of indicators related to the Journalists’ Safety Index.

I. Legal and Organisational Environment	II. Due Prevention	III. Due Process	IV. Actual Safety
1.1 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	2.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures	3.1 Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists	4.1 Non-physical threats and harassments
1.2 Confidentiality of journalists’ sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities	2.2 Journalists and other media actors have access to special protection or safety mechanisms	3.2 Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently	4.2 Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists
1.3 Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely	2.3 Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms	3.3 Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment	4.3 Actual attacks
1.4 Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations	2.4 Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media	3.4 Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently	4.4 Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists’ associations

⁴ Researchers from the RESIS Institute (www.resis.mk), Snežana Trpevska, Igor Micevski and Ljubinka Popovska Toseva developed the [conceptual and methodological framework](#) for the Index and the model for its aggregation, weighting and calculation.

⁵ Members of the Advisory Panel in Montenegro were: Radomir Krackovic, Milena Bubanja-Obradovic, Jovana Davidović, Jelena Martinovic, Irena Pejanović, Goran Đurović, Vladan Mićunović, Željka Vučinić i Bojana Milićević.

I. Legal and Organisational Environment	II. Due Prevention	III. Due Process	IV. Actual Safety
1.5 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	2.5 Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue	3.5 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity	

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TUMM – Trade Union of Media of Montenegro

AEM – Agency for Electronic Media

AMU – Agency for Audiovisual Media Services

MONSTAT – Statistical Office

RTCG – National Public Broadcaster Radio and Television of Montenegro

EC – European Commission

NGO – Non-Governmental Organizations

ANB – National Security Agency

AZLP – Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information

ODT – Basic State Prosecutor's Office

VDT – Supreme State Prosecutor

CC – Criminal Code

LPB – Local Public Broadcaster

Introduction

Montenegro, which began its negotiations with the European Union (EU) in 2012, has been recognized for years as a leader in European integration. Throughout 2025, it continued to receive clear signals from Brussels that, should it fulfill its obligations, it would become the very next member of the EU in the coming years.

The political parties represented in the Parliament of Montenegro generally share a commitment to European integration, or at least nominally do not express opposition to this goal. However, on almost all other issues, the political scene is highly polarized. The current Government is not ideologically homogeneous; rather, it is composed of political entities with value starting points that are difficult to reconcile. In addition to the nominally centrist the *Europe Now Movement* (PES), led by Prime Minister Milojko Spajić, the executive branch also includes pro-Serbian parties gathered around the coalition of President of the Parliament Andrija Mandić and MP Milan Knežević, followed by the center-right party *Democratic Montenegro (Demokrate)*, as well as Albanian parties and the Bosniak Party (BS), a long-standing coalition partner of the previous regime of the *Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)*.

Montenegrin society itself is also polarized, particularly regarding national identity. Such divisions occasionally escalate into open incidents, like the event from early September when the screening of a film in the Albanian language, which has the status of an official use, was interrupted in Podgorica. Gatherings with pronounced national overtones are also not rare, posing a high risk to the safety of male and female journalists. An illustrative example is the removal of the monument to Chetnik Duke Pavle Đurišić in Gornje Zaostro in Berane, during which journalist teams were attacked.

In the *Safejournalists* database, a total of 33 attacks on media workers were recorded during 2025, with women being the victims

in more than half of the cases (18). This placed 2025 in first place as the year with the highest number of recorded attacks in the database, followed by 2021 and 2022, when 28 attacks and incidents were registered in each.

The patterns of attacks and threats vary, but implicit and explicit threats to the lives and physical safety of media workers dominate. Media professionals work under conditions of pronounced insecurity, both in the field and in the digital space. Attacks via email and private social media accounts are becoming increasingly frequent. Particularly worrying is the trend of inflammatory and inappropriate rhetoric by certain political actors, which can act as an incentive for citizens to further jeopardize the safety of journalists.

At the same time, media employees are among the lowest-paid workers, despite the general growth of wages in the country through the *Europe Now 2* economic program. Research by the OSCE and the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (TUMM) showed that three-quarters of media workers receive a salary below the national average. Furthermore, the Branch Collective Agreement has not yet been signed, even though this obligation has been repeatedly pointed out at the EU level as well.

In 2025, legal proceedings were also conducted against the President and four members of the *RTCG* Council due to the unlawful election of Boris Raonić as the Director General of the national public broadcaster. The fact that Raonić has been in this position unlawfully since 2021 has been confirmed through about a dozen court rulings, while several proceedings are still ongoing.

The TUMM initiated the signing of the Protocol on the Protection of Journalists, which represents a key step toward establishing a national Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists. The document was signed by representatives of trade unions, the judiciary, the police, relevant ministries, and the media community to strengthen the institutional framework for protecting media professionals. Right before the end of the year, the Government of Montenegro adopted the Decision on forming an inter-ministerial working group to establish the mechanism for the safety of journalists, thereby enabling the “mechanism” to come to life in 2026, when a more sustainable solution for its functioning needs to be found.



Media freedom and journalists' safety in Montenegro – Indicators

A. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS FOR MEDIA FREEDOM AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

– A.1 BASIC GUARANTEES FOR MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS' FREEDOM AND THEIR APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

The right to freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Constitution and media laws, including the right to access the Internet, and these are, in principle, respected. Three media laws were not amended during 2025; instead, their full implementation began following their adoption in mid-2024. These laws introduced certain innovations into the media sphere⁶, and with them, negotiating Chapter 10 which relates to the information society and media in Montenegro's European Union accession process was provisionally closed. The laws in question are the Law on Media, the Law on the National Public Broadcaster Radio and Television of Montenegro, and the Law on Audiovisual Media Services.

"The implementation of media laws will only yield effects once the election of all Council members is carried out in accordance with the new regulations. They are actually best in the section regulating the procedures for electing Council members, as the process has returned to legal solutions dating back to 2002, which ensure the highest possible degree of reducing political party influence on the work of independent media institutions."⁷

There were no complaints from the public suggesting that the right to use the Internet was restricted in any way.

The funding of the *RTCG* remains stable, and the latest changes in that area were made in late 2023, when it was decided in a non-transparent

6 TUMM, „Šta nam je Zakon o medijima donio“ [What Has the Media Law Brought Us], January 20, 2026.

7 Interview, Goran Đurović, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January, 2026.

manner⁸ that, starting from 2024, the *RTCG* would be funded with 1.3 percent of the current budget instead of 0.3 percent of the gross domestic product. Despite this change, which initially slightly reduced the allocations, the *RTCG* receives more public money each year. The year 2025 was also marked by scandals surrounding the repeated unlawful appointment of the *RTCG* General Director⁹, as well as court proceedings against four current and one former member of the Council. The State Prosecution Office charged them with abuse of official position due to the repeated unlawful appointment of the same person to the head position of the Public Broadcaster, and the Basic Court in Podgorica found them guilty¹⁰ (with the exception of the former member).

The implementation of the first Media Strategy¹¹ has had no visible effect in the segment relating to the working conditions of employees, which was included on the initiative of the TUMM, but the Ministry of Culture and Media is generally satisfied with the achievement of the set goals¹².

The introduction of licenses for journalists was not a topic of discussion in the public during the year, nor were any such initiatives heard.

More than 220 media outlets operated during the year, and re-registration in accordance with the new Law on Media is still ongoing¹³. An obligation to register all portals is now envisioned, as well as self-regulation, which is why the number of media outlets that have regulated this segment has drastically increased. While only 17 media outlets were gathered within the Media Self-Regulation Council before, there are now as many as 77¹⁴; the self-regulation council for the local press gathers another six media outlets, while 18 media outlets have ombudsmen.¹⁵

— A.2 INDEPENDENCE AND EFFICIENCY OF THE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

During 2024, the Law on Audiovisual Media Services was also adopted, which guarantees the independence and increases the efficiency of the regulator (AMU). Following the adoption of the law, it was necessary to launch a call for the election of new members of the AMU Council within 6 months, as the criteria for Council members were tightened, the election procedure was modified, and the composition of the Council (authorized nominators) was changed. The amendments to

8 Government of Montenegro, „[Spajić sa Raonićem o izmjenama zakona o načinu finansiranja Javnog servisa](#)“ [Spajić with Raonić on amendments to the law regarding the financing model of the Public Broadcaster], January 20, 2026.

9 Antenam.me, „[Osnovni sud: Raonić nezakonito izabran za generalnog direktora i prošle godine](#)“ [Basic Court: Raonić was unlawfully elected as Director General last year as well], January 20, 2026.

10 Etv.me, „[Drljević, Lazović, Murić i Zorić proglašeni krivim za zloupotrebu službenog položaja prilikom ponovnog izbora Raonića](#)“ [Drljević, Lazović, Murić, and Zorić found guilty of abuse of office during Raonić’s re-election], January 20, 2026.

11 Government of Montenegro, „[Usvojena prva Medijska strategija 2023 – 2027. koja će doprinijeti unapređenju ambijenta za slobodno i profesionalno novinarstvo](#)“ [The First Media Strategy 2023–2027 Adopted, Which Will Contribute to Improving the Environment for Free and Professional Journalism], January 20, 2026.

12 Government of Montenegro, „[Izveštaj o implementaciji Akcionog plana za sprovođenje Medijske strategije 2023-2027, za 2024. godinu i Predlog akcionog plana za period 2025-2026.](#)“ [Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Media Strategy 2023–2027 for the Year 2024 and the Proposal for the Action Plan for the Period 2025–2026], January 20, 2026.

13 Letter from the Ministry of Culture and Media, May 20, 2025.

14 Data from the Media Self-Regulation Council.

15 Letter from the Ministry of Culture and Media, May 20, 2025.

the Law relate to an increase in the number of nominators¹⁶. However, the President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Andrija Mandić, launched the call for the election of two new members of the AMU Council with a delay; specifically, he failed to respect the deadline requiring this to be done 6 months before the expiration of the current members' mandates. The public call for the election of the two members was issued as many as four times, and the appointment finally took place with an 18-month delay, on the very last day of 2025¹⁷.

The Agency itself had pointed out functioning difficulties due to the incomplete composition of the Council¹⁸, and at the end of the year, it was also established that the President of the Council had spent his entire mandate in that position unlawfully, having voted for himself during the election¹⁹.

"Avoiding the implementation of the Law on AVM Services and the Law on RTCG when it comes to the election of Council members is an indicator of constant attempts of the political influence over the work of these two institutions. Following the adoption of the media laws in 2024, the parliamentary majority realized that the new, unified procedure for electing members of the RTCG, AMU, and local public broadcasters' councils reduces the room for political influence. This is because authorized nominators from civil society organizations propose their own representatives independently, while the role of the Parliament of Montenegro and local parliaments has been reduced to an administrative verification of documentation."²⁰

The non-implementation of the Law on AVM Services and the political influence on the selection of council members for AMU and RTCG was the reason behind the resignation of the Media Director at the Ministry of Culture and Media.²¹

There were no significant public criticisms regarding the work of the regulator. No objections were raised concerning AMU's decisions regarding the allocation of licenses to electronic media.

"The work of the AMU generally deserves praise, especially when it comes to certain administrative and procedural progress, but it seems to me that a substantive strengthening of regulatory autonomy and consistency is still lacking. There is also a lack of methodologically rigorous and demanding studies, which the AMU certainly has the capacity to produce."²²

Even after the adoption of the new law, the AMU does not have jurisdiction over portals and internet publications (except regarding video content on portals), and no body is

16 [Law on Audiovisual Media Services](#)

17 TUMM, „[Imenovanje Vukovića pobjeda javnog interesa nad pokušajem političke kontrole](#)“ [Vuković's appointment is a victory for the public interest over an attempt at political control], January 20, 2026.

18 Gradski.me, „[Bakić: Nedostak dva člana Savjeta blokira punu funkcionalnost agencije](#)“ [Bakić: The absence of two Council members is blocking the agency's full functionality], January 20, 2026.

19 Portalanalitika.me, „[Bošković podnio ostavku na mjesto predsjednika SAMU](#)“ [Bošković resigned from the position of SAMU President], January 20, 2026.

20 Interview, Goran Đurović, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January, 2026.

21 Dan portal, „[Neđeljko Rudović podnio ostavku](#)“ [Neđeljko Rudović submitted his resignation], January 20, 2026.

22 Interview, Vuk Vuković, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January 2026.

competent to oversee their content. During 2025, the AMU issued 80 warnings to broadcasters, resulting from both ex officio proceedings and complaints, four monetary fines, as well as five measures of temporary and three measures of permanent revocation of broadcasting authorization.²³

— A.3 INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA²⁴

The independence of the *RTCG* is guaranteed by the Law and by-laws, but criticisms regarding the work of the Public Broadcaster due to the political influence of the ruling parties remain frequent.

“Political influence is visible and multi-layered. It does not manifest itself exclusively through open censorship, nor even through the pluralism of opinions, but more subtly through personnel solutions, editorial priorities, the selection of topics (and the selection of non-topics), the choice of interviewees, and the tone of reporting. Particularly problematic is the fact that the head of the *RTCG* is a person whose election has been legally challenged on multiple occasions, which further delegitimizes the management structure and creates room for political bargaining.”²⁵

The *RTCG* Council operated with an incomplete composition during the first half of the year, until three members were eventually elected to a five-year mandate in a controversial parliamentary procedure²⁶. Three current members and one female member of the Council whose mandate expired mid-year were found guilty in proceedings before the Basic Court and sentenced to a seven-month suspended sentence for abuse of official position during the unlawful election of the Director General in June 2023²⁷. The case is currently before the High Court on appeal.

“It should come as no surprise that the three remaining members of the *RTCG* Council are still in office and have not resigned, because these people consciously, with intent, voted to elect Raonić unlawfully for a second time. We are talking about individuals without integrity who, thanks to previous legal procedures, came to their positions through the will of political parties. From the very beginning of their mandate, they have served the interests of political parties, not the public interest.”²⁸

The European Commission stated in its Report on Montenegro that “the ongoing court case challenging the legality of the appointment of the *RTCG* Director General continues to raise questions regarding a lack of

23 AMU „Izveštaj o radu AMU za 2025. godinu“ [AMU 2025 Work Report], May 15, 2026.

24 The section of the report concerning the Public Broadcaster *RTCG* was written by media expert Dražen Đurašković from the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro, ensuring that the author who is also a member of the *RTCG* Council would not be in a conflict of interest.

