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# **NORTH MACEDONIA Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety Index 2025**

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# About the Project

## BACKGROUND OF THE INDICATORS

Journalist associations from the Western Balkans, supported by the European Commission<sup>1</sup>, have established the [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) platform to jointly monitor media legislation and practice in their countries and to engage in improving the legal and institutional environment in which journalists and other media professionals work. Every year, based on a carefully designed methodology<sup>2</sup>, [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) partners conduct advocacy research, which provides journalist associations with reliable and relevant, evidence-based data on the main problems and obstacles in the implementation of EU standards in the area of media and journalists' freedom and safety in the Western Balkans. The research results give substance to partners' activities, providing them with new evidence and examples, which refine and strengthen their advocacy positions.

The first, qualitative research tool – *Indicators of the Level of Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety*, was first developed in 2016 and has been gradually fine-tuned over the years. It is composed of three groups of indicators: (A) Legal Protection, (B) Position of Journalists in the Newsroom, and (C) Journalists' Safety. Based on this monitoring tool, a total of seven assessments have been published, the last one was for 2022.

The quantitative research tool – *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 project cycle for the [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) platform, which is a continuation of the previous two phases: the Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety in the Western Balkans project (January 2016 – December 2018) and [Safejournalist.net](https://safejournalists.net) (February 2020 – March 2023). The main objective of the project is to strengthen the role of national journalist associations, members of the [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) Platform, to become effective and accountable independent actors in advocacy and creating relevant media policies in their countries: Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, Association of BH Journalists, Croatian Journalists Association, Association of Journalists of Kosovo, Association of Journalists of Macedonia and the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro. 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 was designed and coordinated by Snezana Trpevska and Igor Micevski, research associates of the Research Institute on Social Development RESIS, from North Macedonia – [www.resis.mk](http://www.resis.mk).

changes in the environment that have a 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 Organizational Environment, (2) Due Prevention, (3) Due Process and (4) Actual Safety. Based on this tool, a total of three research cycles were conducted: 2020 (pilot year), 2021 and 2022.

Starting in 2023, [Safejournalists.net](https://safejournalists.net) has combined both (qualitative and quantitative) research tools into a 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, Kosovo<sup>3</sup> and Serbia.

## METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

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

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

- Review of studies, analyses, research reports, policy papers, strategies and other documents;
- Qualitative analysis of legal documents;
- Searching and analyzing information published on the websites of public institutions and other organizations and bodies;
- Searching and analyzing press releases, announcements, and other information produced by professional organizations;
- Secondary data collected from journalist associations;
- In-depth interviews with experts, journalists, policymakers, etc.;
- Focus groups with journalists, and
- Survey with journalists (in some countries).

At the national level, advocacy research is conducted by national researchers, who collect data and prepare narrative reports, which are then reviewed by local media and legal

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

experts and the principal researcher. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) nominated Milan Spirovski as national researcher.

## QUALITATIVE INDICATORS ON THE LEVEL OF MEDIA FREEDOM AND JOURNALISTS' SAFETY

The following table presents all qualitative indicators of the level of media freedom and safety of journalists, divided into three areas. These qualitative indicators are presented in descriptive, i.e., narrative form. The indicators used in the conceptual framework for the Journalists' Safety Index are highlighted in red in the table.

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

A. Legal safeguards and their implementation	B. Position of journalists in newsrooms	C. Journalists' safety
A.1 Basic guarantees for the freedom of the media and journalists and their application in practice	B.1 The job positions of journalists are stable and protected in the workplace	C.1 Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures when exposed to threats
A.2 Independence and efficiency of the regulatory authority	B.2 Editorial independence in private media	C.2 Journalists and other media actors (whose lives or physical integrity are at real and immediate risk) have access to special protection/safety mechanisms
A.3 Independence and autonomy of the public service media	B.3 Editorial independence of the public service media	C.3 Women journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when facing gender-based threats, harassment and violence
A.4 Financial support for quality journalism and media content of public interest	B.4 Editorial independence in the not-for-profit media sector	C.4 The practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks against journalists and media has been established.
A.5 State advertising in the private media sector	B.5 Freedom of journalists in the process of news production	C.5 Police authorities are sensitive to the issue of protecting journalists
A.6 Legal provisions related to defamation and their application do not create a chilling effect on journalists and the media	B.6 Economic situation of women journalists	C.6 Specialized investigative units and/or officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists
A.7 Other laws are implemented objectively and allow journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely		C.7 Investigations into serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are conducted effectively (independently, thoroughly and promptly)
A.8 The confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in legislation and respected by the authorities		C.8 Journalists and other media actors are effectively protected from various forms of online harassment
A.9 Journalists are free to practice their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations		C.9 Investigations into all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are conducted 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 harassment
		C.12 Threats against the life and physical safety of journalists
		C.13 Actual attacks
		C.14 Threats and attacks on media and journalist associations

## JOURNALISTS' SAFETY INDEX

Taking into consideration the standards and recommendations established by the Council of Europe and other international organizations, the concept of "journalists' safety"<sup>4</sup> was effectuated, taking into account the following four dimensions:

- I. **Legal and organizational environment** – existence and implementation of legal protective measures relevant to the safety of journalists.
- II. **Due prevention** – the existence and implementation of a series of preventive measures, which have a direct impact on the protection and safety of journalists.
- III. **Due process** – the behavior of state institutions and public officials towards journalists and the efficiency of the criminal and civil justice systems in relation to investigations of threats and acts of violence against journalists.
- IV. **Actual safety** – incidents and cases 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 concept of "journalists' safety". Data for all these indicators were collected in the first phase of the research, and in the second phase, based on the evidence collected from the research, nine members of the Advisory Panel<sup>5</sup> from each country assessed the situation and assigned points for each of the 19 indicators:

### Overview of indicators related to the Journalists' Safety Index

I. Legal and organizational 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 protection measures when exposed to threats	3.1 Specialized investigative units and/or officers are equipped with expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists	4.1 Non-physical threats and harassment
1.2 The confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in legislation and respected by the authorities	2.2 Journalists and other media actors (whose lives or physical integrity are at real and immediate risk) have access to special protection/ security mechanisms	3.2 Investigations into serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are conducted efficiently (independently, thoroughly and promptly)	4.2 Threats to the lives and physical safety of journalists
1.3 Other laws are enforced objectively and enable journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely	2.3 Women journalists have access to legal remedies and support mechanisms when facing gender-based threats, harassment and violence	3.3 Journalists and other media actors are effectively protected from various forms of online harassment	4.3 Actual attacks
1.4 Journalists are free to practice their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations	2.4 The practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks against journalists and media has been established.	3.4 Investigations into all types of attacks and violence against journalists and other media actors are conducted transparently	4.4 Threats and attacks on media and journalist associations

4 Researchers at the RESIS Institute ([www.resis.mk](http://www.resis.mk)), Snezana Trpevska, Igor Micevski and Ljubinka Popovska-Tosheva, have developed the conceptual and methodological framework for the Index and the model for its assessment, weighting and calculation.

5 The members of the Advisory Panel in North Macedonia: Zoran Richliev, Milka Smilevska, Vesna Nikodinovska, Aleksandra Bogdanovska, Jovica Paunoski, Aleksandra Denkovska, Era Gjakova, Stefanija Maneva and Kristijan Landov.

I. Legal and organizational environment	II. Due prevention	III. Due process	IV. Actual safety
1.5 The job positions of journalists is stable and protected in the workplace	2.5 Police authorities are sensitive to the journalists protection issue	3.5 Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity	

N.B.: In this report, the masculine form is used as a gender-neutral form and refers to individuals of female, male, or other gender. Multiple designations are not used for the sake of better readability of the report.

## — LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAVMS – Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services

SEC – State Election Commission

MRT – Macedonian Radio and Television

EMFA – European Media Freedom Act

AJM – Association of Journalists of Macedonia

LCLID – Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation

IRL – Investigative Reporting Lab

MISA – Ministry of Information Society and Administration

MDT – Ministry of Digital Transformation

MIM – Macedonian Institute for Media

MIA – Media Information Agency

RNM – Republic of North Macedonia

ITUJMW – Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers

CMEM – Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia

# Introduction

**Country overview:** The Republic of North Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy in which, after each election, the government is formed through a political symbiosis between the most successful parties from the Macedonian and Albanian blocs. The multiethnic composition of the country adds layers to the socio-political landscape, which is also reflected in the media sphere. According to the 2021 population and housing census<sup>6</sup>, the country has a population of 1,836,713. The ethnic map reveals that 58.44% are Macedonians, 24.30% Albanians, 3.86% Turks, 2.53% Roma, 0.47% Vlachs, 1.30% Serbs, 0.87% Bosniaks, and the rest are the smaller communities. Religious diversity, however, is reflected in the fact that 46.14% are Orthodox, 32.17% Muslim, 0.37% Catholic, and a small percentage declared themselves agnostics or members of other religious groups and communities.

**Political context:** In 2024, the parliamentary elections led to various internal restructurings of political parties. In the country, after these elections, the opposition VMRO DPMNE took power in coalition with the Albanian political coalition VLEN. The political scene was unstable due to the increasing division between the government and the opposition, full of challenges for political parties in North Macedonia, and important issues such as European integration and relations with neighbors intensified this instability. These tensions also left their mark on the media landscape, where accusations of political pressures on editorial policies and selective reporting became more frequent. As a candidate country for membership in the European Union, N. Macedonia remains under the scrutiny of monitoring for the rule of law, media freedom and respect for human rights.

**Economy:** The economic landscape in 2025 was intertwined with global challenges and domestic economic turbulence. Inflation and

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6 State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, [2021 Population Census](#).

the energy crisis strongly shook the general economic stability, and the consequences were also felt in the media sector. Many media outlets faced financial challenges, which resulted in a further decline in the socio-economic status of journalists and cuts in budgets for investigative journalism and quality reporting. The advertising market remained constrained, and a significant part of advertising funds were redirected to digital platforms, further reducing the revenues of traditional media. This economic instability paved the way for increased dependence of the media on political and corporate interests, putting their editorial independence to the test.

**Regulatory environment:** In 2025, the media sector in N. Macedonia remained under strong economic and institutional pressure, with a potentially increased dependence on political subsidies, which further threatens editorial independence. The regulatory framework, led by AAVMS, continued to face a lack of functional independence, while both AAVMS and the public broadcaster MRTV got new leadership after a long period in which the mandates of the members of their governing bodies had expired. Thus, after years of institutional blockade, personnel changes were made in two key institutions in the media sector. Despite certain legislative interventions, in the part of lifting the moratorium on state advertising to reinstate the practice of state campaigns in private media, and the technical update of the Law on Media in the part of fines, substantial reforms of the media laws were still lacking. The European Commission has again warned in its report<sup>7</sup> about the slow progress in media pluralism, stressing the need for urgent reforms to ensure a free and independent media scene. In the report, the European Commission states that North Macedonia has achieved between a certain level of readiness and a moderate level of readiness for freedom of expression and has made limited progress in this area. The legal framework governing the media is still not fully aligned with EU law, in particular with the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)<sup>8</sup>, although some progress has been made in the Law on Media.