25 Interview, Vuk Vuković, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January 2026.

26 *Vijesti.me*, „Saslušani Camović Veličković, Ljumović i Tatar kandidati za članove Savjeta RTCG“ [Camović-Veličković, Ljumović, and Tatar, candidates for *RTCG* Council members, interviewed], January 1, 2026.

27 *Pobjeda.me*, „Predsjednik i dio članova Savjeta RTCG osuđeni zbog nezakonitog imenovanja Raonića“ [President and several members of the *RTCG* Council convicted over unlawful appointment of Raonić], January 20, 2026.

28 Interview, Goran Đurović, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January, 2026.

transparency and potential breaches of legal procedures"²⁹. In November 2024, the prosecution office filed an indictment against the members of the *RTCG* Council.

"A swift legal resolution of this case is of crucial importance to ensure full respect for the law and the highest standards of professional integrity and accountability by the public broadcaster."³⁰ The EC also pointed out that representatives of the *RTCG* trade unions expressed concern over alleged unjustified pressure from management, discrimination against the union, and delays in collective bargaining³¹.

The method of funding *RTCG* was changed at the very end of 2023³² and in a controversial manner, given that the Prime Minister agreed on amendments to the Law on the National Public Broadcaster during a meeting with the *RTCG* Director General³³, who was elected in a way that indicates corruption³⁴ among the Council members who voted for him, without public participation and contrary to the draft Law that had been agreed upon by the working group and sent to foreign experts for review. Instead of the previous 0.3 percent of the gross domestic product, the *RTCG* will now receive 1.34 percent of the current budget. The total budget amount continues to grow by several million euros year after year, reaching a total of over 26 million euros for the year 2026.

When it comes to local public broadcasters founded by municipalities, the situation began to improve at the end of 2024 because the new Law on Audiovisual Media Services significantly increased allocations from local budgets for the operation of these media outlets. This is done according to a specific scheme that takes into account the total size of the current budget, as well as whether the local public broadcaster operates only a radio station or also includes a television channel and a portal. However, their manner of operation remains debatable because "although the Law on AMU has partially modified their way of functioning, especially in the domain of funding security, fundamental problems remain: weak professional production, limited personnel capacities, pronounced clientelism, and self-censorship"³⁵

"Under such conditions, local broadcasters rarely fulfill their public role which is to inform citizens in the interest of the community, monitor local authorities, and nurture pluralism"³⁶

Nevertheless, not all comments regarding the work of local public broadcasters are negative, as some experts believe that these local media outlets "fulfill their role and make a significant contribution to media pluralism."

29 Skupstina.me. "[European Commission Montenegro 2025 Progress Report](#)", p. 44.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Dan portal, "[Spajić-Raonić: Izmjenama zakona o načinu finansiranja Javnog servisa garantuje se nezavisnost RTCG-a](#)" [Spajić-Raonić: Amendments to the law on the financing model of the Public Broadcaster guarantee the independence of RTCG], January 20, 2026.

33 Adria.tv, "[Media centar: Vlada bez javne rasprave predložila izmjene Zakona o RTCG kojima se ukida finansijska nezavisnost javnog servisa](#)", [Media Center: Government proposed amendments to the Law on RTCG without public debate, abolishing the financial independence of the public broadcaster], January 20, 2026.

34 Agency for Prevention of Corruption, [Opinion No. 03-02-24-24-6](#).

35 Interview, Vuk Vuković, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January, 2026.

36 Ibid.

"The essential obstacles to the work of most local public broadcasters (all except RTV Podgorica and RTV Nikšić) are very limited resources, a small number of journalists who can report on local topics of interest to the community, outdated equipment, inadequate work space..." ³⁷

— A.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO QUALITY JOURNALISM AND MEDIA CONTENT OF PUBLIC INTEREST

The Fund for the Promotion of Media Pluralism was established in 2021³⁸, financed by a fixed annual allocation of 0.09 percent of the gross domestic product from the state budget. With the adoption of the Law on Media in June 2024, this amount was increased to 0.20 percent of the current budget. From the portion of the Fund allocated to electronic media, the AMU³⁹ distributed 900,053 euros in June 2025 to commercial broadcasters for the production of media content of public interest. Fourteen radio and television broadcasters were supported, with the obligation to produce 45 pieces of media content. From the portion of the Fund under the Ministry of Culture and Media, which applies to print media and portals, 1,132,226.24 euros were distributed for a total of 38 projects, which were allocated across 48 media outlets and three self-regulatory bodies⁴⁰

The Parliament of Montenegro funds the only weekly newspaper in the Albanian language, *Koha javore*, with 157,500 euros annually⁴¹

— A.5 STATE ADVERTISING IN THE PRIVATE MEDIA SECTOR

The state advertises in private media, but data regarding the exact amounts and specific media outlets remains unavailable. This is despite the fact that the obligation to report revenue from this type of marketing has existed since the beginning of 2021, when the provisions of the Law on Media regarding transparent advertising entered into force. The Report on the Transparency of Media Funding from Public Revenues for the year of 2024⁴² shows that advertising data was submitted by only 113 out of 217 media outlets registered at the time in the records of the Ministry of Culture and Media and the register of the Agency for Audiovisual Media Services, representing 52% of registered media outlets. Compared to the previous reporting period for 2023, there is a slight decrease in the number of media outlets that submitted data on public funding transparency, as 56% had done so the year before, though only 198 media outlets were registered at that time. Out of a total of 681 public sector entities, 419 submitted data, which is 62%; here too, a

37 Interview, Goran Đurović, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January, 2026.

38 Government of Montenegro, „[Informacija o Fondu za podsticanje pluralizma i raznovrsnosti medija](#)” [Information on the Fund for the Promotion of Media Pluralism and Diversity], October 28, 2021.

39 AMU „[Report on the Allocation of Funds from the Fund for the Year 2024](#)”, January 20, 2026.

40 Government of Montenegro „[Decision on the Allocation of Funds from the Sub-Fund for Media and Internet Publications in 2025](#)”, February 15, 2026.

41 Biznis.me, „[Skupštini 15,63 miliona eura iz budžeta: Manje novca za rad poslanika, više za administraciju](#)” [Parliament allocated 15.63 million euros from the budget: Less money for MPs' work, more for administration], April 5, 2026.

42 Ministry of Culture and Media, [2024 Report on the Transparency of Media Funding from Public Revenues](#), June 2, 2025.

decline is recorded compared to the previous year, when 64% of public sector entities provided transparency funding data.

The distribution of state funds for advertising purposes is still not transparent⁴³, and data from the two sources differ. Consequently, a clear conclusion cannot be drawn as to whether there is any form of favoritism toward certain media outlets or whether political influence is involved which was precisely the intention to prevent when the Law on Media was drafted.

According to the Law on Media, advertising data must be submitted once a year⁴⁴, by the end of March of the current year for the previous year, to the Ministry of Culture and Media, which is then required to publish a summary report. Given that this data is largely not being submitted, the Ministry has announced that it will finally employ media inspectors who, in accordance with the Law, will be tasked with this type of control.

— A.6 LEGAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO DEFAMATION AND THEIR APPLICATION DO NOT CREATE A CHILLING EFFECT ON JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA

The Law on Obligations⁴⁵ and the Law on Media protect personality rights in the media through civil litigation, providing sufficient freedom for the media and journalists to do their jobs without pressure. Defamation was decriminalized in 2011, and since then, there have been no concrete proposals to recriminalize it.

According to data from the basic courts⁴⁶, six proceedings were initiated during the year (one of which was withdrawn) for violations of personality rights where journalists and media outlets were sued. This represents a drastic drop compared to 2024, when 31 such cases were registered. Specifically, the Basic Court in Kolašin received two lawsuits, one of which was withdrawn, while the basic courts in Bar, Danilovgrad, Kotor, and Podgorica received one lawsuit each. The defendants were *Digitella DOO* from Bar (which publishes *Primorski portal*), the portal *Aktuelno, Insajder Tim DOO Belgrade* (which publishes *Informer* in Serbia), and *Pobjeda*.

In a proceeding before the Basic Court in Podgorica, journalist Danilo Ajković proved that Deputy Prime Minister Nik Đeljošaj violated his honor and reputation by claiming he was corrupt; that verdict is currently before the High Court on appeal.⁴⁷

Journalist Dragana Šćepanović won a first-instance ruling in her case against the portal *Aktuelno* for systematically spreading falsehoods about her and attempting to discredit her; the High Court's decision on the defendant's appeal is pending.⁴⁸

43 Ibid.

44 CDM.me, „[Vujović: Svi mediji će proći inspekcijski nadzor, planirane veće kazne za širenje dezinformacija](#)” [Vujović: All media will undergo inspection, higher fines planned for spreading disinformation], April 5, 2026.

45 „[Law on obligations](#)”, article 151.

46 TUUM's data.

47 Rtcg.me, „[Đeljošaj osuđen zbog klevetanja Ajkovića: Mora da mu plati 1.800 eura, troškove advokatici...](#)” [Đeljošaj convicted for defaming Ajković: Must pay him 1,800 euros, as well as the lawyer's fees...], April 14, 2026.

48 AntenaM.net, „[Četvrta presuda za iznesene neistine: BIRN i Džidić osuđeni i zbog klevetanja Kačuše Krsmanović](#)” [Fourth verdict for spreading falsehoods: BIRN and Džidić also convicted for defaming Kačuša Krsmanović], April 4, 2026.

About a dozen lawsuits initiated against two *BIRN* journalists⁴⁹ continued before courts in Podgorica and Sarajevo. These stems from a 2022 article in which several citizens and activists, including two female journalists, were included on a list of right-wing organizations in Montenegro. Multiple first-instance verdicts delivered during 2025 established their liability⁵⁰.

Journalists state that they are exposed to various types of pressure, but they do not include the fear of lawsuits among them. They emphasize that, despite the pressure, they try to maintain correct relations with their interlocutors, as they need them for their future work⁵¹.

— A.7 OTHER LAWS ARE ENFORCED OBJECTIVELY AND ALLOW JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS TO WORK FREELY AND SAFELY

The law does not treat SLAPP lawsuits in any specific way, nor do any protective mechanisms exist in court practice, such as the early dismissal of such lawsuits when they occur. SLAPP lawsuits are rare, and those that do happen are mostly covered by the media. A case that the *Vijesti* newspaper labeled as a SLAPP suit, and which drew public interest, concerns a lawsuit filed by Andrej Vučić, brother of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, against that media outlet because it had reported on him in a manner that Vučić did not like.⁵²

A first-instance verdict by the Basic Court in Podgorica established that there was no violation of the honor and reputation of RTCG employee Vladana Vučinić, who had sued two media outlets, a female member of the RTCG Council, and a female citizen⁵³ for commenting on and publishing information related to her unlawful salary increase. The decision of the High Court is pending following an appeal by Vučinić, who requested that the defendants jointly and severally pay her 12,000 euros.

— A.8 THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF JOURNALISTS' SOURCES IS GUARANTEED IN THE LEGISLATION AND RESPECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES

Amendments to the Law on Media in 2024⁵⁴ specified that a journalist is not obliged to reveal their source of information, except when requested by the state prosecutor and confirmed by the competent court, and solely for the protection of national security, territorial integrity, and health. Even during 2025, no cases of abuse of this article of the law were recorded.

There were no new cases in which journalists or media outlets were requested to reveal a source of information,

49 Pobjeda.me, „[Podnijete tužbe za klevetu protiv BIRN-a u Sarajevu, u Podgorici protiv Jovanović i Tomović](#)“ [Defamation lawsuits filed against BIRN in Sarajevo, and against Jovanović and Tomović in Podgorica], February 15, 2023.

50 *Vijesti.me*, „[Usvojena tužba Šćepanović protiv portala Aktuelno, novac koji joj je dosuđen doniraće u dobrotvorne svrhe](#)“ [Šćepanović's lawsuit against Aktuelno portal upheld; awarded funds to be donated to charity], April 14, 2026.

51 Focus group with journalists, February 16, 2026.

52 *Vijesti.me*, „[Spaić: Klasična SLAP tužba, Andrej Vučić hoće da učutka Vijesti](#)“ [Spaić: A classic SLAPP lawsuit, Andrej Vučić wants to silence *Vijesti*], January 20, 2026.

53 *Slobodnaevropa.org*, „[Obustavljen postupak protiv crnogorskog profesora koji je kritikovao SPC](#)“ [Proceedings dropped against Montenegrin professor who criticized the Serbian Orthodox Church], May 15, 2025.

54 [Law on media](#)

and journalists did not report facing any difficulties in meeting and maintaining contact with their sources⁵⁵.

— A.9 JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO PURSUIT THEIR PROFESSION AND TO ESTABLISH, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR ASSOCIATIONS

Journalists do not need to be licensed, and the definition of a journalist in the new 2024 Law on Media⁵⁶ is quite broad, without any requirement for journalists to hold a license or registration.

Association is free, but this right is not frequently exercised because journalists harbor reservations regarding the motives of the people running these associations, and they do not see how it serves their interests as professionals⁵⁷. Only 19 percent of the total number of employed journalists and media workers(??) are members of an association⁵⁸. There are three journalistic associations operating in Montenegro, only one of them is active, and primarily in terms of organizing occasional training sessions. However, two national trade unions also operate in Montenegro, with the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro being more widespread and visible in the public eye. Their members continue to report problems due to trade union membership and anti-union discrimination, and even instances of being banned from organizing into trade unions.

— A.10 RIGHT TO ACCESS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

According to data from the Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information (AZLP)⁵⁹, journalists submitted 240 requests for free access to information to state authorities in 2025. This marks another increase compared to the previous year, which had been a record high with 172 requests. "A total of 109 requests were approved, 65 were rejected, while 38 requests for free access to information were partially granted."⁶⁰ In total, journalists filed 98 appeals, while entities that refused to provide information included "Barska Plovidba", Airports of Montenegro, Port of Bar, the Ministry of the Interior, the Faculty of Economics, the High Court, Elektroprivreda (EPCG), the Development Bank, the Montenegrin Electric Transmission System (CGES) AD Podgorica, the Regulatory Agency for Energy and Regulated Communal Services, "Monteput", the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation...

The main resource through which journalists obtain official information and documents remains the platform operated by MANS⁶¹, which they turned to 1,397 times⁶² during 2025. Their experience shows that the highest number of appeals

55 Focus group with journalists, February 16, 2026.

56 [Law on media](#)

57 Ibid.

58 TUMM, „[Research on the Socio-Economic Status of Journalists and Other Media Professionals in Montenegro](#)”, p. 46.

59 Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information, Letter No. 07-43-9987-2/25 dated January 13, 2026.

60 Ibid.

61 Mans.me, [Faster access to information with the new MANS mobile app](#)

62 Letter from the Network for the Affirmation of the Non-Governmental Sector (MANS), February 5, 2026.

(239 in total) due to unanswered requests were filed against the National Security Agency (ANB), RTCG, Montenegrin Electric Enterprise, and Hotels Group "Budvanska rivijera".

Following a long alignment process, a new Law on Free Access to Information⁶³ was adopted, the implementation of which is set to begin in mid-2026.

Recorded material in which ministers address the public directly, delivered to the media by their PR services, and messages sent via the X platform (Twitter) are the most frequent forms of public communication. Government sessions are no longer broadcast live via the YouTube channel, and a major public complaint is that most decisions are made on the WhatsApp platform, i.e., at online/telephone sessions⁶⁴. The authorities continue to favor media outlets close to them, providing them with information deemed beneficial to the administration. Journalists claim that the Prime Minister is inaccessible, meaning that in terms of transparency, both the Government and the Parliament have significantly regressed.

"The Supreme and Special State Prosecution Offices are also inaccessible, while basic prosecution offices are more open. Certain ministries are now more transparent, as are some institutions, and it appears that the practice of forwarding responses to questions posed by one media outlet to other media outlets has finally stopped."⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the government's stance toward certain media outlets has shifted, and journalists argue that officials are using neglect as a tool to silence them.

"They have completely isolated me because they are afraid of what will be published. What we publish, they cannot deny because we write based on arguments and evidence, but I can no longer maintain contacts. Sources are intimidated and do not want to speak out, so we are forced to find alternative ways to obtain information."⁶⁶

The work of the courts is generally assessed as transparent, but the limited capacity of courtrooms remains a restricting factor for reporting. A precedent occurred during the year when a judge banned the media from attending a trial that was otherwise open to the public. It was later determined that the judge violated the Code of Judicial Ethics through this conduct.⁶⁷

For almost six years, the RTCG has operated the Parliamentary Channel, which broadcasts all parliamentary sessions and committee meetings live, with reruns also available.

63 Government of Montenegro, „Crna Gora unapređuje otvorenost podataka javnog sektora“ [Montenegro improves public sector data openness], April 5, 2026.

64 Portalanalitika.me, „CGO: Vlada strateški važne odluke donosi na telefonskim sjednicama – neozbiljno je voditi državu na „seen“ i „like““ [CCE: Government makes strategically important decisions at phone sessions – it is non-serious to run a country based on 'seen' and 'like'], February 20, 2026.

65 Focus group with journalists, February 16, 2026.

66 Ibid.

67 Human Rights Action „Sutkinja Rabrenović prekršila Etički kodeks sudija“, [Judge Rabrenović violated the Code of Judicial Ethics], January 20, 2026.

Furthermore, the Parliament's YouTube channel maintains these recordings for later viewing. During 2024, communication between the TUMM, other media organizations, and the Parliament led to improved reporting conditions from the Parliament. However, the request from cameramen and photojournalists to be allowed more time inside the plenary hall while the Parliament is in session remains unresolved.

B. JOURNALISTS' POSITION IN THE NEWSROOMS

— B.1 THE JOB POSITIONS OF JOURNALISTS ARE STABLE AND PROTECTED AT THE WORKPLACE

According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Media, 136 media outlets were operating in Montenegro by mid-2025. Out of that number, 64 were portals, including a large number with only one or even zero employees⁶⁸. Under the 2024 Law on Media, all of them were required to re-register; however, the registration process for all previously recorded media outlets is still ongoing, which explains why a lower number of portals was recorded compared to the previous year.⁶⁹

Research⁷⁰ conducted by the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro showed that although the majority of respondents, 77.8 percent, work full-time, a portion hold fixed-term contracts (16.5%), while around 5 percent are engaged through service contracts or as freelancers⁷¹.

In Montenegro, the majority of media employees still receive a salary lower than the national average. During 2025, nearly three-quarters of employees (73.6%) earned less than 1,022 euros, which is the average net salary at the state level⁷². As many as 36.8 percent of respondents receive a salary below 800 euros, which is the legal minimum for employees with a university degree. A significant number of respondents (57.5%) state that their socio-economic position has improved over the past year, while 42.1% believe there have been no changes.

Data on working hours indicate a heavy workload, as nearly a third of respondents (31.4%) say they usually work more than eight hours a day. About a quarter (22.2%) state that they work overtime several times a week, while only 9.6% of respondents report never working overtime. They claim that in nearly 40 percent of cases, this overtime work is not paid regularly.

There is no branch collective agreement for the media sector in Montenegro, and at the company level, collective agreements exist only within public broadcasters, namely the *RTCG*, *RTV Budva*, and, as of October 2025, *RTV Pljevlja*⁷³. Furthermore, the collective agreement at *RTV Budva* dates back to 2017, and most of its provisions are no longer applied in practice.

Problems regarding anti-union discrimination against media activists continue to be reported, as well as bans on trade union organizing in certain private media outlets. The most drastic example involves members of the Trade Union of Employees of Radio and Television of Montenegro (*RTCG*) who, due to pressure from management, wrote to international organizations, including the European and

68 TUMM, „[Poslovanje medija u Crnoj Gori u 2024. godini](#)“ [Media Business Operations in Montenegro in 2024], January 20, 2026.

69 Letter from the Ministry of Culture and Media, May 20, 2025.

70 TUMM, „[Research on the Socio-Economic Status of Journalists and Other Media Professionals in Montenegro](#)“

71 Ibid.

72 Monstat, [Average wages \(salaries\)](#), January 30, 2026.

73 Tvpljevlja.me, [Collective Agreement of RTV Pljevlja](#).

International Federation of Journalists⁷⁴. Another case involved the dismissal of the president of the Trade Union Organization of the Local Public Broadcaster Podgorica following a problematic disciplinary procedure.⁷⁵

— B.2 THE JOB POSITIONS OF JOURNALISTS ARE STABLE AND PROTECTED AT THE WORKPLACE

In the majority of private media outlets in Montenegro, there are no clear internal rules defining the separation of the editorial staff from management and marketing, leading to a frequent intertwining of their activities. Consequently, portals occasionally publish articles that are difficult to identify as promotional, as they are written by journalists or are shaped and presented in a way that, at first glance, does not look like paid content.

Most private media outlets lack internal ethical rules or codes that would guarantee editorial independence from owners or management structures, although a few, such as the daily *Vijesti*⁷⁶ and the *Mina* agency⁷⁷, began adopting similar acts during 2021. In practice, all private media rely on the general Code of Journalists, which is currently undergoing revision.

Journalists continue to report an inability to cover all topics of public interest, noting that every newsroom has certain limitations. In most cases, these boundaries relate to major advertisers and business partners of the media outlets they work for. Another problem involves topics concerning politicians or policies with which media owners have certain connections or affinities, directly shaping editorial policy in that manner.⁷⁸

“Topics related to large supermarket chains, pharmacies, the pharmaceutical industry in general, betting shops, and investors from whom the Government has high expectations, such as companies from the United Arab Emirates, are forbidden. You cannot find them covered in any media outlet, even though topics concerning these advertisers and their businesses are of unquestionable public importance.”⁷⁹

Journalists cite the discouragement of pursuing specific topics and the imposition of a particular story angle, to make a problem appear less significant or trivial, as the greatest pressures they face from owners and editors. They emphasize that this pressure is subtle; no one tells them openly, but when it recurs, they recognize the pattern and understand what is happening.

“If I have to approach a topic of public interest, for which I have evidence and relevant interlocutors, from a different angle because ‘it is better that way,’ I refuse to do it and

74 Vijesti.me, „[IFJ i EFJ: Alarm zbog kršenja sindikalnih prava u RTCG, zaposleni primorani da napuste sindikat](#)“ [IFJ and EFJ: Alarm over violation of trade union rights in RTCG, employees forced to leave the union], April 17, 2026.

75 TUMM, „[Otaševića razriješiti zbog nezakonitog otkaza predsjedniku sindikata](#)“ [Otašević should be dismissed over illegal termination of the union president], February 20, 2026.

76 Vijesti.me, „[Editorial Ethical Guidelines](#)“.

77 Mina Agency, „[Code of Ethics of the Mina News Agency](#)“.

78 Focus group with journalists, February 16, 2026.

79 Ibid.

put my name on it. It also happens that editors take a topic away from me and reassign it to one of my colleagues.”⁸⁰

Journalist Nemanja Živaljević pointed out the censorship he faced at the *News Max Balkan* television channel, where interventions were made in his interview to the point where he could no longer stand behind it, prompting him to leave the media outlet.⁸¹

— B.3 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

The *RTCG* has a Code of Ethics⁸² that was amended in 2024 and contains numerous restrictions on freedom of speech. The Code was amended following several announcements and unsuccessful attempts that specifically aimed to restrict the freedoms of employees, particularly freedom of speech and the use of social networks. In the end, a problematic text with similar provisions was adopted despite warnings regarding the unconstitutionality of the document.⁸³ On a positive note, the Code of Ethics is not being applied because the Ethics Committee, which holds jurisdiction over it, has not yet been formed; this is due to several attempts to recruit a Committee member representing the professional public through public open calls, which drew no interested candidates. After a long hiatus, an ombudsman was elected at the end of 2024 and operated throughout 2025, partially upholding most of the received complaints. However, no improvement in the public broadcaster’s work was evident. A major issue is that the ombudsman failed to submit work reports, which constitutes a legal ground for dismissal, though this dismissal has not yet occurred.⁸⁴

The most important governing act of the *RTCG* is its Statute, which does not formally separate the editorial staff from governing bodies and does not address the topic. The most critical body of the *RTCG* is the Council, which was constituted in mid-2021. Its composition has changed to a lesser extent due to resignations from office,⁸⁵ and in mid-2025, it was filled with three new members following a controversial competition and election procedure in the Parliament of Montenegro.⁸⁶ The Basic State Prosecution Office initiated criminal proceedings against five Council members for abuse of office because, contrary to a final court ruling, they re-elected an individual to the position of Director General who, according to the ruling, could not be elected. According to the first-instance verdict, four were convicted, while one former member was acquitted of the charges⁸⁷.

80 Ibid.

81 TUMM, “[Puna podrška Nemanji Živaljeviću koji je hrabro progovorio o cenzuri](#)” [Full support for Nemanji Živaljević who bravely spoke out about censorship], April 14, 2026.

82 RTCG Council, “[RTCG Code of Ethics](#)”.

83 TUMM, “[Etički kodeks suprotan zakonu, zaposleni da nam se obrate](#)” [Code of Ethics contrary to the law, employees should contact us], Apr 27, 2026.

84 Vijesti.me “[Savjet RTCG-a nije usvojio Programski plan za 2026.](#)” [RTCG Council failed to adopt the 2026 Programming Plan], January 20, 2026.

85 Rtcg.me, “[Miranović podnio ostavku u Savjetu](#)” [Miranović resigned from the Council], January 20, 2026.

86 Vijesti.me, “[Saslušani Camović-Veličković, Ljumović i Tatar, kandidati za članove Savjeta RTCG](#)” [Camović-Veličković, Ljumović, and Tatar, candidates for RTCG Council members, interviewed], January 20, 2026.

87 Etv.me, “[Drljević, Lazović, Murić i Zorić proglašeni krivim zbog zloupotrebe službenog položaja prilikom ponovnog izbora Raonića](#)” [Drljević, Lazović, Murić, and Zorić found guilty of abuse of office during Raonić’s re-election], January 20, 2026.

Journalists still do not report direct pressure coming from politicians, who address them through editors and directors who are in contact with those politicians. Furthermore, topics concerning illegalities within the *RTCG* itself regarding the election of the Director General are also censored⁸⁸.

Political influence on the Public Broadcaster remains evident and is frequently attributed to it. This is reflected in the dismissal of editors who are deemed politically unsuitable and the hiring of new, suitable ones. While this is not spoken of officially, it is visible through the programs, the choice of guests, the stances being advocated, and the testimony of journalists⁸⁹.

— B.4 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT MEDIA SECTOR

Two non-profit radio stations are registered in Montenegro⁹⁰ (*Radio Fatih* and *Radio Svetigora*). *Radio Svetigora* obtained the status of a non-profit broadcaster at the end of 2022. This sector remains quite underdeveloped, and the number of these types of media outlets decreased during the year. They are recognized under the Law on Audiovisual Media Services, which prescribes specific rules regarding programming schedules that these broadcasters must respect to maintain their status. Additionally, 13 non-profit print media outlets are registered in the records of the Ministry of Culture and Media.

There are also a few non-profit online portals that are funded through donations and projects. However, they usually lack formal editorial boards and permanent employees, instead hiring journalists on a case-by-case basis depending on project activities.

No financial or employment data is available for *Radio Fatih*, while *Radio Svetigora* reported three employees. Since these are religious radio stations, news and information are not their primary focus; consequently, there is no available data regarding their ethical codes or editorial independence.

An example of a non-profit online media outlet is *PCNEN*⁹¹, which is project-funded and does not have a large impact or high readership.

No information regarding any form of pressure on non-profit media has reached the public, not even concerning those operating within non-governmental organizations that engage in project-based investigative journalism and research into corruption and crime.

88 Focus group with journalists, February 16, 2026.

89 Ibid.

90 Agency for Audiovisual Media Services, [List of Non-Profit Radio Broadcasters a](#), January 15, 2026.

91 PCNEN, „[About us](#)“.

— B.5 FREEDOM OF JOURNALISTS IN THE NEWS PRODUCTION PROCESS

The majority of respondents who participated in the research by the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (60.9%) state that they work without external interference from owners, advertisers, or political actors. However, nearly one in four respondents (23.6%) state that editorial processes are completely or partially not free from these influences.

An analysis of pressures within the media content creation process shows that 42.7% of respondents have never faced a request to alter or adapt content, which is a positive finding. Nevertheless, among those who have experienced such pressures, they most frequently originate from editors (15.5%) and political actors (12.7%), while pressures from advertisers and commercial clients (5.5%) or media owners (3.6%) are less common. Additionally, 10% of respondents state that they cannot identify a specific actor exerting pressure but feel discomfort regarding potential consequences, pointing to indirect pressure and the presence of self-censorship.