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7 European Commission, [Commission Staff Working Document: North Macedonia 2025 Report](#), November 2025.

8 European Media Freedom Act – [EMFA](#).



# Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety in North Macedonia – Indicators

## A. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

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

The basic guarantees for freedom of expression and independence of the media, in addition to the Constitution of N. Macedonia, are incorporated in the media and several other laws<sup>9</sup>. All of these laws also cover the right to access the internet, i.e. there is no separate regulation that regulates only the internet.

The right to freedom of expression, including in the online space, is freely exercised by citizens, journalists, media and other organizations. In 2025, there was not a single registered or documented case in which the government or other state body attempted to block or filter internet content. In the latest report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF)<sup>10</sup>, compared to 2024, N. Macedonia recorded a drop of six positions in the World Press Freedom Index for 2025 and ranks 42nd. In the legal section, the report notes that the national legislation is still not aligned with European standards, and the abuse of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) is a means of pressure on critical media and journalists. In the security section, the report records cases of intimidation, pressure and attacks on journalists, especially those reporting on abuse of power and corruption. The report also indicates that public office holders display negative and demeaning attitudes towards journalists.

Reforms in the media sector, although long recognized as a need, were initiated in 2023. The EU-supported project *Alignment of*

9 These safeguards are incorporated into the Media Law, the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Law on Free Access to Public Information, the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation, and other laws.

10 Reporters Without Borders Annual Index – [Republic of North Macedonia 2025](#).

*National Media Legislation with EU Law and Media Standards*” focused in the first phase on harmonization with the 2018 Audiovisual Services Directive, and in the second phase on a comprehensive reform of media laws. Several analyses and proposals were prepared, but the process was interrupted due to pressure from the largest private television stations and the decision of the then government to prioritize the return of “state” (or government) advertising in broadcast media. In April 2025, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Media Law, which recognized online media publishers – internet publications as legal entities in the media sphere.<sup>11</sup>

There are no licenses or other strict requirements for establishing a print or online media outlet in the country. Print and online media outlets are subject to minimal regulation under the provisions of the Media Law, in terms of basic obligations for publicity in operations, protection of sources of information, protection of the rights of minors, prohibition of hate speech and incitement to violence, and several other obligations.

## — A.2 INDEPENDENCE AND EFFICIENCY OF THE REGULATORY BODY

The mandate of the members of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAVMS) expired in 2018, after which two unsuccessful public competitions were announced for the selection of new members. The third competition, announced in 2024<sup>12</sup>, took place with limited transparency and without the participation of civil society, and the new composition of the AAVMS Council was voted on by the Assembly of the RNM in June 2025.<sup>13</sup>

In 2025, no cases of politically biased, unfair or discriminatory treatment of the AAVMS towards the media it supervises were observed, although there have been complaints from the political party LEVICA that it was discriminated against during the political campaign for the 2025 local elections<sup>14</sup>. According to the information available on the official website of the AAVMS, in 2025, based on the monitoring conducted, the AAVMS issued several public warnings to broadcasters for various violations of legal obligations. When granting licenses and applying the relevant by-laws in the audiovisual field, the regulator acted in a fair and neutral manner. However, with the amendments to Article 79 of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, adopted in February 2024,<sup>15</sup> the independence of the regulatory body is undermined, as it no longer has the authority to decide on the renewal of licenses based on the broadcaster’s contribution to program diversity and media pluralism in general.<sup>16</sup>

11 [Media Law](#), consolidated text, Ministry of Digital Transformation.

12 ["A complex political game concerning the new composition of the Media Agency"](#) PRIZMA, 30.01.2025,

13 Free Press, ["New candidates for members of the AAVMS Council presented to parliamentary committee"](#), November 2025.

14 [There are no state-paid advertisements for a party with six MPs, but there are for those without any](#), 360 stepeni, 25.09.2025.

15 [Law on Amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services](#), (Official Gazette of RNM No. 55/2024).

16 Not only has this criterion been deleted from Article 79, but an absurd provision has been inserted, implying that broadcasters are allowed to broadcast hate speech, call for the overthrow of the constitutional order, threaten national security, broadcast content harmful to the development of minors, and other harmful content. Namely, according to the new Article 79, the regulator cannot refuse to renew a license unless the broadcaster has committed such serious violations at least three times during the duration of the license.

### — A.3 INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

The autonomy and independence of the public service broadcaster, the Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT), are partially guaranteed by the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (LAAVMS). The law contains a general provision guaranteeing the independence of MRT from the state and other legal entities and bodies, but this guarantee is insufficient. There is no explicit provision that the news departments of MRT are independent and autonomous in the creation of the program, although Article 61 guarantees the right of editors and journalists to independence. Article 104 of the LAAVMS establishes that journalists, editors and other persons participating in the program production are not considered administrative/public servants, but have a special status and their employment relationship is regulated by special rules, not as for public sector employees. However, the management of MRT requires approval from three ministries on these issues, which creates pressure on the work of journalists and editors and calls into question their editorial independence. To achieve full institutional autonomy for MRT, additional amendments<sup>17</sup> to other laws are also needed.<sup>18</sup>

Key to the autonomy of the public service broadcaster is its stable and independent financing. With the amendments to Article 105 of the LAAVMS, adopted in July 2023, funds for the operation and development of MRT are provided from the Budget, in the amount of 1% of the realized tax revenues determined in the last final account of the Budget<sup>19</sup>. These funds are not intended only for MRT, some go to the PE Macedonian Broadcasting and the AAAMS. Although these legal amendments provide for more stable financing, in the past two years, shortcomings in the model have surfaced. In 2025, the funds intended for financial support of regular operations that the public broadcasting company MRT receives from the Budget of RNM were planned in the amount of 1,261,864,000 denars. However, with the rebalance of the RNM Budget for 2025, they were reduced by 80,000,000 denars and are now planned in the amount of 1,181,864,000 denars. MRT does not have a multi-year financial projection in its strategic plan<sup>20</sup>, which means that capital investments are not planned for more than one year. Additional funds for technological development can, but do not have to be allocated from the Budget, which leaves room for arbitrary influence by the Government. There is a risk that the new framework will not be applied consistently, which was already demonstrated in 2023, when the Government did not fully apply the new adopted formula. In 2023, instead of the legally planned

17 AJM Press Release, [AJM gives specific proposals for the public service broadcaster at the first public session of the MRT Program Council](#), 12.09.2025.

18 All these issues are elaborated in detail in the analysis titled "Overview of the legal framework of the public service broadcaster MRT in terms of role, competence, independence and financing, from the perspective of EU law and European media standards and practice". This analysis was submitted to the competent Ministry of Information Society and Administration in late 2023, by the expert team engaged in the project "[EU for Freedom of Expression: Harmonization of National Media Legislation with EU Law and European Media Standards](#)".

19 The funds are distributed as follows: 80 percent to MRT to cover the costs of creating and broadcasting programs and for technical and technological development, 15 percent to PE "Macedonian Broadcasting" for the maintenance, use and development of the public broadcasting network, and 5 percent to the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services.

20 Macedonian Radio and Television, "[Five-Year Strategy for the Development of MRT](#)", Skopje, 2021.

18.5 million euros, only 10.9 million euros were transferred, which resulted in a debt of over 2 million euros for MRT.

Macedonian Radio and Television operated for six years with the same composition of the Program Council, although its members' mandate had already expired. The mandate of other bodies had also expired: the Supervisory Board and the General Director of MRT. In May 2025, the Parliamentary Commission for Elections and Appointments adopted the draft decision for the appointment of new members of the Program Council of Macedonian Radio and Television. In the run-up to the election, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM), together with other relevant domestic and international organizations, publicly pointed out the risks of partisanship and insufficient transparency in the procedure, emphasizing that the selection should be based on clear professional criteria and the integrity of the candidates<sup>21</sup>. After the election, some of these concerns continued to appear in the public, including through expressed doubts about possible political influences on the work of the Council, as well as through certain remarks about institutional delays in key processes. In the first six months of its mandate, the Programming Council faced serious challenges in its functioning, including the delay in the election of the Supervisory Board and the General Director of MRT, which further deepened institutional uncertainty and opened the debate on the efficiency, independence and accountability of the public service.

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

In March 2024, financial support for printing and distribution of print media was regulated by amendments to the Law on Media. In 2025, the Government announced a public call<sup>22</sup> for support for the printing and distribution of print media of a general and informative nature. The funds for this support amounted to 10 million denars, which is approximately the same as the amounts from previous years. The Commission for the distribution of funds was composed of representatives of relevant institutions, as well as one representative each from the Association for the Protection of National Print Media and the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM). Of the total amount, 2 million denars were allocated for print media at the local level, while 8 million denars for print media at the national level. AJM assessed that the process of distributing funds was fair, transparent and non-discriminatory.

The country has not yet established a Pluralism Fund to support the production of media content of public interest, although there are initiatives to establish one. As part of the European Union-supported media reform project, in 2023, a draft new Media Law was prepared, which includes provisions for the creation of such a fund. In addition to this draft law,

21 [AJM Press Release, "AJM gives specific proposals for the public service broadcaster at the first public session of the MRT Program Council"](#), 12.09.2025.

22 [Public call](#) for support for printing and distribution of print media for 2025.

the AJM has published a report<sup>23</sup> with a special focus on the Media Content Pluralism Fund. In addition, the Report<sup>24</sup> of the media freedom fact-finding mission offers concrete solutions applicable in the national context, especially since this is an obligation of the state under the 2018 Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)1 on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe<sup>25</sup>. The recommendation extends the requirement for media pluralism to the digital age and explicitly calls on Member States to establish sustainable and transparent public funding mechanisms, independent support schemes and measures to protect local and minority media.

Apart from radio and television programs in the languages of the ethnic communities aired by the public service broadcaster, there are no other mechanisms for financing the media in the languages of the different ethnic communities. These media are not attractive to advertisers and have been facing financial difficulties for years. The lack of an appropriate media policy to address this issue has a negative impact on the overall pluralistic image of the media sector in the country.