— B.6 WORKING POSITION OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS

An opaque pay system prevents female journalists from knowing precisely whether they receive equal pay for equal work compared to their male colleagues, although they generally believe this is not the case; furthermore, they progress more slowly in their careers and most frequently occupy lower-level positions.⁹² Editors-in-chief are rarely women, though they are well-represented in lower editorial positions that require significant labor and dedication. According to available data, women make up more than 60 percent of media employees, but, for example, none of the three daily newspapers has a female editor-in-chief. Data found in the impresum of the three daily newspapers in Montenegro show that women are not equally represented even in lower editorial positions.

None of the three top executive positions at the *RTCG* belong to women (Director General, Director of Television, and Director of Radio).

There is a consensus among the interviewed female journalists and focus group participants that the most vulnerable category consists of female journalists who live and work in smaller communities, as well as those covering the "crime beat". Following them, younger journalists, single mothers, and women in general were highlighted because they are seen as an "easier target" compared to men, making it easier to discredit them through misogynistic and sexist attacks, as well as disparagement via gender stereotypes.⁹³ Stereotypical gender roles in private life are also present, which puts female journalists in a significantly worse position

92 TUMM, „Safety of Women Journalists 2024“, Podgorica 2025.

93 Ibid.

due to balancing “taken-for-granted” household chores with professional tasks. Female journalists testify to a different attitude from employers toward them compared to male colleagues regarding earnings, as well as general treatment, while highlighting motherhood as an additional challenge.

The only media outlet that addresses the issue of gender equality in any manner is *RTCG* through its “Gender Equality Plan 2023–2027”⁹⁴, which outlines specific plans to improve working conditions for women and presents statistical data. This data shows, for instance, that while women make up the majority of employees, only three out of the 11 employees in the Director General’s cabinet are women.

In the 2025 Work Report⁹⁵, the Ombudsman states that journalists are frequently exposed to threats and online harassment campaigns, which can have a negative impact on freedom of expression and public debate. The Ombudsman’s office reacted to all cases of attacks on female journalists.

Due to compromised safety, two female journalists in Montenegro have been under continuous police protection for several years, and during 2025, a third female journalist was granted this status.

94 [RTCG, „Gender Equality Plan 2023-2027”, Decembar 2023.](#)

95 [Annual Work Report of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms for 2025.](#)

C. JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

— C.1 JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ACTORS HAVE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES

A special department dedicated exclusively to investigating attacks on journalists and media property has still not been established within the police and the prosecution office. However, at the end of the year, the Government adopted a decision⁹⁶ to form an Inter-departmental Working Group for the Establishment of a Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists. Throughout the year, the TUMM advocated for this outcome, which is why the Government's decision was preceded by the signing of the Protocol on the Protection of Journalists. In addition to the TUMM, the protocol was signed by several ministers, the Supreme State Prosecutor, and a number of media outlets.⁹⁷

The number of attacks increased drastically in 2025, with 33 incidents recorded, compared to 24 in the previous year. The most severe incident was a physical assault on photojournalists from *Vijesti* and *Pobjeda*, who were attacked in the village of Gornje Zaostro in the Municipality of Berane, in northern Montenegro, during the erection of a monument to Pavle Đurišić, a World War II Chetnik commander and war criminal. Specific mechanisms to protect journalists from hate speech or serious death threats have not yet been established either; however, on the initiative of the Ministry of Justice, a new criminal offense *Aggravated Hate Speech* has been included in the draft amendments to the Criminal Code.⁹⁸ Currently, victims of attacks and threats can file reports with the Police Directorate through the standard procedure applicable to all citizens. The Mandatory Instruction of the Supreme State Prosecution Office on Handling Cases of Attacks on Journalists⁹⁹ remains in force. Among other things, it obliges lower prosecution offices to urgently intensify work on cases formed in relation to attacks on journalists and media property, and directs the heads of state prosecution offices to issue written, binding instructions to the acting state prosecutors in cases where investigations take an unjustifiably long time.

In 2025, 33 attacks and threats against journalists and the media were registered in the database of the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro on the safejournalists.net website, while the Police Directorate registered 29 cases¹⁰⁰. This statistical discrepancy occurs because not every report filed by journalists is directly connected to their journalistic work, and because the TUMM also records incidents that do not end up with formal police reports, such as threats or

96 Government of Montenegro, „[Proposal for a Decision on the Formation of the Interdepartmental Working Group for Establishing a Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists](#)”.

97 TUMM, „[Potpisan protokol o zaštiti novinara korak ka uspostavljanju mehanizma za bezbjednost medijskih radnika](#)” [Signed protocol on the protection of journalists a step towards establishing a mechanism for the safety of media workers], March 10, 2026.

98 Cdm.me, „[Ministarstvo pravde planira da uvede novo krivično djelo - teški govor mržnje](#)” [Ministry of Justice plans to introduce a new criminal offense – aggravated hate speech], April 17, 2026.

99 Tužilaštvo.me, [Guidelines for the Conduct of State Prosecution Offices in Cases of Threats and Violence Against Journalists](#).

100 Letter from the Police Directorate, January 20, 2026.

pressures originating from politicians. All minor cases from previous years are resolved within a short timeframe, but old, unresolved cases of attacks remain a persistent problem.

The experiences of journalists and media representatives who have been victims of attacks and threats are largely positive regarding the conduct of the police officers in charge of the investigations. No cases were reported where the relevant state authorities refused to accept a report of an incident.

— C.2 JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS (WHOSE LIVES OR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY ARE AT REAL AND IMMEDIATE RISK) HAVE ACCESS TO SPECIAL PROTECTION OR SAFETY MECHANISMS

Amendments to the Criminal Code have enhanced the preventive protection of journalists and other media workers in Montenegro regarding threats to their safety. However, within the newsrooms themselves, no preventive work is done, and risk assessments are not conducted before sending teams into the field, particularly ahead of high-risk events¹⁰¹. Current legal solutions offer the possibility of providing continuous police protection in cases where there is a serious threat to the life or physical safety of a journalist. The prerequisite for securing police protection is a negative security assessment. For five years now, two female journalists have had continuous police escorts, having previously been victims of serious attacks and threats due to their investigations into high-level corruption and crime, and during 2025, a third female journalist was granted this status. In cooperation with competent institutions, the police acted upon a total of six requests from the Special Purpose Police Sector during the year regarding individual threat assessments for the safety of journalists.

The police have not established any specific risk assessment procedures tailored to potentially endangered journalists; instead, this is handled on an individual basis through the standard procedure applicable to all citizens. The amendments to the Criminal Code, which entered into force at the beginning of 2022, enable the preventive protection of media workers in Montenegro. The Criminal Code offers additional protection through five amended criminal offenses that prescribe stricter penalties for perpetrators of attacks on journalists. Several cases have already been qualified under these new articles of the Criminal Code. Risk assessments for journalists are still not being conducted within their newsrooms. A new draft of amendments to the Criminal Code, initiated by the TUMM, foresees three additional criminal offenses whose perpetrators will face more drastic punishments if they attack journalists.¹⁰²

Special support services for media workers exposed to attacks and threats are mainly offered by civil society organizations, and media employees highlight this as the

101 Focus group with journalists, February 16, 2026.

102 TUMM, „SMCG predložio izmjene Krivičnog zakonika: evo šta one donose medijskoj zajednici“ [SMCG proposed amendments to the Criminal Code: here is what they bring to the media community], April 17, 2025.

most needed service. The Trade Union of Media also offers free legal and psychological aid, providing more than 160 individual therapy sessions for this purpose during 2025. For female journalists under police protection, this status does not provide any other “privileges” in terms of psychological or other support, but strictly the physical protection of the police officers assigned as their escort. They are, however, able to use the support services provided by the civil sector.

— C.3 FEMALE JOURNALISTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL MEASURES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS WHEN FACED WITH GENDER-BASED THREATS, HARASSMENT, AND VIOLENCE

Montenegro was one of the first countries (among the first five) to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), which entered into force on 1 August 2014. An important strategic document is the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention for the period 2023–2027,¹⁰³ on the basis of which the process of adopting new legislation has begun, including amendments to the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Law on Free Legal Aid.

During 2025, no cases involving threats of rape were recorded; however, one case of sexual harassment through social media was registered and resulted in a conviction of the perpetrator.¹⁰⁴ Women journalists may rely on the same protection measures available to other women, such as free legal aid or protection against discrimination and gender-based violence, but there are no measures specifically linked to their profession.¹⁰⁵ Amendments to the Law on Free Legal Aid¹⁰⁶ have defined that victims of the criminal offence of domestic violence, violence within a family community, and victims of human trafficking are entitled to free legal aid, regardless of whether they are women or men.

Victims of gender-based violence still do not have the opportunity to systematically obtain information or assistance regarding their problems through coordinated networking among state institutions. A positive example, both for the general population and for women journalists, is the institution of the Ombudsman, which acts preventively by providing information, while also collecting statistical data and maintaining records of such cases. In addition to the courts, women journalists who are victims of workplace discrimination may also seek assistance from the Ombudsman institution.

103 Government of Montenegro, [Nacionalni plan za implementaciju Istanbulske konvencije za period 2023.-2027. godine](#). [National Plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention for the period 2023/2027].

104 [Safejournalists.net](#), databasis.

105 Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro – Ombudsman, [Izveštaji o radu](#) [Work Report].

106 Government of Montenegro, [„Besplatna pravna pomoć“](#) [Free Legal Aid], February 25, 2026.

— C.4 THE PRACTICE OF REGULAR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THREATS AND ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

There have been no real improvements in the relationship between representatives of political parties or public officials and the media. The trend of criticizing media outlets or journalists due to disagreements with the editorial policies of the media organizations for which they work continues. The most serious case of attacks on journalists recorded during 2025, involving a Chetnik gathering dedicated to war criminal Pavle Đurišić, at which two photojournalists were attacked, passed without condemnation from far-right political parties, including the party to which the President of the Parliament of Montenegro belongs.¹⁰⁷

Debates are also frequently conducted over which media outlets are professional and which are not, as well as whether attacks are directed against media organizations from one side or the other of the polarized media community.

Given that attacks come even from the highest political positions, it cannot be said that an environment has been created in which journalists can feel safe while carrying out their work. The practice of favouring politically aligned actors and establishing informal partnerships with media outlets remains present.

— C.5 POLICE AUTHORITIES ARE SENSITIVE TO JOURNALISTS' PROTECTION ISSUE

The trend of resolving new cases of attacks on journalists more quickly has continued, and every incident that occurred during 2025 received some form of legal or institutional outcome. According to reports from the Police Directorate and the Ministry of the Interior, training is conducted annually for officials of these state institutions in order to further raise their awareness of fundamental human rights standards and to familiarize them with the nature and importance of journalism for every democratic society.

"New trends were also evident during the previous term of the Commission for the Investigation of Attacks on Journalists, reflected in the increased and more timely engagement of the police and the prosecution service in cases involving attacks on journalists. This trend should continue and be further improved through stronger cooperation and coordination among all institutions. The plan is for progress to be supported by the Mechanism, which would enable institutions to respond more quickly and effectively in cases of attacks and threats against journalists."¹⁰⁸

107 Cdm.me, „[Reakcije na napad na fotoreportre u Gornjem Zaostru](#)“ [Reactions to the attack on photojournalist in Gornji Zaostru], April 04, 2026.

108 Interview, Predrag Nikolić, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January 2026.

Cooperation between the Police Directorate and organizations dealing with the safety of journalists continues to be limited primarily to the provision of information upon request by such organizations.¹⁰⁹ It is expected that communication will improve through the operationalization of the Mechanism for the Protection of Journalists.

— C.6 SPECIALISED UNITS/OFFICERS ARE EQUIPPED WITH EXPERTISE FOR INVESTIGATING ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

The Commission for Investigating Attacks on Journalists remains the only body established by the Government and granted the authority to oversee investigations. For six months, the Commission was unable to operate because its mandate had expired. Shortly before the end of its previous term, the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office (VDT) decided to stop providing complete case files related to ongoing investigations, having determined that such practice was not in accordance with the law.¹¹⁰

"In its previous composition, the Commission operated at full capacity in the sense that it had access to documentation from both the police and the prosecution in cases involving attacks on journalists. The change occurred when the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office, arguing that the disclosure of prosecutorial documentation was not lawful, altered this practice. Since then, the Commission has had access only to police documentation, but not to prosecutorial files. As an alternative, reports and meetings with the prosecutors handling the cases have been offered. How this arrangement will function, and to what extent the Commission will be able to fulfil its role, will become clear in practice during the work of the next composition of the Commission."¹¹¹

— C.7 INVESTIGATIONS OF SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT EFFICIENTLY (INDEPENDENTLY, THOROUGHLY AND PROMPTLY)

The most serious cases of attacks on journalists remain unresolved, and there has been no progress in the investigations that are still ongoing. Seven years after journalist Olivera Lakić was shot and wounded, the trial of the suspects finally began, but the proceedings have made little progress due to repeated postponements of hearings. Lakić herself testified toward the end of the year, while the entirety of 2025 was marked by adjournments in this case.¹¹²

109 Interview, Radomir Kračković, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January 2026.

110 Vijesti.me, „VDT ne dostavlja papire jer nije po zakonu, Komisiji za praćenje istraga napada na novinare otežan rad” [Supreme State Prosecutor does not deliver papers because it is not according to the law, the work of the Commission for Monitoring Investigation of Attacks of journalists is difficult], April 14, 2026.

111 Interview, Predrag Nikolić, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January 2026.

112 Safejournalistst.net, „Lakić prvi put pred Višim sudom: Napad na mene bio je motivisan mojim istraživačkim radom” [Lakić for the first time before the High Court: The attack on me was motivated by my research work], April 17, 2026.

Amendments to the Criminal Code adopted in 2022 allow attacks on journalists to be classified as more serious criminal offences, carrying stricter penalties.

The only case of a journalist's murder, which occurred 22 years ago, remains unsolved, while the sole person convicted for aiding and abetting that murder has already served his 19-year prison sentence.

Institutions respond better than they did in the past, but the system still does not provide journalists with effective protection. The media community also criticizes the fact that many threats made online remain unresolved because "the police and the prosecution are unable to identify the perpetrators."

— C.8 JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE EFFICIENTLY PROTECTED FROM VARIOUS FORMS OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

Online harassment is not recognized as a separate criminal offence under the Criminal Code, even though, at least in the case of journalists, it occurs every year. Nevertheless, some legal experts believe that this area is adequately regulated by the existing Criminal Code and that such conduct can be effectively sanctioned regardless of the channel through which it occurs (online or offline).¹¹³

An increase in the number of cases of online harassment targeting media workers was recorded, rising from 9 cases in 2024 to 16 cases in 2025, of which 7 involved threats to life and physical safety.

In some cases, the State Prosecutor's Office assessed that the reported conduct did not constitute a criminal offence, while some cases were prosecuted and others remain under police and prosecutorial investigation.

No specific measures aimed at protecting journalists in the online sphere have been introduced; instead, these cases are handled in the same manner as cases involving other citizens as victims.

— C.9 INVESTIGATIONS OF ALL TYPES OF ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CARRIED OUT TRANSPARENTLY

Formally, victims of attacks and threats have access to the investigative process and are generally informed about the course of the investigation, the evidence gathered, and the case files.

The public relations departments of Montenegrin courts generally provide information on all proceedings that have been concluded by a final judgment, as well as on cases in which

113 Interview, Mirko Bošković, interviewed by Marijana Camović-Veličković, January 2026.

a judgment has been rendered. Information on the progress of proceedings may also be obtained in cases considered to be of significant public interest. There is also the possibility of obtaining final court judgments through the courts' websites. However, this is often complicated by the anonymization of the parties involved in the proceedings, as well as by the fact that judgments are not always published in a timely manner.

— C.10 QUALITY STATISTICS COLLECTION SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED BY STATE AUTHORITIES TO STEM IMPUNITY

The collection and publication of statistical data remain among the greatest challenges facing Montenegrin state institutions, particularly with regard to data relating to the media sector. Not only are disaggregated data unavailable, but in many cases such data are not collected at all. Even when a state institution does collect statistical data, these are generally not published proactively and can only be obtained upon request.

With respect to the safety of journalists, cases involving attacks and threats are recorded by the Police Directorate, and these data can be obtained upon request. However, the records include all attacks and threats where the victim happens to be a journalist, even when the specific incident is unrelated to their professional activities. As a result, the data do not provide a clear picture of attacks connected to journalistic work. Information can also be obtained from the prosecution service upon request.

Even institutions that collect certain statistical data, such as the Statistical Office, do not always provide an accurate picture. When its data on the number of people employed in the media sector are compared with data from the Tax Administration, discrepancies of several hundred employees become apparent, calling into question the reliability of the figures. Breakdowns within the sector by gender or other characteristics are likewise unavailable, primarily due to the absence of a comprehensive and reliable database.

— C.11 NON-PHYSICAL THREATS AND HARASSMENTS

During 2025, 16 cases of threats against journalists were recorded, representing an increase compared to 11 cases in 2024 and also exceeding the previous peak recorded in 2022, when 13 such cases were documented. The trend of political actors targeting media professionals continued. Notable cases included sexist remarks made by the Mayor of Pljevlja, Dario Vraneš, and insults directed at journalists by Member of Parliament Vladimir Dobričanin. A sexist incident involving a physician at the Clinical Centre of Montenegro targeting a journalist from *RTV Podgorica* was also recorded; the case resulted in a conviction by the Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica. In 2025, two cases of legal and administrative harassment were registered. The first involved the wife of Podgorica Mayor Saša Mujović, who filed a complaint against journalist Vesna Rajković Nenadić over a sarcastic post on social media. The second concerned proceedings initiated by

the Police Directorate against journalist and publicist Brano Mandić following his public criticism of Professor Aleksandar Stamatović. Both cases were discontinued after significant public pressure. In addition, journalist Jelena Jovanović was designated as a suspect in a prosecution case following a complaint filed by Jelena Perović, the former Director of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ASK). According to the complaint, Jovanović had allegedly “violated the confidentiality of the proceedings” through articles she had published.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
<p>Non-physical threats and harassment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Surveillance or monitoring – harassment by phone calls – arbitrary harassment by representatives of judicial or administrative authorities – Aggressive statements by public officials – other forms of pressure that can jeopardize the safety of journalists in the performance of their work. <p>These types of threats do not include mobbing and bullying in the work environment.</p>	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – On 4 December, the Mayor of Pljevlja, Dario Vraneš, directed an offensive and sexist comment at Milka Tadić Mijović, Director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism, via Instagram. Commenting on a statement by Tadić Mijović published in an article by Vijesti, he wrote on Instagram: “Tell me, old woman, are you a witch? I am, Prince, there’s no point hiding it.” – Srđan Stanojević, a television director at Vijesti TV, announced on his Facebook profile that on 2 November, at around 10 a.m., following the broadcast of the programme “Nedjelja u retrovizoru” (“Sunday in the Rear-View Mirror”), an incident occurred involving one of the programme’s guests – Vladimir Dobričanin, a Member of Parliament from United Montenegro. Upon leaving the studio, a discussion about footage that had been the subject of the programme (an attack on a Podgorica citizen by nationals of Azerbaijan) escalated into a serious verbal confrontation. Stanojević claims that Dobričanin continuously directed insults and profanities at him and, at one point, pulled out a pepper spray canister and threatened to spray him. – On 21 October 2025, S.K., a journalist with RTV Podgorica, reported to the police that a video recording featuring her at her workplace had been posted on Instagram together with a comment that, in her view, offensively targeted and belittled her with the aim of damaging her reputation and undermining her two-decade-long career in the media. The competent prosecutor at the Basic State Prosecutor’s Office in Podgorica was informed of the case and the case files were submitted for assessment and opinion. – On 10 October, Vijesti journalist Jelena Jovanović reported several unidentified individuals to the police for stalking, endangering her safety, obstructing a journalist in the performance of journalistic duties, and inciting racial and religious hatred. An unidentified person had previously posted her photograph on the Facebook account “Niko Kater”, having taken it from her social media profiles without permission, falsely claiming that Jovanović had been arrested. On the same day, Jovanović received a series of threatening messages in her inbox, including insults such as “traitors, get lost” and comments based on her national background. The journalist has been exposed to similar messages on social media for the past six years. The police in Bijelo Polje announced that they had filed criminal charges against M.K. from that town on suspicion of endangering the safety of the journalist. – Vijesti journalist Jelena Jovanović was questioned as a suspect following a complaint previously filed by Jelena Perović, the former Director of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (ASK). Perović, who has been charged with unlawful abuse of office and causing damage to the State of Montenegro, alleged that articles published by Vijesti in November 2023 and authored by Jovanović had “violated the confidentiality of the proceedings.” Podgorica residents M.S. (71) and D.S. (47) were arrested after posting insulting and threatening comments on Facebook on 3 September targeting Ž.K., a journalist with E TV. They were arrested on 6 October by order of the acting prosecutor at the Basic State Prosecutor’s Office in Podgorica. M.S. was arrested for a misdemeanour under Article 7 of the Law on Public Order and Peace, while D.S. was arrested for a misdemeanour under Article 8 of the same Law. – On 24 July 2025, E TV journalist Vesna Rajković Nenadić received a summons from the police to provide a statement regarding a complaint filed against her by Danijela Mujović, the wife of the Mayor of Podgorica. Rajković Nenadić had shared a photograph of Danijela Mujović wearing Dior slippers on Facebook, accompanied by the comment: “Poor liberator. Everyone shops at Cotton. This is one hundred percent fake, as my son would say when he doubts whether something is original.” Mujović subsequently wrote on Instagram that she would henceforth sue anyone who published her photograph or mentioned her on any social media platform. On 30 July, the police announced that the case contained no elements of a misdemeanour offence. – Slobodan Doknić, the correspondent of Television of Montenegro in Nikšić, reported receiving a series of messages from the Mayor of Šavnik, which he perceived as inappropriate influence, threats, and an attempt at censorship. The messages followed the broadcast of a report from the ceremonial session of the Šavnik Municipal Assembly held on the occasion of the Municipality Day. Doknić reported the incident to his editorial office.

Category	Number	Brief description of cases
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – On 17 June, administrators of the Facebook page “Autocephalous Montenegrin Orthodox Church” published a link to the private profile of Nina Đuranović, a journalist with Raskrinkavanje, one day after she had published an article stating that the page continuously used photographs of adult film actors to spread disinformation and nationalism. In addition, the administrators sarcastically and falsely presented her as an administrator of their page and invited all their followers to “feel free to contact her.” The post attracted comments containing insulting and sexist content. It is noteworthy that a male journalist from Raskrinkavanje had debunked content from the same page a month earlier, but the administrators had not reacted at that time. – On 26 April, Magdalena Čelanović, a presenter at Gradska TV, reported to the police that Vladimir Peruničić, a physician at the Clinical Centre of Montenegro, had been sending her insulting, threatening, and sexist messages via email and social media over a period of several days, causing her to fear for her safety. The Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica imposed the maximum fine of EUR 1,000 and ordered a security measure requiring mandatory outpatient treatment for alcoholism while at liberty. – On 23 April 2025, journalist Ana Raičković appeared before the Podgorica Security Department and reported that a comment posted under an article published that same day on the “Aktuelno” portal constituted a threat against her and her son. The prosecutor at the Basic State Prosecutor’s Office in Podgorica determined that the case involved the criminal offence of endangering security. Raičković had previously reported comments on the same portal on three other occasions – on 25 February, and on 14 and 29 March. In one of those cases, the prosecution concluded that there were no elements of a criminal offence and announced that it would instead submit a request to initiate misdemeanour proceedings before the Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica, while opinions in the remaining two cases were still pending. – On 9 March 2025, Duška Pejović, a journalist with Radio and Television of Montenegro, reported an unidentified individual to the Podgorica Security Centre after he directed a series of insults and threats at her in front of her apartment building in Podgorica. The police arrested Podgorica resident Goran Mičković, who was placed in custody on suspicion of committing the criminal offence of endangering security. On 14 March, the Basic Court in Podgorica found him guilty and sentenced him to five months’ imprisonment. As it was not established during the proceedings that the attack was motivated by her journalistic work, that part of the indictment was dismissed. – The Police Directorate of Montenegro filed a misdemeanour complaint against journalist and writer Brano Mandić for a column published on 18 October 2024 in which he criticised public statements made by Aleksandar Stamatović, a professor at the University of Montenegro. In the column, Mandić criticised the professor’s sexist remarks directed at a TV Adria presenter, when, commenting on the slogan on the journalist’s T-shirt, he stated that he liked “what is below and above it.” The incident was widely condemned by the public but did not prompt an adequate response from the University of Montenegro. After the Acting Director of the Police Directorate, Lazar Šćepanović, requested a detailed review of the assessment of whether a misdemeanour had been committed in the complaint against Mandić on 11 March, the Podgorica Security Department announced on 14 March that it had withdrawn its request to initiate misdemeanour proceedings. – On 3 March, Pobjeda journalist Nada Kovačević reported Milovan Gojović to the Police Directorate after he posted an offensive comment on Facebook beneath an article she had authored. In the comment, he suggested that Kovačević had “taken money” in exchange for an interview with a representative of the Montenegrin diaspora and accused her of “poisoning the media scene.” The police reacted promptly and arrested Gojović on the same day, when a hearing was also held before the Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica. Gojović admitted guilt and apologised to the journalist. – On 18 February, the Basic State Prosecutor’s Office in Podgorica received a complaint from A.B., a journalist with the “Analitika” portal, concerning insults and offensive language posted by several Instagram users on his account following the publication of a video clip from his appearance on a programme broadcast by E TV. The acting prosecutor instructed the Police Directorate to undertake measures to establish the identity of the perpetrators and scheduled the journalist’s hearing in the capacity of an injured party. The preliminary investigation is ongoing. – On 12 February, ahead of a hearing before the High Court in Podgorica, Predrag Veljić, one of the defendants alleged to be members of the criminal organisation of accused cigarette smuggler Aleksandar Mrkić, threatened Libertas photojournalist Savo Prelević. Upset that he was being photographed, Veljić told Prelević: “Go ahead, hero, take my picture, and I’ll smash that over your head, you idiot. Did you hear me...?” On 4 March, the Misdemeanour Court fined Veljić EUR 1,000 for threatening and insulting Prelević.

— C.12 THREATS AGAINST THE LIVES AND PHYSICAL SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

A significant increase in the number of cases in this category was recorded compared to the previous year, 2024. A total of eight such cases were documented. Five of the threats were directed at journalists Jelena Jovanović and Danica Nikolić, the latter of whom has been receiving threats via email from the same individual since 2022.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
<p>Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists</p> <p>This category may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – references to the murder of the journalist, his friends, family, or sources. – references to the infliction of physical harm on journalists, the journalists' friends, family, or sources. <p>These threats may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – made directly or through third parties. – transmitted through electronic or face-to-face communication. – implicit as well as explicit. 	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – On 6 December, two residents of the village of Botun (Municipality of Zeta), identified by the initials B.Ć. and N.S., warned Vijesti journalist Nikola Saveljić not to "provoke people with questions" and told him that he would "fare badly in the field, not those who send him," if he continued doing so. The incident occurred after Saveljić, while reporting from a local protest, asked a question to Milan Knežević, leader of the Democratic People's Party (DNP). Following a follow-up question, Knežević compared the journalist to his aunt, who "asks questions and answers them herself." Afterwards, the two residents approached Saveljić and, in a hostile tone, told him that he was "working against them," that it was not the first time he had "provoked" them, and that he had previously done the same in Golubovci. – On 6 November, the police in Bijelo Polje submitted a criminal complaint to the local Basic State Prosecutor's Office (ODT) against Radojko Filipović on suspicion of committing the criminal offence of endangering security against journalist Alisa Hajdarpašić. According to the complaint, Filipović used Facebook on 4 November to threaten the life and physical integrity of the journalist. The duty prosecutor ordered his detention for up to 72 hours. – On 13 September, Vijesti journalist Jelena Jovanović received an anonymous threatening message from a telephone number registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina, stating that "next time, you will be the one at a loss, not my company. Whatever the cost." The Basic State Prosecutor in Podgorica classified the incident as the criminal offence of endangering security. The case remains pending. – On 10 September, Danica Nikolić, Editor-in-Chief of M Portal, again received threats from a person identifying himself as "Bane LA." For the past three years, this individual has been sending her death and rape threats from the email address slatkislatka@hotmail.com. In September 2025, the Police Directorate announced that it had identified Austrian citizen Branko Urošević as the suspect and had filed criminal charges against him for endangering security. – Danica Nikolić, Editor-in-Chief of M Portal, gave a statement to the Basic State Prosecutor's Office (ODT) following renewed death threats received on 30 June through her official email address. Three new emails were sent from the address slatkislatka@hotmail.com, from which dozens of threatening and insulting messages had already been received over the previous three years. The emails repeated death threats and also threatened her with expulsion from Serbia. In September 2025, the Police Directorate announced that Austrian citizen Branko Urošević had been identified and criminally charged with endangering security. – On 25 May, Television E journalist Itana Kaluđerović received a threatening message on her private Facebook account. Under a photograph showing her wearing traditional Montenegrin attire, someone posted the comment: "Watch out, for a bullet." Kaluđerović reported the threat to the police, who referred the case to the Basic State Prosecutor's Office (ODT) in Podgorica. On 20 November 2025, at the first hearing, Judge Arsen Popović of the Basic Court in Kolašin sentenced Miodrag Novaković to nine months' imprisonment for the criminal offence of endangering security, specifically its aggravated form, which carries stricter penalties when the victim is a journalist. – On 13 April, Vijesti journalist Jelena Jovanović reported receiving death threats from a woman identifying herself as Milica Ćuk in connection with an article published by the newspaper. The woman stated that "if someone's head rolls because of that article, it will be the author's head." She later repeated the threats by email. The Podgorica police filed criminal charges against Serbian citizen M.Ć. (36) on suspicion of committing the criminal offence of endangering security. – On 28 February 2025, M Portal journalist Danica Nikolić received an email containing threats and insults, which caused her distress. Nikolić has been receiving threats from the same email address since 2022.