#### — A.5 STATE ADVERTISING IN THE PRIVATE MEDIA SECTOR

In 2025, the amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of February 2024 came into force, which lifted the ban on state advertising in the audiovisual media sector. According to the new legal provisions, the Government is obliged to implement at least one campaign at the state level during one calendar year, i.e. to allocate at least 0.1 percent of the realized tax revenues determined in the last adopted final account of the RNM Budget. Of these funds, a maximum of 7% is for the selection of production companies for the development and production of conceptual solutions and final implementations of state campaigns, and at least 93% is for the media that will implement (publish) state campaigns. The funds for the implementation of state campaigns are distributed to the following media: 40% for state-level television stations broadcasting through a digital terrestrial multiplex operator, 40% for state-level television stations broadcasting through a cable operator or via satellite, 15% for regional and local television stations broadcasting through a terrestrial multiplex or cable, as well as for local and regional radio stations, and 5% for state-level radio stations.<sup>26 27</sup>

Municipalities, on the other hand, can finance up to four campaigns per year, for which they can allocate a maximum of 0.5% of the municipal budget, i.e. from their own realized tax revenues determined in the last adopted

23 Association of Journalists of Macedonia, "[The Rights of Journalists, Freedom of Expression and Media Independence in North Macedonia - Metadata Report for 2023](#)", Skopje, 2025.

24 Association of Journalists of Macedonia, "[Media Freedom in North Macedonia: Fragile Progress](#)" Report of the Media Freedom Fact-finding Mission, Skopje 2025.

25 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\]](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 March 2018 at the 1309th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).

26 [State Financing in North Macedonia: A FAIRER, STRONGER AND MORE TRANSPARENT SYSTEM](#), February 2025. Metamorphosis Foundation, 2025.

27 [Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services](#), Editorially revised text, Ministry of Digital Transformation, 2024.

final account. The distribution of funds is carried out in the following manner: a maximum of 10% is for the selection of production houses for the development and production of conceptual solutions and final realizations of state campaigns at the local level, and at least 90% is for the realization of the campaigns at the local level.

Journalist associations (AJM and ITUJMW), experts and several relevant institutions (the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, the State Audit Office and the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services) continuously oppose the spending of public money on state and political advertising, emphasizing that such complex financial mechanisms threaten the independence of the media, distort the media market and represent a source of corruption and clientelism.

In 2025, the implementation at the central and local levels was subject to monitoring by the AJM. According to the analysis of the transparency of local self-government units on the spending of public funds in the media <sup>28</sup>, not a single municipality has implemented a procedure for the approval of campaigns by the Municipal Council, which is a prerequisite for transparency and accountability. A large part of the contracts are concluded without a clear methodology or public debate. Some municipalities conclude contracts with marketing agencies or individuals, and not directly with the media, which is assessed as non-transparent and as a circumvention of the media regulation. Some municipalities have several contracts with multiple media outlets, while others do not conclude contracts at all or do not respond to transparency requirements. Some contracts cover the production of “public events” or “municipal announcements”, but the content published is often in the function of positive promotion of the mayor or local government, without a clear distinction between information of public interest and promotional content. Rarely does any municipality publish detailed information about concluded contracts, funds spent, or the effects of implemented campaigns.

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

In 2025, there were almost no significant negative effects from the amendments to the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation adopted in November 2022. The aim of these amendments – to reduce the envisaged amounts of non-pecuniary damage that can be awarded by the court so as not to negatively affect free and critical journalism – proved to be justified. The law guarantees freedom of expression, and the restrictions are in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

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28 AJM, [“Analysis : Transparency of local self-government units in spending public funds in the media”](#), May 2025.

According to data from the Basic Civil Court Skopje, the total number of active cases in the last four years is 40. Separately, in 2025, 16 new lawsuits for defamation and insult were filed against journalists and/or media outlets. In 2025, the number of new defamation and insult lawsuits against journalists and/or media outlets increased to 16 compared to 2024 when statistics showed a figure of 15 cases. Although the increase compared to 2024 is small, these data indicate that defamation and insult lawsuits continue to be a factor of legal and professional uncertainty for journalists/media outlets. Some of the interviewed journalists perceive this increase "...as a form of indirect pressure and an attempt to gag, especially when the lawsuits come from public office holders or powerful economic entities."<sup>29</sup> Journalists describe these proceedings as both "exhausting" and "discouraging," pointing out that despite the fact that some of the lawsuits lack a strong legal basis, the procedure itself creates a financial and psychological burden.

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

There is no efficient legal protection in the country for critical media or journalists from so-called strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). The Comparative Analysis of Dealing with SLAPPs<sup>30</sup> in the EU and Western Balkan countries, published in 2025 by the AJM, points to serious gaps in national regulation and case law – from the absence of clear procedural mechanisms for early dismissal of abusive lawsuits, to insufficient protection of journalists from financial and psychological pressure. A series of legal and institutional measures are recommended that would enable faster reaction of the courts and better prevention of SLAPPs. In 2025, after a multi-year initiative by the AJM, the Government of RNM announced the formation of a working group that would work on amendments to the legislation in order to incorporate provisions for protection from such lawsuits, but by the end of the year the group had not yet been formed.

Compared to 2024, in 2025 there was no significant increase in pressure on investigative journalists by the business elite. However, the statistics of the AJM for the last four years indicate a broader trend of increased use of SLAPPs as a means of intimidation and pressure on investigative journalism. In terms of the continuity of this problem, in 2024, court proceedings continued following previously filed lawsuits, and some of them were followed by prosecutorial activities and hearings. In 2025, one new case of a SLAPP against an investigative media outlet by a private higher education institution was registered.

In 2025, no examples of arbitrary or discriminatory application of other laws were observed that aimed at limiting the freedom of journalistic work or burden the media with

29 Statement by a journalist-editor in an online media outlet, Focus group with journalists and media workers, conducted by Milan Spirovski on December 26, 2025.

30 Zharko Aleksov and Zharko Hadzi-Zafirov, " [A Comparative Analysis of Dealing with SLAPPs in the Western Balkans Region and the EU vis-à-vis North Macedonia](#)", European Perspective Initiative (EPI), 2025.

costs of representation. However, the absence of anti-SLAPP mechanisms remains a key systemic problem.

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

The protection of journalistic sources is guaranteed and regulated in detail in the Constitution of RNM and in several laws: the Law on Media, the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation, the Criminal Code and the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers. During 2025, the provisions of these laws were respected, i.e. AJM did not observe any cases of journalists' right to protection of sources being restricted.

During 2025, AJM has not registered any reports of pressure on journalists to reveal their confidential sources, and journalists working on investigative articles felt free to contact their sources. However, the number of individuals reporting corruption cases to the competent authorities and to journalists is still low, although the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers guarantees the rights of whistleblowers and regulates protected reporting. In this sense, journalistic sources are encouraged and are institutionally better protected, but due to pressures and fear for their jobs, people still rarely dare to use this mechanism.

#### — **A.9 JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO DO THEIR JOB AND TO ESTABLISH, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR OWN ASSOCIATIONS**

The journalism profession is not subject to licensing, and there have been no attempts by the state to introduce any conditions for someone to be able to work as a journalist. The provisions of the Media Law are already outdated, especially in terms of the restrictive definition of the term journalist<sup>31</sup>. Journalists are free to organize themselves in their own associations. During 2025, no direct political pressures were observed on journalist associations as organizations, although in practice pressures related to union organizing in individual media continued. AJM is a leading journalist association, operating since 1946 and is a member of the International Federation of Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists. AJM is a membership organization. At the end of 2025, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) had 479 registered active members. Membership fees are paid on a biennial basis.

Two other member organizations are also actively working: the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (ITUJMW) and the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM). During 2025, the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM) worked unobstructedly in terms of processing received complaints about media content, promoting media

31 In Article 2 of the "Media Law", the term journalist is defined as "a person who collects, analyzes, processes or classifies information published in the media and is employed by the media or has a work contract with them, or a person who carries out journalistic activities as an independent profession (freelance journalist)".

self-regulation to the general public, and working with youth to recognize and expose disinformation and hate speech. Characteristic of last year is that in one day, over 140 complaints related to the reporting of the Kocani tragedy were submitted to CMEM (the annual average of complaints received is around 100), which is assessed as an orchestrated attempt to silence the media. The main problem for CMEM remains financial fragility and unpredictability, which prevents the organization from carrying out development and research activities.<sup>32</sup>

The main challenges facing the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers are related to pressures against unionizing. In certain media outlets, through various types of subtle pressures, employed journalists and other media professionals are not allowed to join the ITUJMW or form a union group. These subtle pressures mainly come from management, especially in larger private television stations at the national level. In addition, ITUJMW members (but also potential members) face direct pressures from two other trade unions, in the public service MRT and in the state agency MIA, which, according to ITUJMW, function as so-called yellow unions. These pressures primarily relate to threats to withdraw from the ITUJMW or to dissuade employees from joining the Union, and are particularly noticeable in the public broadcasting service.<sup>33</sup>

#### — A.10 RIGHT TO ACCESS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

As of December 2025, 354 complaints from information seekers had been submitted to the Agency for the Protection of Free Access to Public Information, of which 36 were from journalists. These data indicate that the number of complaints submitted by journalists remains relatively low (in 2024, out of 454 complaints, 37 were from journalists). Journalists working in investigative journalism complain that institutions often do not respect deadlines, but they also emphasize that, unlike before, the Agency has shown greater understanding and offers them assistance in using the Law<sup>34</sup>. However, during 2025, the AJM noted serious problems in the functioning of the Agency: as of December 24, 2025, the Agency was left without an appointed director and deputy director, which is why it was practically unable to fully exercise its legal responsibilities. As a result of this situation, some of the complaints submitted by journalists and citizens were left without a response or solution, and even in cases where the procedure was completed, the solutions could not be sent due to the absence of an authorized person to sign them. This institutional gap created a risk of limiting the right to access public information and an opportunity for certain institutions to avoid transparency, knowing that there was no one to review the complaints in a timely manner.

In the second half of 2024, the Ministry of Justice established a working group to amend this law, in which active members include representatives of the AJM. The working group

32 Interview with Biljana Georgievska, executive director of the Council for Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM).

33 Interview with Darko Duridanski, Program Manager at the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (ITUJMW).

34 For the purposes of this Report, five interviews were conducted with journalists working on investigative journalism during 2025.

held about a dozen meetings and developed a proposal for amendments to the Law that was submitted to the Parliament, but by the end of 2025 this draft law had not been placed on the agenda of the parliamentary bodies.

According to previous analyses by AJM<sup>35</sup>, journalists believe that the judiciary is more open and transparent than in the past. These positive developments, however, are not due to systemic improvements, an adopted strategy or an implemented reform aimed at increasing the transparency of the judiciary, but rather to the behavior of individuals in the judicial system aimed at increasing the transparency of the institutions they represent. In order to promote transparency, AJM has, for years, also pointed out the need to establish a register of spokespersons for judicial institutions, which should be publicly available on the websites of the courts and on the website [www.sud.mk](http://www.sud.mk). Such a register would be a practical tool for promoting institutional transparency and facilitating journalists' access to timely and accurate information.