— C.13 ACTUAL ATTACKS

While four actual physical attacks against journalists were recorded in 2024, the number decreased in 2025, with two such incidents documented.

The most serious case occurred in August, when a group of individuals attacked and threatened photojournalists Stevo Vasiljević of *Pobjeda* and Boris Pejović of *Vijesti*. Proceedings related to these incidents are still ongoing before the competent judicial authorities. In total, two criminal proceedings and two misdemeanour proceedings involving multiple individuals have been initiated.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
Actual attacks on journalists Types of actual attacks may include actual physical or psychological harm, kidnapping, home/office invasion, seized equipment, arbitrary detention, failed assassination attempts, etc.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – During the removal of a monument dedicated to Pavle Đurišić, a Chetnik commander and convicted war criminal, in the village of Gornje Zaostro near Berane, several dozen people attending the event attacked photojournalists Boris Pejović of <i>Vijesti</i> and Stevo Vasiljević of <i>Pobjeda</i>. Upon the arrival of the media crews, several individuals ran towards them and began aggressively threatening them, getting in their faces and attempting to seize their cameras and equipment. Vasiljević's equipment was taken and damaged, and he was forcibly dragged into a tent, where several individuals assaulted him and threatened him. Pejović and Vasiljević were forced, under threats, to delete all material from their cameras. Boris Pejović was specifically threatened that, if "anything appeared in <i>Vijesti</i>," he would be "killed with bare hands." While these events were taking place, two plainclothes police officers merely observed the attack on the journalists without intervening. In connection with the incident, two criminal proceedings and two misdemeanour proceedings were initiated, all of which remain ongoing. – On 9 July, J.M., a journalist with the Kodex portal, reported to the police that she had been verbally and physically assaulted by Đ.K. in front of the Commercial Court building in Podgorica. According to the journalist, he directed insulting and threatening remarks at her and pushed her while attempting to seize her camera. The acting state prosecutor concluded that Đ.K.'s actions did not contain elements of a criminal offence prosecuted ex officio. Consequently, the prosecution initiated misdemeanour proceedings before the Misdemeanour Court in Podgorica against Đ.K. for a violation under Article 7, paragraph 2 of the Law on Public Order and Peace.

— C.14 THREATS AND ATTACKS ON MEDIA OUTLETS AND JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATIONS

In this category, seven incidents were recorded in 2025, compared to five in the previous year. In one case, misdemeanour proceedings were initiated, while two cases involved aggressive rhetoric and the targeting of media outlets by members of the Parliament of Montenegro. One case also involved a SLAPP lawsuit filed by Andrej Vučić, the brother of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, against the daily newspaper *Vijesti*.

The arrest of businessman Aleksandar Mijajlović is particularly noteworthy because the Special State Prosecutor's Office (SDT) alleged that he exercised control over a large number of Montenegrin media outlets, a claim denied by the media owners and editors concerned. The SDT suspects Mijajlović of providing media outlets with information obtained

through police surveillance measures, which he allegedly received from two police officers and a prosecutor, with the aim of discrediting the government and the Church.¹¹⁴

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
<p>Threats and attacks on the media and associations of journalists</p> <p>Actual attacks on the property of media outlets and organizations, their employees, confiscated equipment, aggressive statements by public officials, etc. In addition, threats and attacks can include some of the categories listed above.</p>	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – On 9 December, a resident of Nikšić verbally abused a group of journalists reporting on a double murder case in that town. The incident occurred when an unidentified man approached journalists from several media outlets and shouted: “Have you arrived, vultures? Everything is your fault.” Some of the journalists attempted to calm the situation, but the man continued insulting them before eventually leaving the building. – On 11 November, the editorial office of Vijesti received an email containing threatening content. The subject line included a link to a Vijesti article entitled: “The Berane Court’s Extra-Judicial Panel Orders Police to Temporarily Seize the Đurišić Monument.” The incident was reported to the competent prosecutor at the Basic State Prosecutor’s Office in Podgorica, and the case file was submitted for assessment and opinion. – On 12 October, Jasmina Muminović, Executive Director and Editor-in-Chief of the Standard portal, filed a criminal complaint with the police concerning a threat directed at the newsroom. Under a link to the article “Selective Action by the SDT: Prosecuting Editors More Important than 100 Kalashnikovs Intended for the Serbian Church,” posted on the portal’s official Facebook page, a user commented: “Standard, should I come over to your house?” Following police action, the acting prosecutor determined that the conduct constituted a misdemeanour under Article 8 of the Law on Public Order and Peace, and a request for misdemeanour proceedings was subsequently filed against D.K. – During a parliamentary debate in the Parliament of Montenegro on 26 June, Boris Bogdanović, head of the parliamentary group of Democratic Montenegro, targeted journalists from Television E, M Portal, and Portal Analitika. He alleged that they were on the payroll of both the Kavač and Škaljari criminal clans and claimed that they received up to EUR 8,000 per article published. – In a public statement issued on 3 May, Momčilo Leković, a Member of Parliament from Democratic Montenegro, targeted several Montenegrin media outlets, including Television E, Portal Analitika, M Portal, and Antena M, publicly labelling them as “servants and protectors of the mafia.” – On 28 February, proceedings commenced before the Basic Court in Podgorica in a lawsuit filed by Andrej Vučić, the brother of Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, against the founders of ND Vijesti and its online portal, Editor-in-Chief Mihailo Jovović, and journalists Danilo Mihajlović and Jelena Jovanović. Vučić initiated the lawsuit over an article that, among other things, cited messages from the Sky application in which fugitive Montenegrin police officer Ljubo Milović and Nikšić resident Miloš Božović discussed claims that Zvonko Veselinović and Andrej Vučić “hold all the strings in their hands” and had recently celebrated “their first billion euros earned.” – The Montenegrin Police Directorate, specifically the Sector for Combating Crime, sent an official letter to M Portal, its Editor-in-Chief Danica Nikolić, and journalist Kaćuša Krsmanović regarding the article “Lists of the Undesirable Compiled by Šćepanović and Šaranović,” which the outlet had republished from the E TV portal. In the letter, the police requested that M Portal “provide a statement regarding the circumstances” under which the journalist obtained access to and photographed the telegram referenced in the article. The police also inquired whether, prior to publishing the telegram, the newsroom had consulted officials from any competent state authorities and, if so, which ones. Nikolić stated that the outlet would not reveal its sources and described the request as an attempt to exert pressure on and intimidate media outlets and journalists.

114 Slobodnaevropa.org, „[Crnogorski mediji označeni kao saradnici uhapšenog biznismena odbacuju optužbe](#)” [Montenegrin media outlets labeled as associates of the arrested businessman deny the allegations], April 14, 2026.



Conclusions and recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

LEGAL GUARANTEES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

The professional operation of all media outlets is not fully guaranteed, as the issue of oversight of compliance with professional standards by online news portals remains unresolved. Portals represent the largest segment of Montenegro's media sector, accounting for more than half of all media outlets, and their influence continues to grow. There has been a noticeable increase in propaganda and biased reporting in favour of certain political actors, while the effective sanctioning of hate speech and the incitement of discrimination remains an unresolved issue.

The independence of the Public Service Broadcaster continues to be questioned. Throughout 2025, court judgments were delivered confirming both the repeated unlawful appointment of the same individual as Director General and the criminal liability of four members of the Council for abuse of office in connection with that appointment. These judgments, together with numerous ongoing proceedings and concerns regarding the quality and impartiality of reporting on both the broadcaster's television channels and online platform, have kept the Public Service Broadcaster under constant scrutiny from the public, civil society organisations, and the European Commission. The parliamentary majority continues to obstruct the appointment of members to the *RTCG* Council and the Council of the Agency for Audiovisual Media Services, as the current legal framework limits opportunities for political influence over these bodies.

The financial stability of local public broadcasters established by municipalities has improved following the adoption of the new Law on Audiovisual Media Services. However, there is little indication that this has strengthened their editorial independence.

State advertising in private media remains insufficiently transparent, while state subsidies allocated through the Media Pluralism Fund lack adequate mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness and proper use of public funds.

Although media freedom in Montenegro is guaranteed by the Constitution and legislation, longstanding challenges persist while new ones continue to emerge within a dynamic media environment characterised by a large number of media outlets operating in a relatively small market with a limited audience. Compliance with professional standards remains a significant challenge, particularly given the tendency of some politicians and public officials to seek influence over certain media outlets. Efforts to secure the full independence of the Public Service Broadcaster and local public broadcasters must remain ongoing, as must initiatives aimed at improving the professional and economic position of journalists and other media workers. Emerging challenges, including the spread of disinformation, hate speech, and increasingly sophisticated forms of propaganda, require a comprehensive and coordinated response from both the media community and state institutions. Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) remain relatively rare.

POSITION OF JOURNALISTS IN NEWSROOMS

Although salaries increased to some extent in parts of the private media sector and among local public broadcasters, the average salary in the media sector remains below the national average. This is the case for approximately two-thirds of all media employees. Among the key challenges are the excessive workload faced by journalists in private media outlets and the failure of some media organisations to pay salary supplements and benefits. Despite renewed efforts by the two media trade unions, no progress was made in negotiations with media owners regarding the conclusion of a Sectoral Collective Agreement, which is intended to improve the working conditions and rights of all media employees. Some journalists continue to report instances of censorship and self-censorship within certain media outlets. According to these reports, pressure most often originates from politicians and is exerted through editors and media managers. The position of women in the media sector remains particularly challenging. Due to the lack of transparency in remuneration policies, women frequently receive lower salaries than their male colleagues for performing the same work, despite estimates indicating that they account for more than 60% of media employees. Women also face difficulties in balancing professional and family responsibilities and remain underrepresented in senior management positions, such as directors and editors-in-chief, although there are examples of women holding such positions in some private television stations and local public broadcasters.

SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

The number of attacks against journalists increased dramatically in 2025, rising by almost 40 per cent, with a total of 33 cases recorded. A positive development is that a large proportion

of these cases have either been resolved or are progressing towards resolution. However, the oldest and most serious cases involving attacks on journalists remain unsolved. Initial steps have been taken to establish a mechanism aimed at improving journalists' safety through the creation of an inter-institutional body that will provide journalists who are victims of attacks with automatic access to free legal and psychological assistance. Within newsrooms themselves, risk assessments are generally not conducted before sending reporting teams to cover high-risk events. Politicians and public officials frequently criticise journalists and media outlets whose work or editorial policies they disagree with and often condemn attacks on journalists selectively rather than consistently. The situation of women journalists is particularly illustrated by the fact that two female journalists have been under police protection for several years due to threats to their lives, while a third female journalist was granted the same status during 2025.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Media professionals in Montenegro have yet to experience substantial improvements in their working conditions. Inflation continues to offset sporadic salary increases, while the rise in the number of attacks against journalists contributes to a broader sense of dissatisfaction among media employees.

There is a widespread perception that meaningful change must be systemic and substantive rather than superficial or politically motivated. Laws should be adopted only after genuine consultations with all relevant stakeholders, rather than being amended through government proposals or last-minute amendments by the parliamentary majority that alter key provisions immediately before adoption. Censorship and self-censorship remain major challenges for the profession, as does the lack of effective self-regulation within the media sector.

With regard to journalists' safety, the competent authorities must intensify their efforts, develop greater specialization, and strengthen their work in order to finally resolve the older and most serious cases of attacks against journalists. Only through consistent institutional action can a safer environment for independent journalism be ensured.

RECOMMENDATIONS

DIMENSION A: LEGAL CERTAINTY

- Adopt amendments to the law aimed at sanctioning hate speech and incitement to discrimination in the media. (Parliament of Montenegro)
- Ensure the full independence of the Public Service Broadcaster and bring the procedure for appointing the Director General into compliance with the law. Conclude the court proceedings against the members of the *RTCG* Council with a final and legally binding judgment.