Regarding the transparency of the Parliament and the communication of political parties and MPs with journalists in 2025, "journalists reporting from the RNM Parliament were not fully and objectively informed by the coordinators of the parliamentary groups about the implementation of the planned activities, especially about the disagreements between the government and the opposition or between the Speaker of Parliament and a particular parliamentary group."<sup>36</sup> The public has the opportunity to directly follow the work of MPs and the adoption of laws through the Parliamentary Channel. However, although it has an important role in informing citizens, the Parliamentary Channel essentially serves mainly as a technical service for broadcasting parliamentary activities, without broader journalistic production or analytical content.<sup>37</sup>

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35 Pashovski, Davor, " [Journalists' Views and Perceptions on the Transparency of the Judiciary in North Macedonia](#) ", Association of Journalists of Macedonia, Skopje, 2021.

36 Statement by a journalist, editor in an online media outlet – participant in a focus group organized by Milan Spirovski for the purposes of preparing this report on 26.12.2025.

37 For more information, visit the [Parliament's](#) website.

## B. POSITION OF JOURNALISTS IN NEWSROOMS

### — B.1 JOURNALISTS' JOB POSITION ARE STABLE AND PROTECTED IN THE WORKPLACE.

Although the employment status of the majority of journalists is formally considered stable, the everyday working reality shows a different picture. Respect for the legally established number of working hours is more often questioned in private media than in public broadcasting.<sup>38</sup> 28% of journalists and 14% of media workers work above the permitted legal limit, with excessive workload turning into a direct source of chronic stress. More than half of journalists (55%) stated that they very often or often feel psychological pressure from their work responsibilities, compared to 31% of media workers.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of job stability, research data shows that around 70% of journalists and media workers had permanent, full-time employment contracts, around 17% were engaged on fixed-term contracts, and 7% and 9% on piecework agreement or an author/publishing agreement, respectively<sup>40</sup>. Such (temporary or unstable) employment is more common in the online sector, followed by print media and private television.

The biggest problem is the valuation of the work of journalists and media workers at their workplace. Over the past two years, about 50% of journalists and 77% of media workers had incomes below the average monthly salary in RNM, which at that time amounted to 37,065.00 denars. During 2025, the situation has worsened, given that few journalists confirm that salaries follow the trend of increasing the average salary in the country. Another serious problem is that in many cases the media do not pay employees compensation for overtime work or work on holidays.

The Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (ITUJMW) is the only national union that unites journalists and media workers in the country. At the end of 2025, ITUJMW had around 500 active members. Last year, subtle pressures were registered on the leadership and members of ITUJMW, related to the membership of journalists in the union, but also to the position of ITUJMW against the lifting of the ban on state advertising in private audiovisual media. In 2025, no general collective agreement was signed to protect the rights of journalists in private media. ITUJMW has signed a collective agreement only with the Media Information Agency (MIA), which is state-owned<sup>41</sup>. In 2025, the ITUJMW trade union group at MRT worked on improving the working conditions of journalists in the public service, and also held a working meeting with the MRT Program Council.<sup>42</sup>

38 Trpevska, Snezana, "[Working conditions in the media sector: "Professional status and labor rights of journalists and media workers"](#)", ITUJMW, RESIS Institute, Skopje, 2024.

39 Ibid, p.17.

40 Ibid.

41 Interview with Darko Duridanski, project coordinator at the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (ITUJMW), January 22, 2026.

42 [ITUJMW and the MRT union group at ITUJMW at a meeting with the Program Council of the Macedonian Radio and Television](#), 20.11.2025.

## — B.2 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN PRIVATE MEDIA

There are no published data from which it can be determined whether and how many private media outlets have internal organizational acts or rules, according to which the editorial board is formally separated from the management of the media outlet. However, according to statements made by journalists through direct communication, it can be concluded that such acts rarely exist. There is no information on whether any of the private media outlets have adopted their own separate ethical codes or rules. The only code that applies to all professional journalists, in any media sector, is the Code of Journalists of Macedonia<sup>43</sup>, adopted in 2001. The Code is the basis for the actions of both the Council of Honor of the AJM and the Complaints Commission of the Council for Media Ethics (CMEM).<sup>44</sup> CMEM has also adopted Guidelines for Ethical Reporting in Online Media, i.e. guidelines for the application of the Code of Journalists in the online sphere<sup>45</sup>.

The connection between the owners of individual media outlets and the centers of power is often to the detriment of journalists working in these media outlets. At the focus group with journalists and media workers organized by AJM<sup>46</sup> for the needs of this report, participants emphasized that they often do not report and do not know where to report pressures, threats and comments about them and their work.

“When it comes to pressures, we as journalists, except for AJNM and ITUJMW, have nowhere to report that we are the target of such phenomena.”<sup>47</sup> Pressures are most often not expressed as direct threats, but through a series of subtle ways of influencing, and especially through the instability of the working status of journalists and media workers.

## — B.3 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

The Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT) has adopted a Code of Ethics since 2017<sup>48</sup>, which applies to creative staff and all employees of MRT. The Code has been criticized by the journalistic community since the beginning due to its content, but also due to the lack of transparency in its development. The biggest shortcoming of the Code is the mixing of journalistic ethics with work discipline and the rights and obligations of journalists arising from employment relationships. The Ethics Commission at MRT, which is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Code, has not received a single complaint in the past period. In 2021, the AJM appealed for amendments to the MRT Code of Ethics and the establishment of procedures

43 Association of Journalists of Macedonia, “[Code of Journalists of Macedonia](#)”.

44 At [the initiative of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#) (AJM), the Council for Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM) and the Macedonian Institute for Media (MIM), the consultation process for the development of a new code of ethics for journalists and the media has begun. The new code will replace the existing version from 2001, in order to reflect the contemporary challenges and needs of the journalistic and media community. In support of the process, two important documents have been developed, which provide an analytical basis and guidelines for the modernization of ethical standards in journalism.

45 Council for Media Ethics of Macedonia, “[Guidelines for Ethical Reporting in Online Media - Application of the Journalists' Code in the Online Sphere](#)”.

46 Focus group with journalists and media workers, conducted by Milan Spirovski on December 26, 2025.

47 Statement made by a journalist, participant in the focus group with journalists held on 26.12.2025.

48 Macedonian Radio and Television, “[MRT Code of Ethics for Journalists, Creative Staff and All MRT Employees](#)”, Skopje, 2017.

for submitting complaints and the manner of work of the Ethics Commission, which should also be published on the MRT website. During 2025, the new composition of the MRT Program Council initiated activities regarding this issue in cooperation with professional media organizations and the expert public,<sup>49</sup> which can be assessed as a positive initial step towards overcoming the observed weaknesses.

MRT has internal acts, according to which the editorial offices are formally separated from the management structures. However, it is difficult to find information on the rules of the internal organizational structure and the operation of its organs and bodies on the MRT website. MRT is still not free from systemic political influences<sup>50</sup>, although the existing regulation is designed to ensure the independence in the election of the organs and bodies of MRT and its stable and independent financing. In the past few years, including in 2025, no direct pressure from the government on the editorial offices or on individual journalists has been registered, but rather structural forms of pressure: through the postponement of the election of the new organs of MRT. In December 2025, the Program Council of the Public Broadcasting Company Macedonian Radio Television (MRT) informed the public<sup>51</sup> that the Draft Statute of MRT is being put up for public debate for a period of 30 days, counting from the day of its publication on the MRT website. Within the framework of the public debate, all interested parties, institutions, professional and civil society organizations, media workers and citizens will have the opportunity to submit their opinions, comments and suggestions regarding the text of the Draft Statute.

#### — B.4 EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE NON-PROFIT MEDIA SECTOR

Non-profit media in the country are not sufficiently developed, primarily due to the absence of policies to support and finance this sector<sup>52</sup>. Although the media regulator has adopted a separate policy paper<sup>53</sup> for the development of the non-profit broadcasting sector, until last year there were only two non-profit radio stations – one radio station intended for the student communities of the State University in Bitola (UKLO FM), and one radio station intended for a religious community in Strumica (Radio Marija Blagovest).

There are different types of non-profit media in the online sector in the country. Several independent newsrooms, which are registered as citizens' associations, are engaged in investigative journalism: Prizma, IRL, 360 stepeni, SCOOP Macedonia,<sup>54</sup> etc. Other non-governmental organizations, as

49 [AJM gives specific proposals for the public service broadcaster at the first public session of the MRT Program Council](#), 12.09.2025.

50 Association of Journalists of Macedonia, [Media Freedom in North Macedonia: Fragile Progress, Report of the Media Freedom Fact-finding Mission](#), Skopje, 5-7 June 2023.

51 [Public call](#) of the MRT Program Council for amending a new Statute, 25.12.2025.

52 Micevski, Igor, Trpevska, Snezana. "[Monitoring Media Pluralism in the Digital Age: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor in the European Union, Albania, North Macedonia and Turkey - National Report: Republic of North Macedonia](#)", European University Institute, June, 2023.

53 Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, "[Concept for the Development of Non-Profit Broadcasting institutions](#)", December, 2015.

54 [Prizma](#) is a website of BIRN Macedonia, designed to promote and strengthen investigative journalism. [The Investigative Reporting Lab](#) (IRL) is a non-profit media organization, whose reporting focuses on corruption, crime and good governance. [SCOOP](#) Macedonia is a non-governmental and non-profit organization, whose goal is to promote, support and encourage investigative journalism.

part of their program projects, have also established information media, intended for different audiences: Portalb, Radio Mof, Meta.mk, Jasno.mk, Lokal Aktiv<sup>55</sup>, and others. The editorial offices of non-profit media are usually small and include several journalists, and their funding is unstable and unsustainable.

In April 2025, a significant step was taken by recognizing online media and web portals in the Law on Media.<sup>56</sup> This change is important because portals and journalists will now be able to more easily seek their protection. The introduction of the Register of Online Media Publishers at AAAMVS<sup>57</sup> is a positive step towards increasing transparency and professionalism. At the initiative of the Ministry of Digital Transformation, with the latest amendments to the Law on Media, web portals, including non-profit ones, are for the first time recognized as media with apposite rights and obligations.

There is no specific code of conduct for journalists in the non-profit sector, but in 2021, the CMEM adopted Guidelines for Ethical Reporting in Online Media<sup>58</sup>, which actually elaborate on the application of the basic ethical principles of the Code of Journalists in the online sphere. In addition, the CMEM and the AJM established a Register of Professional Online Media.<sup>59</sup> Promedia, which has about 116 online news media members, including some non-profit ones. The majority of these media have accepted the Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Ethical Reporting in Online Media, which are implemented by CMEM.<sup>60</sup>

Although the pressure on non-profit media, especially those engaged in investigative journalism, has decreased compared to the period 10 years ago, when journalists and editors from these media were often discredited and harshly attacked in public for their critical texts towards the then government and powerful figures, the observations of the focus group participants are that the perception is that in the last three years there has been an increase in pressure again, especially visible through the filing of defamation and insult lawsuits.

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

A problem that journalists often highlight is the influence of some editors on their daily work, but it is not so direct and visible, meaning there is more self-censorship than direct pressure. The point is that in the newsrooms it is known in advance which topics are acceptable, i.e., which topics the editor will accept and which ones they will reject. The journalists who were included in the research conducted for

55 [Portalb](#) is a non-profit media outlet in Albanian, founded by the NGO Innovative Media, which aims to advance journalistic practices. [Radio MOF](#) is a program activity of the Youth Educational Forum. [Meta.mk](#) is an independent news agency, which is a project of the Metamorphosis Foundation. [Jasno.mk](#) is a digital platform, founded by AJM, with the aim of raising awareness and strengthening the capacities of local communities to recognize disinformation, especially on a gender basis. [Lokal aktiv](#) is an online media outlet for local communities, including vulnerable groups of citizens and civil society organizations working with them, founded by the RESIS Institute in partnership with 22 civil society organizations from the [east and the the southeast region](#) and 10 civil society organizations from [the Vardar region](#).

56 [Media Law](#), consolidated text, Ministry of Digital Transformation.

57 [AJM warns: The lack of rules for paid political advertising in online media creates corruption risks](#), 15.08.2025.

58 Council for Media Ethics of Macedonia (CMEM), [Guidelines for Ethical Reporting in Online Media](#).

59 Register of professional online media in the Republic of North Macedonia [PROMEDIA](#).

60 Council for Media Ethics of Macedonia, "[Guidelines for Ethical Reporting in Online Media - Application of the Journalists' Code in the Online Sphere](#)".

2025<sup>61</sup> believe that they have freedom in choosing topics in the news production process: "Over the past year, at least in our newsroom, we have never had any obstructions or remarks regarding the topics that journalists are working on or will work on, we have always been met with support".<sup>62</sup> This especially applies to media outlets with larger newsrooms. However, choosing topics for reporting in regional and local media is a bigger problem for journalists.,,The reason for this problem is the small environment in which these media operate, the established clientelistic ties of the owners with mayors and other local powerful people, as well as the poor financial situation of these media outlets."<sup>63</sup>

Although the number of investigative media outlets is small, the political environment is now more conducive to investigative journalism. In general, journalists work in a more open and free atmosphere than in the previous decade and feel freer to investigate and report on complex issues, such as corruption. However, there still seems to be a lot of self-censorship among the wider journalistic community due to fear of political or legal repercussions. According to an assessment made by several international experts, the state of independent journalism and editorial freedom remains problematic, as "...many media owners, especially in traditional media (national TV stations), have other core businesses, which often depend on tenders from ministries and institutions, creating implicit or explicit taboo topics"<sup>64</sup>.

## — B.6 ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS

The results of analyses and research conducted over the past two years<sup>65</sup> show that the gender pay gap is almost non-existent in the media sector, but low incomes remain a systemic challenge. More than half of journalists and a significant proportion of media workers earn below the average monthly salary at the state level, with the situation being particularly unfavorable in the private sector. While the regularity of payments is generally not a problem, the practice of not paying compensation for overtime and working on holidays is widespread. The data also indicate that women are not in a subordinate position in terms of career development and representation in editorial positions, with almost equal gender representation in editorial structures, especially in the broadcasting sector<sup>66</sup>.

There is no recent research data on whether women journalists and media workers are exposed to gender-based attacks, pressures and harassment. However, individual women journalists report that they are often exposed to sexist comments, pressures or insults, simply because they are

61 Statement by a journalist participating in the focus group held on December 26, 2025.

62 Statement by a journalist, participant in the focus group held on December 26, 2025.

63 Statement by a journalist and television editor, participant in the focus group held on December 26, 2025.

64 Association of Journalists of Macedonia, "[Media Freedom in North Macedonia: Fragile Progress](#)", Report of the Media Freedom Fact-finding Mission, Skopje, 2024.

65 Trpevska, Snezana, "[Working conditions in the media sector: Professional status and labor rights of journalists and media workers](#)", ITUJMW, RESIS Institute, Skopje, 2024.

66 Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, "[Structure of Employees in the Audio and Audiovisual Media Industry in 2022](#)", August, 2023.

women <sup>67</sup>. Although the data does not indicate a pronounced subordination of women in terms of career development and representation in editorial positions, this does not mean that women journalists are free from gender-specific forms of pressure and harassment, especially online. "The most common occurrence when publishing an investigative story or text in the context of threats and intimidation towards women journalists occurs on social networks by unknown men, and the comments are frighteningly derogatory, sexist and quite chauvinistic just because the author of that text or story is a woman."<sup>68</sup>

According to the AJM Register, <sup>69</sup>out of a total of five registered cases in 2025, two were incidents in which women journalists were attacked, one of which concerns the burning of a passenger vehicle of a female journalist from Ohrid<sup>70</sup>, and the other is related to gender-based harassment of several women journalists.<sup>71</sup> Women journalists often suffer insults and belittling when reporting on sensitive topics. Qualifications that refer only to women are used, in a pejorative sense, based on prejudice and gender stereotypes, phenomena that indirectly reflect on their professional future and on their private lives.

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67 Statement by a journalist from an online media outlet, participant in the focus group held on December 26, 2025.

68 Statement by an editorial journalist from a print and online media outlet for the purposes of this report, participant in the focus group on December 26, 2025.

69 [Register of cases of violation of the rights of journalists and media workers over the years](#), Association of Journalists of Macedonia.

70 In January 2025, the vehicle of journalist Suzana Vrencovska, a correspondent from Ohrid for SDK.mk, was set on fire in the yard of the family home.

71 [Zoran Bozinovski excluded from AJM for serious ethical violations and gender-based harassment](#), 02.10.2025.

## **C. JOURNALISTS' SAFETY**

### **— C.1 JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ACTORS HAVE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES WHEN EXPOSED TO THREATS**

The competent prosecutor for cases related to attacks on journalists, appointed by the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in 2022, is a key contact point for direct communication with journalists in cases of physical assault, threats or serious forms of harassment. Such an open communication line is a significant step forward in the institutional protection of journalists, but the effectiveness of this mechanism still depends on the speed of reaction and the outcome of the procedure. To this end, better coordination is needed between the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Interior in all cases of threats, pressure and attacks on journalists and media workers. In 2025, the AJM registered five cases of attacks and threats against journalists and media workers, which is an increase of one case compared to the previous year. Two incidents stand out in terms of seriousness: the first concerns online harassment, aggressive, harassing or discriminatory statements towards a group of women journalists by the journalist and editor of the Bure Vesnik portal, Zoran Bozinovski, and the second is the case of destruction of property and intrusion into the Infomax editorial office by an unknown person. All cases were reported to the Ministry of Interior. Following the intrusion and destruction of the property of the Infomax editorial office (perpetrated by an unknown person), an indictment was filed with the Basic Criminal Court Skopje, which issued a suspended sentence for the perpetrator. In connection with the case of Zoran Bozinovski, legal proceedings are being conducted before the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office, the Agency for Personal Data Protection and the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination.

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

The existing legal framework allows for the application of measures to protect victims of threats and violence, including journalists, but the practical application of these mechanisms is limited. The Criminal Procedure Code provides for protective measures in cases where the safety of a journalist (as well as that of any other person) is seriously threatened. According to Article 146, paragraph 1, item 6, a measure prohibiting approaching or establishing contact with a specific person may be imposed, but this measure can only be applied if the perpetrator has been identified and if the procedure is already underway. However, although the legal intention is to provide a protective mechanism against threats to life and physical integrity, the existing model in practice does not cover all risky situations, especially in cases where threats come from unknown persons or through online platforms. In such circumstances, legal protection proves to be insufficient

for timely prevention. During 2025, no cases were registered in which journalists formally requested physical protection through the existing legal mechanisms, which indicates a low level of trust in their efficiency or insufficient information about their practical application. Journalists facing threats still most often turn to the AJM, which then mediates and requests the competent institutions to take appropriate measures for immediate protection. There are several organizations in the country that provide support for victims of various forms of violence, including legal and psychological assistance. In 2024, the AJM published a Handbook on the Safety of Journalists in cooperation with the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Interior, as a practical tool for dealing with cases of threats, pressure and violence in the performance of professional duties.

In the future, it is necessary to promote special protocols for the protection of journalists in high-risk situations, as well as clear procedures for rapid response by institutions, in order for these mechanisms to become functional and available in practice, and not only formally provided for by law.

### — C.3 WOMEN JOURNALISTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL MEASURES AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS WHEN FACING GENDER-BASED THREATS, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

The Istanbul Convention, ratified by North Macedonia in 2018, provides a basis for a systemic approach to preventing and sanctioning gender-based violence. Its principles are incorporated into the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which provides for obligations for institutions regarding prevention, protection of victims and provision of free legal aid. Although the legal framework provides for support mechanisms, their practical application is insufficiently effective in cases of gender-based threats and online attacks on women journalists. In 2025, the increase in cases of online harassment, sexualized attacks and discriminatory statements against women journalists, which created a hostile environment for their professional work, has been disconcerting.

The competent institutions for handling cases of gender-based violence are the police, social work centers, the Ombudsman, the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, prosecutors' offices and courts. Although an integrated data collection system has been established, it still does not categorize incidents according to the profession of the victim, which is why there is no official data on the number of women journalists among the victims.

Women journalists most often report incidents to the Ministry of Interior or directly to the AJM, which maintains its own register of attacks on journalists. The real extent of gender-based harassment is probably higher than the registered one, because women journalists often do not report incidents. Although there is a possibility of addressing the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, in 2025, seven complaints

about cases of discrimination against women journalists were submitted to this body, all of them submitted by the AJM.

— **C.4 A PRACTICE OF REGULAR PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA OUTLETS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED.**

In 2025, an increased number of cases of public pressure, discrediting and obstruction of the work of journalists and media professionals were observed. While there are reactions from government officials condemning threats or violence against journalists, examples of negative rhetoric, public insults and pressure from politicians, political parties, public officials and other institutions have also been registered. In February 2025, journalist associations strongly condemned the smear campaign targeting independent and critical media. This campaign, further intensified on social networks, aimed to discredit the media and journalists who repeatedly expose corruption, abuse of power and other issues of public interest. The tendentious narrative that these media outlets received funds from USAID to undermine democracy is an attempt to delegitimize their work, even though their reporting has led to legal reforms, criminal investigations, and sanctions against those responsible for various abuses.<sup>72</sup> AJM also reacted to the political labeling of journalists when a ruling party MP, at two consecutive press conferences, used inappropriate qualifications for journalist Ordanovski, framing him in a political and party context. This rhetoric, when coming from those in power, is not only counterproductive to free public discourse, but also creates the risk of deepening distrust and inciting hatred towards journalists.<sup>73</sup>

In March 2025, journalist associations also reacted to the coordinated online campaign of harassment and discrediting aimed at the editor of Infomax, Aleksandar Mitovski, after a video of his meeting with a former Prime Minister was posted on social media. The video material was misused with the intention of creating negative narratives towards Mitovski, which were then spread through provocateurs, but also anonymous bots, resulting in a massive online harassment, hate speech and calls for violence. In May 2025, the director of the National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility, Petar Bogojeski, made inappropriate and harsh statements directed at the editorial staff of the Racin.mk portal, its journalists and editors. It is particularly worrying that such statements come from public officials, i.e. party representatives, because they devalue the reputation of the institution they represent and can incite hatred and hate-motivated acts against journalists.<sup>74</sup> In July 2025, the Ministry of Health issued appeals to the media that were restrictive in their content and were interpreted as institutional pressure on the media and an attempt to establish

72 [Condemnation of the campaign to defame independent media and threats against journalists – Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#), February 12, 2025.