(Parliament of Montenegro, Supreme State Prosecutor's Office, Prosecutorial Council, Higher Court in Podgorica)

- Ensure the implementation of media laws, particularly the provisions relating to the appointment of council members in *RTCG* and the AMU. (Parliament of Montenegro)
- Ensure full transparency of state advertising, as well as an evaluation of the spending of funds from the Media Pluralism Fund. (Ministry of Culture and Media, Agency for Electronic Media)

DIMENSION B: POSITION OF JOURNALISTS IN NEWSROOMS

- Continue efforts to adopt a Sectoral Collective Agreement through negotiations with employers, with the aim of improving the position of all journalists and media workers. (Trade Union of Media of Montenegro, Employers' Federation of Montenegro)
- Identify cases of censorship and self-censorship in the media and ensure protection for journalists who publicly speak out about them. (Trade Union of Media of Montenegro)
- Ensure a better position for women in the media industry and full protection against gender-based discrimination. (Employers' Federation of Montenegro, Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro, media outlets)

DIMENSION C: SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

- Make additional efforts to resolve long-standing and the most serious cases of attacks against journalists. (Police Directorate, Supreme State Prosecutor's Office, Prosecutorial Council)
- Implement the Government Decision on the establishment of an interinstitutional working group for creating a mechanism for the protection of journalists' safety, and establish an SOS hotline as well as mechanisms to protect journalists from hate speech. (Police Directorate, Trade Union of Media of Montenegro, Ministry of Justice)
- Media outlets should adopt, or work on improving, their internal ethical guidelines and also adopt risk assessment guidelines for reporting from high-risk events. (Media outlets)

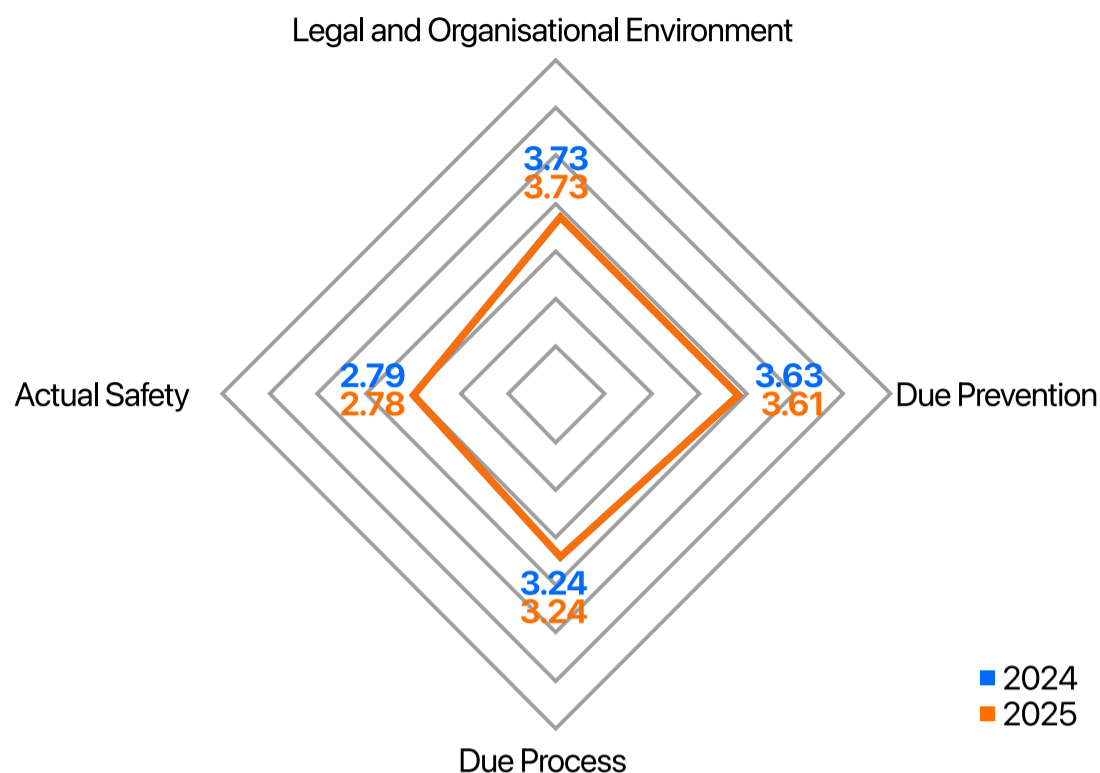
IV

Journalists' Safety Index in Montenegro – 2025

In this section of the Report, the Journalist Safety Index for 2025 is graphically presented in comparison with the previous year, 2024. For each of the four dimensions and all 19 indicators, a brief explanation of the key changes that occurred in 2025 is provided.

A more detailed explanation of the data and changes for each indicator of the Index can be found in the narrative part of the Report – Chapter II Media Freedom and Safety of Journalists in Montenegro – Indicators.

Indicators of Journalists Safety Index	Narrative report
I Legal and Organisational Environment	
Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	A.6
Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities	A.8
Other laws are enforced objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely	A.7
Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations	A.9
Job positions of journalists are stable and protected at the workplace	B.1
II Due Prevention	
Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures	C.1
Journalists and other media actors (whose lives or physical integrity are at real and immediate risk) have access to special protection or safety mechanisms	C.2
Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment or violence	C.3
Practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media has been established	C.4
Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issue	C.5
III Due Process	
Specialised units/officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists	C.6
Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)	C.7
Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment	C.8
Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently	C.9
Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity	C.10
IV. Actual Safety	
Non-physical threats and harassments	C.11
Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists	C.12
Actual attacks	C.13
Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations	C.14



	2024	2025	Major new changes in each dimension
Legal and Organisational Environment	3.73	3.73	– The number of civil lawsuits filed on the grounds of protecting personal rights decreased significantly. While 31 such cases were recorded in 2024, only six lawsuits were filed in 2025, one of which was subsequently withdrawn. Defamation has been decriminalised since 2011. The Media Law was amended in mid-2024, including changes to the previously controversial provision concerning the protection of journalistic sources. Although SLAPP lawsuits are not common, public attention was drawn to a lawsuit filed by Andrej Vučić, the brother of the President of Serbia, against the newspaper Vijesti. The case concerning the harassment and disparagement of journalist Dragana Šćepanović, who has for years been subjected to a campaign by a local businessman through his online portal, reached a positive first-instance outcome for the journalist in a private civil proceeding after the prosecutor’s office declared itself not competent to act. The case is currently awaiting a decision by the Higher Court. Šćepanović has also initiated a new civil lawsuit on the same grounds, seeking the removal of additional disputed articles from the portal. Journalist Danilo Ajković also won a first-instance ruling against Deputy Prime Minister Nik Gjeloshaj, who had unfoundedly accused him of corruption. Following a year and a half of obstruction, the Agency for Audiovisual Media Services (AMU) succeeded in completing the appointment of its Council members and resumed normal operations. Working conditions remained largely unchanged, and employees’ salaries continued to be below the national average. The public broadcaster was unable to reach agreement on amendments to its collective agreement, which needs to be revised in the section relating to salaries. During the year, RTV Pljevlja also finalised and signed a collective agreement. Such agreements still do not exist at the sectoral level or within private media outlets.
Due Prevention	3.63	3.61	↓ The situation regarding the legal protection of journalists and other media workers remained largely unchanged. However, owing to the advocacy efforts of the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro, an intersectoral government body was established at the end of the year to provide a certain level of assistance to journalists who become victims of attacks. The number of attacks increased dramatically, with women being the victims in the majority of cases. In terms of the nature of these attacks, online threats were the most prevalent form. Media outlets generally do not place sufficient emphasis on prevention and do not conduct formal risk assessments before assigning reporting teams to the field. Nevertheless, some editors make individual efforts to determine which journalists are best suited to cover events that may pose heightened security risks. Women journalists report being treated differently from their male colleagues, particularly with regard to salaries, but also in terms of their overall treatment in the workplace. There is also an ongoing trend of criticising journalists or media outlets simply because of disagreement with their editorial policies.

	2024	2025	Major new changes in each dimension
Due Process	3.24	3.24	– The Commission for Investigating Attacks on Journalists remains the only body established by the Government and mandated to oversee investigations into attacks against journalists. However, for six months it operated without a valid mandate, as the term for which its members had been appointed had expired. There has been no progress in the trial of those accused of the attempted murder of journalist Olivera Lakić in 2018, as repeated postponements of hearings have effectively obstructed the proceedings. The only case involving the murder of a journalist in Montenegro, which occurred more than 22 years ago, remains unresolved. The most serious outstanding cases of attacks on journalists have likewise not been resolved, and no significant progress has been made in the related investigations. The courts are generally open to the media, while parties to proceedings may obtain information directly or through their legal representatives. Final court judgments are published in anonymised form on court websites, although often with delays. Statistical data are not published proactively and are generally available only upon request. Furthermore, not all institutions are able to provide accurate data, and the information provided by different institutions is not always consistent or mutually comparable.
Actual Safety	2.79	2.78	↓ During 2025, a total of 16 cases of threats against journalists were recorded, representing a deterioration compared to 2024, when 11 such cases were registered. Most incidents involved threats to personal safety and verbal abuse, while four cases concerned administrative and legal harassment. Two actual physical attacks were recorded, marking an improvement compared to the previous year, when four such attacks were documented. The most serious incident occurred on 8 August, when photojournalists Boris Pejović and Stevo Vasiljević were attacked in the village of Gornje Zaostro, near Berane, while covering the unveiling of a monument to Chetnik commander Pavle Đurišić. In the category of threats and attacks against media outlets, seven cases were recorded, two more than in the previous year. In one case, a misdemeanour complaint was filed. In two cases each, the incidents involved politicians, administrative and legal harassment, and other forms of interference.
Journalists' Safety Index	3,15	3,14	↓

I.

Legal and Organisational Environment

Legal provisions related to defamation and their implementation do not produce chilling effects on journalists and media

3.55

Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities

4.52

Other laws are implemented objectively and allow the journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely

3.17

Journalists are free to pursue their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations

4.10

Journalists' job position is stable and protected at the workplace

3.34

1.00 Neither law nor practice provides any protection in the workplace for journalists, their sources, and their organizations, which creates an extremely chilling effect.

2.00

3.00

4.00

5.00

6.00

7.00

↑
↓

Both the law and practice provide the highest degree of protection in the workplace for journalists, their sources, and organizations.

INDICATOR 1.1

— LEGAL PROVISIONS ON DEFAMATION AND THEIR APPLICATION DO NOT HAVE AN INTIMIDATING EFFECT ON JOURNALISTS AND THE MEDIA

Score for 2024: 3.55 / Score for 2025: 3.55

There were no changes regarding the protection of journalists from defamation and insult lawsuits. Defamation continues to be treated as a civil matter, having been decriminalised in 2011.

The lawsuit filed by Andrej Vučić against the daily newspaper *Vijesti*, seeking €5,000 in damages for the publication of an article concerning him, was perceived by the public as a SLAPP lawsuit.

During 2025, only a small number of proceedings for damage to honour and reputation were initiated against media outlets and journalists before Montenegro's basic courts, representing an improvement compared to 2024, when 31 such cases were filed.

Journalists do not perceive this type of lawsuit as a significant source of pressure and maintain that it does not affect their work.

INDICATOR 1.2

— THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF JOURNALISTIC SOURCES IS GUARANTEED BY LAW AND RESPECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES

Score for 2024: 4.52 / Score for 2025: 4.52

During the year, the Media Law was not amended. However, amendments adopted in June 2024 revised the previously disputed provision on source confidentiality by stipulating that the disclosure of a source may only be requested through judicial proceedings. Such a request must be consistent with European standards and proportionate to the protection of public health, national security, and territorial integrity, representing an improvement over the previous wording. An additional safeguard is that the court may exclude the public from such proceedings. There were no cases of abuse of this mechanism or of journalists' right to protect the confidentiality of their sources.

INDICATOR 1.3

— OTHER LAWS ARE APPLIED OBJECTIVELY AND ENABLE JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS TO WORK FREELY AND SAFELY

Score for 2024: 3.17 / Score for 2025: 3.17

The law does not address SLAPP lawsuits in any specific manner, and such lawsuits remain relatively rare. A first-instance court dismissed the SLAPP lawsuit filed by Vladana Vučinić against *Vijesti*, Pobjeda, a member of the RTCG Council, and a private citizen. The defendants had commented on and published information concerning her unlawful salary

increase. No cases were recorded of laws being misused to intimidate or silence journalists through burdensome and costly legal proceedings. The case of Dragana Šćepanović, a journalist from Kolašin who was harassed, obstructed in her work, and subjected to a media smear campaign by the portal Aktuelno, whose owners were local businessmen she had reported on, resulted in a favourable first-instance judgment. She sued the outlet, which was ordered to compensate her for the harm caused; however, the defendants appealed the decision. Deputy Prime Minister Nik Gjeloshaj was found liable in a first-instance ruling for repeatedly violating the honour and reputation of journalist Danilo Ajković, whom he had publicly accused of corruption without being able to substantiate those claims before the court.

INDICATOR 1.4

— JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO PRACTISE THEIR PROFESSION AND TO ESTABLISH, JOIN, AND PARTICIPATE IN JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATIONS

Score for 2024: 4.10 / Score for 2025: 4.10

The definition of a journalist under the Media Law is relatively broad, and there is no requirement for journalists to obtain a licence or register in order to practise the profession. No new initiatives aimed at licensing journalists were recorded. Freedom of association is guaranteed by the Constitution and legislation, although it is rarely exercised in a particularly effective manner. Journalists generally do not report experiencing difficulties as a result of membership in professional associations. On the other hand, trade union membership can carry consequences. During 2025, Milan Nikčević, president of the trade union at LJE Podgorica, was dismissed from his job. He filed a lawsuit against his former employer and won at first instance, but following an appeal, the Higher Court returned the case for reconsideration. Two national trade unions operate within the media sector, of which the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro is the larger and more publicly visible.

INDICATOR 1.5

— THE EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF JOURNALISTS IS STABLE AND PROTECTED

Score for 2024: 3.34 / Score for 2025: 3.34

Journalists' salaries remain below the national average, a situation affecting approximately three-quarters of media employees, despite the fact that a large majority reported receiving pay increases of 10 per cent or more during the past year. No negotiations were held regarding a sectoral collective agreement, and only a new collective agreement for LJE RTV Pljevlja was signed. Negotiations continued throughout the year at Radio and Television of Montenegro, but the collective agreement was not updated, nor was one concluded at LJE RTV Budva. The adoption of the Law on Audiovisual Media Services improved the financial position of local public broadcasters. Following advocacy by the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro, municipal funding

allocations for these media outlets were aligned with municipal budgets. As a result, almost all local media outlets settled their outstanding obligations towards employees.

The exact number of media outlets operating during the year remains unknown because the re-registration process required under the new Media Law is still ongoing. By mid-year, approximately 140 media outlets had been registered, compared with more than 220 in previous years.