73 [AJM: Political labeling of journalists is unacceptable – Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#), February 22, 2025.

74 [AJM: Public officials should refrain from insults and discrediting journalists and the media – Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#), May 27, 2025.

poor institutional practice in relations with the media, especially when it concerns sensitive events of public interest.<sup>75</sup> In September 2025, an employee of the Ministry of Health behaved inappropriately and unprofessionally towards journalists during a public event attended by the Minister of Health, Azir Aliu.<sup>76</sup> During the elections, journalists and media workers also faced restrictions on access to and reporting from polling stations.<sup>77</sup> After the elections, at a press conference, the opposition party SDSM made discrediting statements to several media outlets.<sup>78</sup>

All of these cases show that, despite regular public condemnation of attacks on journalists, there are still challenges regarding the behavior and communication of public officials with journalists and the media.

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

During 2025, the AJM and the Ministry of Interior continued and deepened their cooperation in the area of journalist protection and safety, with the aim of timely action in cases of threats and attacks on journalists, including in the online space, where an increased number of harassment and threats against media workers has been observed compared to last year. The Ministry of Interior confirmed the safety of journalists as one of its top priorities and, in this regard, posted access to the register of attacks on journalists on its website and intensified coordination with the AJM and other actors for timely action in cases of threats and attacks, including through activities such as the camp for the safety of young journalists that the AJM and the OSCE Mission in Skopje have traditionally organized for the third year in a row.

In 2025, a contact point for cases of online attacks and harassment was appointed within the Cybercrime Sector of the Ministry of Interior. In addition, the Ministry of Interior has also appointed contact points for the protection of journalists at the local level.

Nevertheless, despite this progress made in 2025, it is necessary to improve the attitude of the police towards journalists, especially when reporting from the field, where journalists and media workers are exposed to increased risks. There is a need to continuously strengthen the capacities of police officers in relation to media freedom and the importance of journalist safety.

75 [AJM: Appeals from the Ministry of Health border on censorship – Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#), July 6, 2025.

76 [AJM and ITUJMW : Inappropriate behavior of representatives of the Ministry of Health towards journalists is unacceptable – Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#), September 3, 2025.

77 [AJM: Ensure respect and unhindered work of media workers at polling stations – Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#), October 19, 2025.

78 [AJM: Political entities should refrain from publicly labeling and discrediting the media – Association of Journalists of Macedonia](#), December 13, 2025.

— **C.6 SPECIALIZED INVESTIGATIVE UNITS AND/OR OFFICERS HAVE APPROPRIATE EXPERTISE IN INVESTIGATING ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS**

Specialized investigative units and/or officers formally have a certain level of expertise in dealing with attacks and threats against journalists, and during 2025, the existing contact points in the prosecution and the Ministry of Interior were further strengthened, as were the police protocols for emergency action.

However, despite visible communication and regular meetings between the AJM, the prosecution and the Ministry of Interior, cooperation has not yet resulted in sufficiently efficient processing of cases, especially when it comes to online threats and digital violence. Statements by representatives of the institutions about improved protocols and improved coordination indicate formal progress, but practical implementation remains uneven and slow.

According to data from the AJM Registry, at the end of 2025, a total of 85 attacks and threats against journalists were recorded in the period 2014-2025, with only a limited number of cases ending in a court verdict. This imbalance between normative commitments and actual outcomes indicates that, despite existing communication, deepening institutional cooperation, strengthening investigative and prosecutorial capacities, and a more decisive penal policy are needed to ensure more effective protection of journalists.

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

During 2025, the AJM recorded five attacks on journalists and media workers in its register, which represents an increase in the number of incidents compared to the previous year. All cases were reported to the Ministry of Interior, and some to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office.

The trend of online attacks and threats is particularly worrying, with an increase in such incidents in 2025 (5 in 2025, 4 in 2024), most often targeting women journalists. According to information available to the AJM, concrete actions have already been taken for two of the reported cases in 2025, including the detention of suspects and court verdicts. However, the other three of the registered cases are still in the preliminary investigation phase or under investigation or the outcome of the proceedings, and some of them remain without any resolution. This indicates the need for greater transparency and a more efficient institutional response in processing attacks on journalists and media workers.

For comparison, in 2022, 7 attacks were recorded, of which 2 cases ended with a court decision. In 2023,

the number of attacks decreased to 5, with 2 cases also receiving a court decision, while in 2024, 4 attacks were registered and 3 of them were prosecuted.

However, the fact that some of the cases from previous years remain unresolved confirms that the problem of impunity is still present. Although out of the five cases registered in 2025, two have already been sentenced, the slow and incomplete processing of the remaining three cases undermines the trust of the journalistic community in the institutions and deepens the feeling of insecurity.

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

AJM believes that the amendments to the Criminal Code adopted in 2023 represent a significant step forward in strengthening the legal protection of journalists and media workers. With these amendments, the criminal offenses of murder (Article 123), coercion (Article 139), endangering security (Article 144) and obstructing an official in the performance of an official duty (Article 382) are qualified more severely when committed against journalists, thus providing for stricter sanctions and mandatory ex officio action by the prosecution. In addition, the legal amendments introduced the criminal offense of "stalking" (Article 144-a), which covers continuous and unwanted surveillance or harassment that creates a sense of fear and insecurity in the victim. According to the assessment of legal experts, this norm is particularly relevant for journalists, who in 2025 are increasingly exposed to such forms of pressure, especially through online platforms.

Although it was announced that additional amendments and the adoption of a new Criminal Code would be made in 2025, this was not implemented within the planned deadline<sup>79</sup>. As announced<sup>80</sup> by the Ministry of Justice, the draft version of the new Criminal Code has been prepared, but its adoption has been postponed due to the need for additional harmonization with several European Union directives<sup>81</sup>. Within the framework of the new legal text, it is also envisaged to introduce a new criminal offense related to the misuse of recordings, photographs and audio-video materials with sexually explicit content, including manipulative content created with artificial intelligence (deep fake), which is also important for protecting journalists from new forms of digital abuse.

79 Samardziski, A. [MPs enact harsher penalties for abuses with short amendments, the new law will have to wait](#), Radio Free Europe, December 2025.

80 [Notification on the preparation of a new draft law](#), Ministry of Justice, 2025.

81 These are the Directive on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law (EcoCrime), the Directive on Preventing Domestic Violence and Violence against Women, the Directive on Asset Recovery and Confiscation, as well as the Proposal for a Directive on Combating Corruption.

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

Despite the established cooperation of AJM with the competent institutions, the situation in 2025 indicates a continued need for greater transparency and more efficient institutional action. Insufficient and irregular information about the course of proceedings contributes to the perception of impunity and reduces the trust of the journalistic community in the protection system.

In 2025, the transparency of court proceedings involving journalists remained at approximately the same level as in previous years. The basic civil and criminal courts in Skopje still do not proactively provide detailed information on cases related to attacks on journalists, except upon individual requests. At the same time, there is no established practice of regularly informing the public or journalistic organizations, including AJM and ITUJMW, about the progress of these proceedings.

AJM continued to monitor registered cases throughout 2025 through direct communication with judicial and prosecutorial authorities. According to data received from the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office Skopje, two cases from the AJM Registry are under investigation. In the case concerning the burned vehicle of journalist Vrencovska, the procedure is still in the pre-investigation phase, with instructions given to the Ministry of Interior for further action. In contrast, in the case concerning a physical attack on a journalistic team of Alsat M while reporting on a large fire, a guilty verdict was reached based on the perpetrator's admission of guilt.

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

During 2025, the Ministry of Interior had not established and published a public register of cases of violations of the rights of journalists and media workers. A small but significant step forward has been noted in the area of statistical monitoring of attacks on journalists and media workers. The Ministry of Interior published a special link on its official website<sup>82</sup> for monitoring these incidents, which leads directly to the official website of the AJM and to the public Register of Attacks maintained by the AJM.

In the judiciary, the situation remains unchanged in 2025. Judicial institutions still do not have functional statistical systems that allow recording and searching for cases according to the profession of the parties. Existing databases do not allow for the separation of cases involving journalists or media, which makes it difficult to systematically monitor the proceedings and is often cited as the reason for the absence of a separate register for violations of the rights of media

82 [Ministry of Interior publishes the register of attacks on journalists](#), 360 stepeni, 02.10.2025.

workers. Due to such limitations, the AJM continues to provide the necessary information on court cases mainly through direct communication with representatives of judicial institutions.

Despite the announced positive steps by the Ministry of Interior, the current situation indicates that further improvement of statistical systems in both the executive and judicial branches is necessary, in order to ensure effective protection of journalists and media workers and to reduce the risk of impunity for attacks on them.

## — C.11 NON-PHYSICAL THREATS AND HARASSMENT

During 2025, the former editor of a nationwide television station, Dragan Pavlovic Latas, close to the current ruling party VMRO-DPMNE, targeted journalists from several media outlets on the social network Facebook, misusing private photos from their profiles and using them in his posts<sup>83</sup>. In his posts, he made unfounded accusations and conspiracy theories, the aim of which was to discredit journalists and media outlets that professionally report on relevant social issues. This practice of targeting and publicly stigmatizing journalists, including journalists who have received national and international recognition for their work, represents a serious attack on freedom of expression and independent journalism.

The AJM Management Board, acting on a proposal from the AJM Council of Honor, in October 2025 decided to expel Zoran Bozinovski from AJM membership due to violations of several articles of the Code of Ethics for Journalists. The decision was made due to serious and repeated violations of the Code of Ethics made with a series of posts that incite gender-based harassment against women journalists and violate their privacy and reputation. In addition, these posts incited malicious comments that encouraged others to spread hate speech and threats, thus creating a hostile environment and increasing the risk to the safety of women journalists.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
<p><b>Threats and harassment that do not concern the physical safety of journalists.</b></p> <p>This category of threats and harassment includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– surveillance or monitoring;</li> <li>– harassing phone calls;</li> <li>– arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment;</li> <li>– aggressive statements by public officials;</li> <li>– other forms of pressure that may endanger the safety of journalists in the performance of their work.</li> </ul> <p>These types of threats do not include mobbing and violence in the workplace</p>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Harassing or discriminatory statements, threats to the lives and physical safety of journalists by a former journalist and television editor to fellow journalists.</li> <li>– Zoran Bozinovski, through a series of posts, incited gender-based harassment against women journalists and violated their reputation and right to privacy.</li> </ul>

83 [AJM and ITUJMW: Condemnation of the malicious targeting of journalists and media by Dragan Pavlović Latas](#), 26.02.2025.

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

In 2025, AJM has not registered this type of threat to the lives of journalists.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
<b>Threats to the life and physical safety of journalists</b> This type of threats include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– death threats against journalists, friends of journalists, members of their families or information sources;</li> <li>– threats of physical harm to journalists, friends of journalists, members of their family or sources of information.</li> </ul> These threats can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– made directly or through third parties;</li> <li>– sent electronically or directly face to face;</li> <li>– implicit, but also explicit.</li> </ul>	0	– In 2025, not a single case falling into this category was recorded.

## — C.13 ACTUAL ATTACKS

At the beginning of the year, an incident was reported in which the vehicle of journalist Suzana Vrencovska, a correspondent for the online portal SDK.mk from Ohrid, was set on fire. The vehicle was set on fire in the yard of the family home, in the garage where it was parked.

Over the past year, according to the official register of attacks and threats of the AJM<sup>84</sup>, gross violations of the rights of journalist Avni Tahiri and cameraman Shenol Hajredini have been registered. According to information from the journalist and the cameraman, they were physically attacked while reporting on the large fire at the illegal landfill in Vizbegovo, by the owner of the waste, who is believed to have caused the fire. The attacker forcibly took the mobile phone of the journalist Tahiri and threw it into the fire, and the cameraman Shenol Hajredini was also attacked and his camera was broken. The case was reported to the Ministry of Interior, after which the perpetrator was arrested.

In December 2025, a brutal attack was reported to AJM. The attack took place in the newsroom of "Infomax" during a live broadcast, by an unknown person, which endangered the safety of journalists Aleksandar Mitovski and Milosh Miloshevski, as well as the employees of the newsroom. According to information from colleagues, an unknown person arrived in a taxi in front of the newsroom during the broadcast. The attacker began to aggressively hit and knock on the front door, which was locked and secured with a code. After a short time, he managed to forcefully break it and enter the yard of the newsroom. At the moment when the team took a break from the broadcast, journalist Miloshevski went out

84 AJM's [Register of attacks and threats](#).

to check what was happening. The attacker continued to move towards the other part of the building, where he forcibly broke another door trying to reach the studio. The person made insults and life threats, and the violent entry into the newsroom led to the forcible interruption of the broadcast of the program, which directly prevented journalists from performing their professional duties and freely informing.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
<b>Real attacks on journalists</b> Types of real attacks on journalists may include physical or mental harm inflicted, kidnapping, entry into a home or office, seizure of equipment, arbitrary detention, failed assassination attempt, etc..	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In January 2025, the vehicle of a journalist from Ohrid, Suzana Vrencovska, was set on fire in the yard of her family home.</li> <li>– In July 2025, a physical attack was carried out on the ALSAT M television journalist team, who were reporting on a large fire in Skopje.</li> <li>– In December 2025, the violent break-in into the Infomax editorial office led to the forcible interruption of the program's broadcast, which directly prevented journalists from performing their professional duties and freely informing.</li> </ul>

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

AJM has not registered any attacks of this type in 2025. Compared to previous years in this dimension, for this indicator, the situation remains unchanged.

Category	Number	Brief description of the cases
<b>Threats and attacks on media and journalist organizations</b> Actual attacks on media and organization property, their personnel, confiscated equipment, aggressive statements by public officials, etc. Also, threats and attacks may include some of the above categories.	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In 2025, not a single case falling into this category was recorded.</li> </ul>



# Conclusions and recommendations

## CONCLUSIONS

### LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

In 2025, the legal framework for the media and the safety of journalists formally recorded some improvements, but practical implementation remains inconsistent and selective. Amendments to criminal legislation and civil liability for insult and defamation in previous years have created stronger legal safeguards, but case law still does not provide sufficiently prompt and effective protection for journalists.

In April 2025, a register of online media was established within the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, which for the first time defined web portals as media with clear rights and obligations. This step contributes to greater transparency and professionalism, but at the same time the issue of circumvention of the register in paid political advertising remains open, which creates space for abuses and non-transparent financing of the media sphere.

Despite continuous recommendations from European institutions, the state has not yet established systemic mechanisms to support media pluralism and public interest journalism. The reintroduction of state-funded campaigns in private media reinforces the risk of political influence on editorial policy, as well as the economic dependence of newsrooms. The need for a new, comprehensive Media Law with a strong focus on the protection of journalists and media workers in newsrooms remains a priority.

Additionally, the absence of effective anti-SLAPP mechanisms increases the vulnerability of journalists to strategic lawsuits aimed at silencing critical reporting. Although international standards

and recommendations exist, their implementation in national legislation has not yet been fully implemented.

## **POSITION OF JOURNALISTS IN NEWSROOMS**

In 2025, the socio-economic situation of journalists and media workers remains a serious concern. Most journalists receive salaries below the national average, and the situation is even worse for media workers in private media and local newsrooms. Although the situation in public service is relatively better, the shortage of staff, especially young professionals and expert staff, undermines the long-term sustainability of the system.

Commercial pressures and political influence continue to limit editorial autonomy in some media outlets, resulting in self-censorship and limited space for investigative journalism. Insufficient protection of labor rights, unstable contracts, and precarious working conditions directly affect the quality of journalistic work and increase the vulnerability of journalists to external pressures.

## **JOURNALISTS' SAFETY IN RN MACEDONIA**

In 2025, there was a relative decrease in physical attacks on journalists, but online threats, hate speech and public labeling of journalists by political actors and public office holders remain a serious problem. Social media continues to be a major channel for intimidation and discrediting, especially of journalists reporting on corruption, abuses and issues of public interest.

Although cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office has been strengthened by establishing contact points for cases related to attacks on journalists, the high level of impunity remains a key problem. Investigative procedures are slow and court resolutions are rare, which fosters a culture of impunity and encourages potential perpetrators.

Additionally, the number of SLAPPs has been increasing in recent years, which creates a "chilling effect" on critical and investigative journalism.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A: LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION**

- Urgently adopt a new Media Law, with a clear focus on the protection of journalists and media workers in editorial offices.
- Establish a Fund for Pluralistic and Public Interest Journalism, with clear, transparent criteria for the allocation of funds, independent management and public accountability.

- Abolish paid political advertising and state-funded campaigns in private media and redirect the funds to the Pluralism Fund.
- Adopt anti-SLAPP mechanisms in national legislation, in line with European standards, for early dismissal of abusive lawsuits against journalists through the establishment of a multi-sectoral working group within the Government of the Republic of Macedonia
- Enact a new Law on Free Access to Public Information with deadlines and sanctions that will ensure timely and complete responses from institutions.
- Improve copyright with explicit protection of journalistic content as intellectual property.

## **B: POSITION OF JOURNALISTS IN NEWSROOMS**

- Intensify efforts to conclude collective agreements in private media.
- Ensure fair wages, dignified working conditions and clear employment contracts for journalists and media workers, especially at the local level.
- Develop programs for training and retraining, with the aim of strengthening the professional capacities and competitiveness of journalists.
- Continuous training on workers' rights and editorial independence in editorial offices.
- Support for attracting and retaining young journalists through scholarships, internship programs, and mentoring.

## **C: STRENGTHENING JOURNALISTS' SAFETY**

- Establish special registers for cases of attacks and SLAPPs against journalists in courts and prosecutors' offices.
- Acceleration and priority action in all cases of threats and attacks against journalists.
- Continuous training for judges, prosecutors, police and lawyers on the application of European standards for freedom of expression and protection of journalists.
- Improve institutional protocols for prevention and rapid response to attacks on journalists.
- Deepen the cooperation of AJM with the Ombudsman and relevant institutions for the systemic protection of journalistic rights.
- Form a National Committee for the Protection of Journalists.

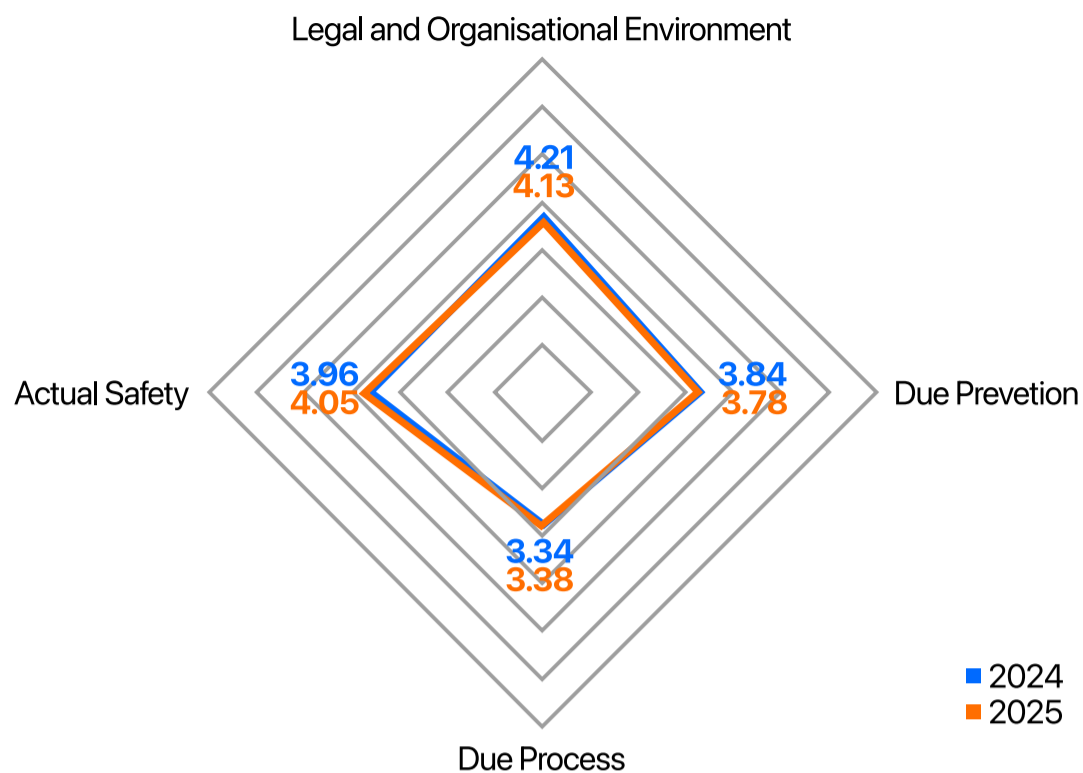
# IV

# Journalists' Safety Index in North Macedonia – 2025

This section of the report graphically presents the Journalists' Safety Index in 2025, compared to the previous year 2024. For each of the four dimensions and for all 19 indicators, a brief explanation of the key changes that occurred in 2025 is provided.