Due Prevention



INDICATOR 2.1

— JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ACTORS HAVE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTION MEASURES WHEN THEY ARE THREATENED

Score for 2024: 3.42 / Score for 2025: 3.42

The legal framework for the protection of journalists remained unchanged during the previous year. No specialised unit has been established within either the police or the prosecution service to deal exclusively with attacks against journalists and media property. However, both institutions will have representatives in the Intersectoral Working Group for the Establishment of a Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists. The number of attacks increased compared to the previous year, with 33 attacks against journalists recorded in 2025. No special mechanisms have been established to protect journalists from hate speech, although the introduction of a new criminal offence of “aggravated hate speech” has been announced. Nor have any special mechanisms been introduced to address serious threats to journalists’ lives. Victims of attacks and threats may report incidents to the Police Directorate through the regular procedures available to all citizens. Hate speech is becoming increasingly prevalent in the public sphere. A total of 33 attacks and threats against journalists and media outlets were recorded, while the Police Directorate officially registered 29 such cases.

INDICATOR 2.2

— JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS WHOSE LIVES OR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY ARE AT REAL AND IMMEDIATE RISK HAVE ACCESS TO SPECIAL PROTECTION AND SECURITY MECHANISMS

Score for 2024: 4.07 / Score for 2025: 4.07

Media outlets have not begun conducting preventive risk assessments before sending reporting teams into the field, even ahead of high-risk events. However, some editors report that they take such considerations into account on their own initiative and tend to assign more experienced journalists, often male reporters, to potentially dangerous assignments. The current legal framework provides for continuous police protection in cases where there is a serious threat to a journalist’s life or physical safety. Two women journalists have been receiving this form of protection for several years, while a third was granted police protection during 2025. The police have not established any special risk-assessment procedures specifically for potentially endangered journalists. Instead, risk assessments are conducted individually through the standard procedures applicable to all citizens. Specialised support services for media workers exposed to threats and attacks are provided mainly by civil society organisations, and media employees identify such services as among their most urgent needs. The Trade Union of Media of Montenegro also offers free legal and psychological assistance. During 2025, approximately 160 individual psychological counselling sessions were conducted, while legal assistance, including advice and representation at various levels, was provided dozens of times.

INDICATOR 2.3

— WOMEN JOURNALISTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL REMEDIES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS WHEN FACING GENDER-BASED THREATS, HARASSMENT, AND VIOLENCE

Score for 2024: 3.77 / Score for 2025: 3.77

Women journalists share the situation of other women in Montenegro, who do not benefit from special protection unless they are victims of domestic violence. As a result, women journalists are not specifically recognised within the institutional protection system. They report being treated differently from their male colleagues, both in terms of salaries and in their overall treatment by employers. Although the Istanbul Convention was ratified at an early stage, its implementation requires further strengthening in practice. The institution of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro remains the only body that acts preventively by providing information, while also collecting statistics and maintaining records of such cases. Indicator 2.4 – A Practice of Regular Public Condemnation of Threats and Attacks Against Journalists and Media Outlets Has Been Established

INDICATOR 2.4

— THE PRACTICE OF REGULAR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THREATS AND ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED

Score for 2024: 3.07 / Score for 2025: 2.99

The most serious cases of attacks against journalists are generally condemned by a broad range of actors. This was the case following the physical attack on photojournalists Boris Pejović and Stevo Vasiljević. Although the most serious incidents are generally not committed by public officials, criminal or misdemeanour proceedings are rarely initiated against those officials who do engage in such conduct. Consequently, it cannot be said that an environment has been created in which journalists feel safe while carrying out their work. Among those who threatened journalists were the Mayor of Šavnik and three members of parliament. The practice of favouring politically aligned media outlets and maintaining informal partnerships with selected media organisations also remains present.

INDICATOR 2.5

— LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES ARE SENSITIVE TO ISSUES CONCERNING THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

Score for 2024: 3.82 / Score for 2025: 3.82

The trend of resolving newly reported attacks against journalists more quickly has continued. However, online threats, particularly those made via email and social media, remain problematic, as the police and prosecution service often fail to identify perpetrators even after several years. In 2025, the individual who had been threatening journalist

Danica Nikolić for three years was finally identified. However, the suspect remains unavailable to the authorities because he is residing abroad. According to reports from the Police Directorate and the Ministry of the Interior, police officers receive annual training aimed at increasing their awareness of human rights standards and improving their sensitivity to such issues. In recent years, a more positive institutional approach to attacks against journalists has become evident, particularly through the faster handling of new cases. Nevertheless, a large number of older cases remain unresolved, and many are at risk of becoming time-barred.



Due Process

Specialised investigation units and/or officers are equipped with relevant expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists

3.63

Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)

3.02

Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment

3.11

Investigations of all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are carried out transparently

3.36

Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity

3.07

1.00 Institutions neither investigate nor sanction attacks on journalists, including online harassment, threats to the life and physical safety of journalists, and physical attacks on journalists and the media.

2.00

3.00

4.00



5.00



6.00

7.00

Institutions are fully efficient and transparent in investigating and sanctioning attacks on journalists, including via the internet, threats to the life and physical safety of journalists, and physical attacks on journalists and the media.

INDICATOR 3.1

— SPECIALISED UNITS/OFFICERS ARE TRAINED TO INVESTIGATE ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Score for 2024: 3.63 / Score for 2025: 3.63

The Commission for Investigating Attacks on Journalists operated only during the first half of the year, as its mandate expired. At the very end of the year, it was re-established with the same competencies as its predecessor. During 2025, the Commission published three reports examining several cases of attacks against journalists. It also criticised the conduct of the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office (VDT), which had ceased providing the Commission with complete case documentation. At the end of the year, the Government approved the establishment of an Intersectoral Working Group for the Creation of a Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists. Its purpose is to develop a rapid-response system for attacks against journalists and to ensure that victims have access to free legal and psychological assistance throughout the year. The binding instructions issued by the Supreme State Prosecutor in April 2024 for prosecutors responsible for investigations into attacks against journalists remained in force throughout 2025.

INDICATOR 3.2

— INVESTIGATIONS INTO SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA WORKERS ARE CONDUCTED EFFECTIVELY (INDEPENDENTLY, THOROUGHLY, AND PROMPTLY)

Score for 2024: 3.02 / Score for 2025: 3.02

No progress was made in the investigations of the most serious attacks against journalists. The trial concerning the shooting of journalist Olivera Lakić in 2018 began in December 2024. However, the overwhelming majority of hearings have been postponed, and the case is now at risk of becoming time-barred. Despite repeated announcements that progress would be made, the investigation into the murder of Duško Jovanović remains without any significant developments.

INDICATOR 3.3

— JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE EFFECTIVELY PROTECTED FROM VARIOUS FORMS OF ONLINE HARASSMENT

Score for 2024: 3.11 / Score for 2025: 3.11

The Criminal Code of Montenegro does not contain specific provisions addressing threats committed in the online environment. During 2025, 17 online threats were recorded, accounting for more than 50 per cent of all registered attacks and representing a significant increase compared to the previous year, when eight such cases were documented. Representatives of various media outlets were targeted. Particularly concerning is the fact that some journalists, especially women journalists, were targeted online on multiple

occasions. In nine cases, investigative authorities undertook concrete investigative measures, resulting in the initiation of five criminal proceedings and four misdemeanour proceedings.

INDICATOR 3.4

— INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALL TYPES OF ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CONDUCTED TRANSPARENTLY

Score for 2024: 3.36 / Score for 2025: 3.36

The transparency of court proceedings and the openness of courts towards the media and journalists remained unchanged during the previous year. Courts are generally open to the media, while parties to proceedings may obtain information directly or through their legal representatives. Final judgments are published on court websites in anonymised form, although often with delays. Victims of attacks and threats have access to the investigative process and are generally informed about the course of investigations, the evidence gathered, and the case files. The public relations departments of Montenegrin courts generally provide information on all proceedings that have been concluded by a final judgment, as well as on cases in which a judgment has been delivered. Information on the progress of proceedings may also be obtained in cases deemed to be of significant public interest.

INDICATOR 3.5

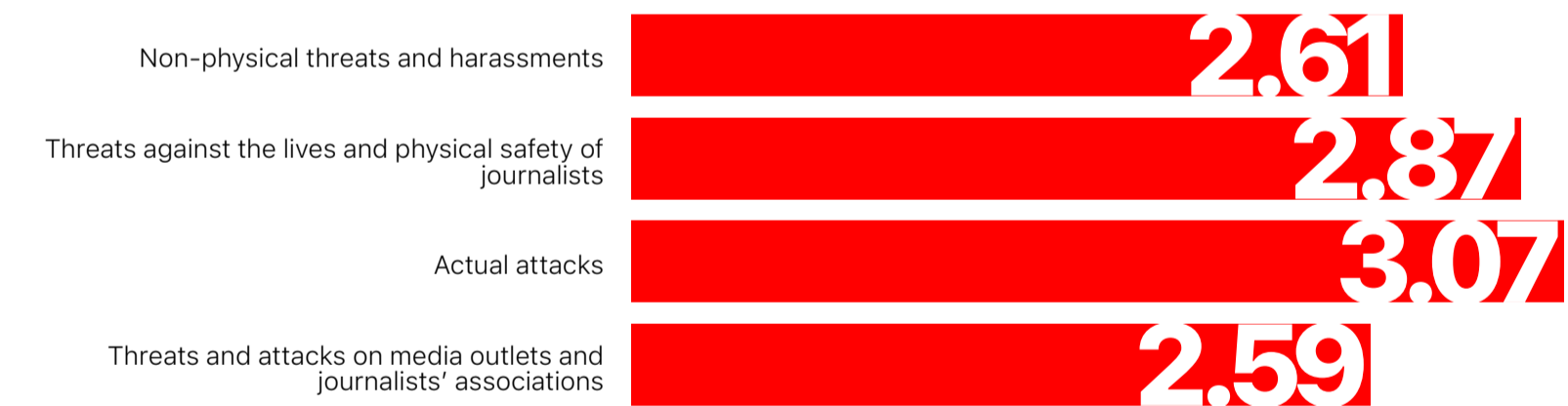
— STATE AUTHORITIES HAVE ESTABLISHED A HIGH-QUALITY SYSTEM FOR COLLECTING STATISTICAL DATA TO PREVENT IMPUNITY

Score for 2024: 3.07 / Score for 2025: 3.07

Statistical data are generally not collected systematically. Even where state institutions do collect such data, they are not proactively published and are usually available only upon request. The Police Directorate of Montenegro records cases of attacks and threats against journalists, and these data can be obtained upon request. However, the police records include all incidents in which the victim happens to be a journalist, even when the incident is unrelated to their professional activities. Consequently, the data do not always provide a clear picture of attacks connected to journalistic work. Statistical information may also be obtained from the prosecution service upon request. The Statistical Office of Montenegro does not provide a fully accurate picture of employment in the media sector. Comparisons between its figures and those held by the Tax Administration reveal discrepancies amounting to several hundred employees, raising concerns about the reliability of the data. Moreover, there is no comprehensive information on the composition of the media sector by gender or other demographic characteristics, largely because a reliable baseline database has not been established.

IV.

Actual Safety



1.00 There are serious cases of threats and actual attacks against journalists and media organizations, including murders.
2.00
3.00
4.00 ↑
5.00 ↓
6.00
7.00 There were no cases of actual attacks, threats to the life and physical safety of journalists, or other threats and harassment of journalists and the media.

INDICATOR 4.1

— NON-PHYSICAL THREATS AND HARASSMENT

This category includes surveillance or monitoring; harassing phone calls; arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment; aggressive statements by public officials; and other forms of pressure that may endanger journalists' safety in the performance of their work. These threats do not include workplace bullying or harassment.

Score for 2024: 2.65 / Score for 2025: 2.61

During 2025, 16 cases of threats were recorded, including four cases of administrative and legal harassment. This represents a deterioration compared to 2024, when 11 such incidents were registered. Most threats were of a similar nature and severity, primarily involving threats to personal safety and verbal abuse. In seven of the 16 recorded cases, the competent authorities undertook concrete actions. Prosecutors ordered the filing of criminal charges for endangering safety in three cases, while misdemeanour proceedings were initiated against the perpetrators in four cases. Three incidents involved public officials as the initiators of threats, while another three fell into the category of "other".

INDICATOR 4.2

— THREATS TO THE LIFE AND PHYSICAL SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

These may include calls for the killing of journalists, their family members, friends, or sources; threats of physical harm directed at journalists, their relatives, friends, or sources. Such threats may be made directly or through third parties, communicated electronically or in person, and may be either explicit or implicit.

Score for 2024: 2.91 / Score for 2025: 2.87

A total of eight cases were recorded in this category, twice as many as in 2024. Women were the victims in seven of these cases. In all reported cases, the perpetrators were identified and criminal proceedings were initiated. The eighth incident was not reported to the police.

INDICATOR 4.3

— ACTUAL ATTACKS

This category may include physical or psychological injuries, kidnapping, home or office intrusions, confiscation of equipment, arbitrary detention, attempted murder, and similar acts.

Score for 2024: 3.00 / Score for 2025: 3.07

Unlike 2024, when four incidents classified as actual attacks were recorded, only two such incidents were registered in 2025. The most serious attack occurred on 8 August, when photojournalists Boris Pejović and Stevo Vasiljević were attacked in the village of Gornje Zaostro near Berane while covering the

unveiling of a monument to Pavle Đurišić. As a result of this incident, two criminal proceedings and two misdemeanour proceedings were initiated against a total of nine individuals. The first-instance proceedings have not yet been concluded. The second case was resolved through misdemeanour proceedings and concerned a verbal and physical attack on a journalist from the Kodeks portal outside the Commercial Court in Podgorica.

INDICATOR 4.4

— THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST MEDIA OUTLETS, ORGANISATIONS, AND MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATIONS

Threats in this category include harassing phone calls, arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment, aggressive statements by public officials, and other forms of intimidation such as graffiti, threatening posts, and similar acts. Actual attacks include office intrusions, confiscation or destruction of equipment, damage to vehicles, and related incidents.

Score for 2024: 2.59 / Score for 2025: 2.59

Seven incidents were recorded in this category, two more than in the previous year. In one case, a misdemeanour complaint was filed. In two cases, politicians were identified as the perpetrators. Two incidents involved administrative and legal harassment, while the remaining two fell into the category of "other".

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