A more extensive explanation of the data and the changes that have occurred for each individual indicator of the Index can be read in the narrative part of the report:

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



	2024	2025		Main developments in each dimension
Legal and organizational environment	4.21	4.13	↓	There is a certain setback in the legal and organizational environment, which is mainly due to the pressure that journalists feel from the new lawsuits filed for defamation and insult (a total of 15 in 2025), the still present resistance and subtle pressures towards unionizing, as well as the extremely poor socio-economic status of journalists working in private media, especially in online media at the local level.
Due Prevention	3.84	3.78	↓	In 2025, a slight setback was noted in ensuring a faster and more effective institutional response to threats and attacks on journalists. There was an increase in online harassment, sexist attacks and discriminatory statements against women journalists. Several examples of negative rhetoric, public insults and discrediting of journalists and media by politicians, political parties and public office holders were registered.
Due Process	3.34	3.38	↑	In 2025, there was good coordination between the competent institutions, which resulted in improved efficiency in detecting and sanctioning serious attacks on journalists. Out of two cases of physical attacks in 2025, all two ended in guilty court verdicts. Cooperation with the Ministry of Interior has improved in terms of statistical monitoring of attacks on journalists and media workers.
Actual Safety	3.96	4.05	↑	The number of physical attacks and threats against journalists has increased compared to last year. However, the level of impunity for this type of attack is still high, as a significant number of cases from previous years have not yet been investigated and concluded. The trend of increasing online threats and attacks against women journalists in the country is worrying.
<b>Journalists' Safety Index</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>↑</b>	

# Legal and organizational environment



#### INDICATOR 1.1

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

**Score for 2024: 4.40 / Score for 2025: 4.03**

In 2025, a slight deterioration in the situation was noted, as the number of new defamation and insult lawsuits filed against journalists and/or media outlets increased by one case: 16 lawsuits were filed in 2025, and 15 lawsuits in 2024. In general, the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation does not create a chilling effect on journalists after the amounts of non-pecuniary damage that can be determined by the court were reduced in November 2022. The law guarantees freedom of expression, and the restrictions are in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the practice of the European Court of Human Rights. According to data from the Basic Civil Court Skopje, by the end of 2025 the number of active cases was 40.

#### INDICATOR 1.2

### — THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF JOURNALISTS' SOURCES IS GUARANTEED IN LEGISLATION AND RESPECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES

**Score for 2024: 4.89 / Score for 2025: 4.89**

During 2025, AJM did not observe a single case of pressure on a journalist to reveal their confidential source, and journalists working on investigative stories felt free to contact their sources. The protection of journalistic sources is guaranteed in the Constitution of RNM and regulated in detail in several laws. Journalistic sources are encouraged and well protected by the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers, but due to pressures and fear for their jobs, the number of individuals reporting cases of corruption to the competent authorities and to journalists is still small.

#### INDICATOR 1.3

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

**Score for 2024: 4.08 / Score for 2025: 4.13**

Compared to 2024, in 2025, no increased pressure on investigative journalists by business or political power was observed, and there were no cases of arbitrary or discriminatory application of other laws in order to limit the freedom of journalistic work. Only one new case of a SLAPP against an investigative media outlet was registered. The fact that in 2025, at the initiative of the AJM, the Government announced the formation of a working group to establish a mechanism for protection against the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) also contributes to the improvement of the situation.

#### INDICATOR 1.4

### — JOURNALISTS ARE FREE TO PRACTICE THEIR PROFESSION AND TO ESTABLISH, JOIN AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR ASSOCIATIONS

**Score for 2024: 4.38 / Score for 2025: 4.31**

Journalist associations (AJM, CMEM and ITUJMW) did not face political pressures and attacks in 2025, although the management structures of some larger media outlets exert subtle pressures on journalists and media workers, hindering union organizing. The self-regulatory body is still fragile in terms of capacity and support, which prevents development and research activities and strengthening the organization. ITUJMW also faces a lack of resources and sustainability problems, and its members also face pressures from two parallel unions, in the public service and in the state news agency.

#### INDICATOR 1.5

### — THE JOB POSITION OF JOURNALISTS IS STABLE AND PROTECTED IN THE WORKPLACE

**Score for 2024: 3.29 / Score for 2025: 3.29**

There has been no improvement in terms of the working status and protection of the workers' rights of journalists and media workers. Although in the public service broadcaster and in some larger private media outlets, journalists and media workers have signed employment contracts and a formally stable working status, precariat still dominates the journalistic profession: the legally established number of working hours is not respected and there are no set working hours, so that excessive workload turns into a direct source of chronic stress; the largest number of employed journalists in the entire sector have salaries below the average salary in the country; a large number of journalists in the online sector and in local media have insecure working status and extremely low incomes; journalist-correspondents from smaller places are most often engaged on freelance contracts.



## Due prevention



#### INDICATOR 2.1

### — JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ACTORS HAVE ACCESS TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES WHEN EXPOSED TO THREATS

**Score for 2024: 3.81 / Score for 2025: 3.81**

The situation regarding this indicator has not changed. The Ministry of Interior does not have a special mechanism for reporting and taking quick and efficient action after attacks and threats against journalists, but it is positive that in 2024 a competent prosecutor was appointed at the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office with whom journalists can communicate directly in the event of a physical attack, threat or serious harassment, including those carried out over social networks. The direct communication line with the prosecutor's office is a significant step forward in the institutional protection of journalists, but AJM believes that the reaction should be faster and more efficient in all reported 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/SAFETY MECHANISMS

**Score for 2024: 3.75 / Score for 2025: 3.75**

There is no change in the score for this indicator in 2025. The existing legal framework allows for the application of special measures to protect all citizens whose physical safety is at real risk, including journalists. However, the practical application of these measures is limited because they can only be applied if the perpetrator has been identified and if the procedure is already underway. During 2025, no cases were registered in which journalists had a real need or formally requested special physical protection measures.

#### INDICATOR 2.3

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

**Score for 2024: 3.58 / Score for 2025: 3.50**

In 2025, there is a certain deterioration in this indicator, due to the increase in online harassment, sexist attacks and discriminatory statements against women journalists. The legal framework provides for mechanisms for the protection and support of women journalists in cases of gender-based threats and online attacks, but their practical application is insufficiently effective. Although institutions have established an integrated system for collecting data on such attacks, it does not categorize incidents according to the profession of the victim, which is why there is no official data on the number of women journalists among the victims who are subject to attacks.

#### INDICATOR 2.4

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

**Score for 2024: 3.33 / Score for 2025: 3.11**

In 2025, there was a deterioration in the attitude of government officials towards journalists and media professionals. Although there were occasional reactions from government officials condemning threats or violence against journalists, there were still several examples of negative rhetoric, public insults and discrediting of journalists and media by politicians, political parties and public office holders (a ruling party MP made disqualifications for journalist Ordanovski at two press conferences; a director of a state agency attacked the editorial staff of the Racin portal via social networks; a coordinated online campaign to discredit the editor of Infomax, etc.).

#### INDICATOR 2.5

### — POLICE AUTHORITIES ARE SENSITIVE TO THE JOURNALISTS' PROTECTION ISSUE

**Score for 2024: 4.75 / Score for 2025: 4.75**

There have been no changes in the behavior of the police authorities towards the issue of the protection of journalists. During 2025, no cases of rough behavior by the police towards journalists or media workers were observed. For the Ministry of Interior, the safety of journalists is a priority issue, good cooperation and coordination with the AJM has been established in order to act promptly and appropriately when there are cases of threats, attacks or harassment of journalists. In 2025, the focus of joint activities was on online harassment and the protection of women journalists. A contact person was appointed within the Cybercrime Sector of the Ministry of Interior, which allows for better and faster coordination with the AJM in resolving these cases.



## Due process

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

3.42

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

3.52

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

3.37

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

3.10

Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity

3.47

1.00 Institutions do not investigate and do not sanction attacks on journalists, including online harassment, threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists, and physical attacks on journalists and media.

2.00

3.00

4.00



5.00



6.00

7.00

Institutions are fully effective and transparent in investigating and sanctioning attacks on journalists, including online harassment, threats against journalists' lives and physical safety, and physical attacks on journalists and the media.

#### INDICATOR 3.1

### — SPECIALIZED INVESTIGATIVE UNITS AND/OR OFFICERS ARE EQUIPPED WITH EXPERTISE FOR INVESTIGATING ATTACKS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS

**Score for 2024: 3.42 / Score for 2025: 3.42**

The situation has not changed in this regard. The officers responsible for these issues within the Ministry of Interior formally have a certain level of knowledge and expertise in investigating attacks on journalists. During 2025, police protocols for urgent action were additionally activated and coordination with existing contact points in the Ministry of Interior and the Prosecutor's Office was strengthened. However, all this still does not result in sufficiently efficient processing of cases, especially online threats and digital violence.

#### INDICATOR 3.2

### — INVESTIGATIONS INTO SERIOUS PHYSICAL ATTACKS ON JOURNALISTS AND OTHER MEDIA ACTORS ARE CONDUCTED EFFECTIVELY (INDEPENDENTLY, THOROUGHLY AND PROMPTLY)

**Score for 2024: 3.48 / Score for 2025: 3.52**

In terms of the efficiency of detecting the perpetrators of attacks on journalists, the situation seems to have improved slightly compared to previous years. In 2025, the AJM recorded 3 serious physical attacks on journalists and media workers in its register. All cases were reported to the Ministry of Interior, and some to the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office. In all cases, the procedure ended quickly with court verdicts. The Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) believes that impunity is still a problem, due to the significant number of unresolved cases from previous years.

#### INDICATOR 3.3

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

**Score for 2024: 3.37 / Score for 2025: 3.37**

Despite the 2023 legislative amendments that strengthened criminal law protection, online attacks continue to pose a threat to journalists. In 2025, the AJM registered one serious incident of harassment and hate speech against women journalists on social media, as well as a series of negative coordinated campaigns targeting investigative journalists. In previous years, institutions have taken action on some of the serious attacks, but the general assessment is that the response has been slow and insufficiently coordinated, which has led to journalists not feeling sufficiently safe.

#### INDICATOR 3.4

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

**Score for 2024: 3.10 / Score for 2025: 3.10**

Despite the established cooperation of AJM with the competent institutions, the situation in 2025 has not changed and indicates a continued need for greater transparency and more efficient institutional action. Insufficient and irregular information about the course of proceedings creates a perception of impunity and reduces the trust of the journalistic community in the protection system. The basic civil and criminal courts in Skopje do not provide detailed information on cases related to attacks on journalists, even when journalists submit individual written requests.

#### INDICATOR 3.5

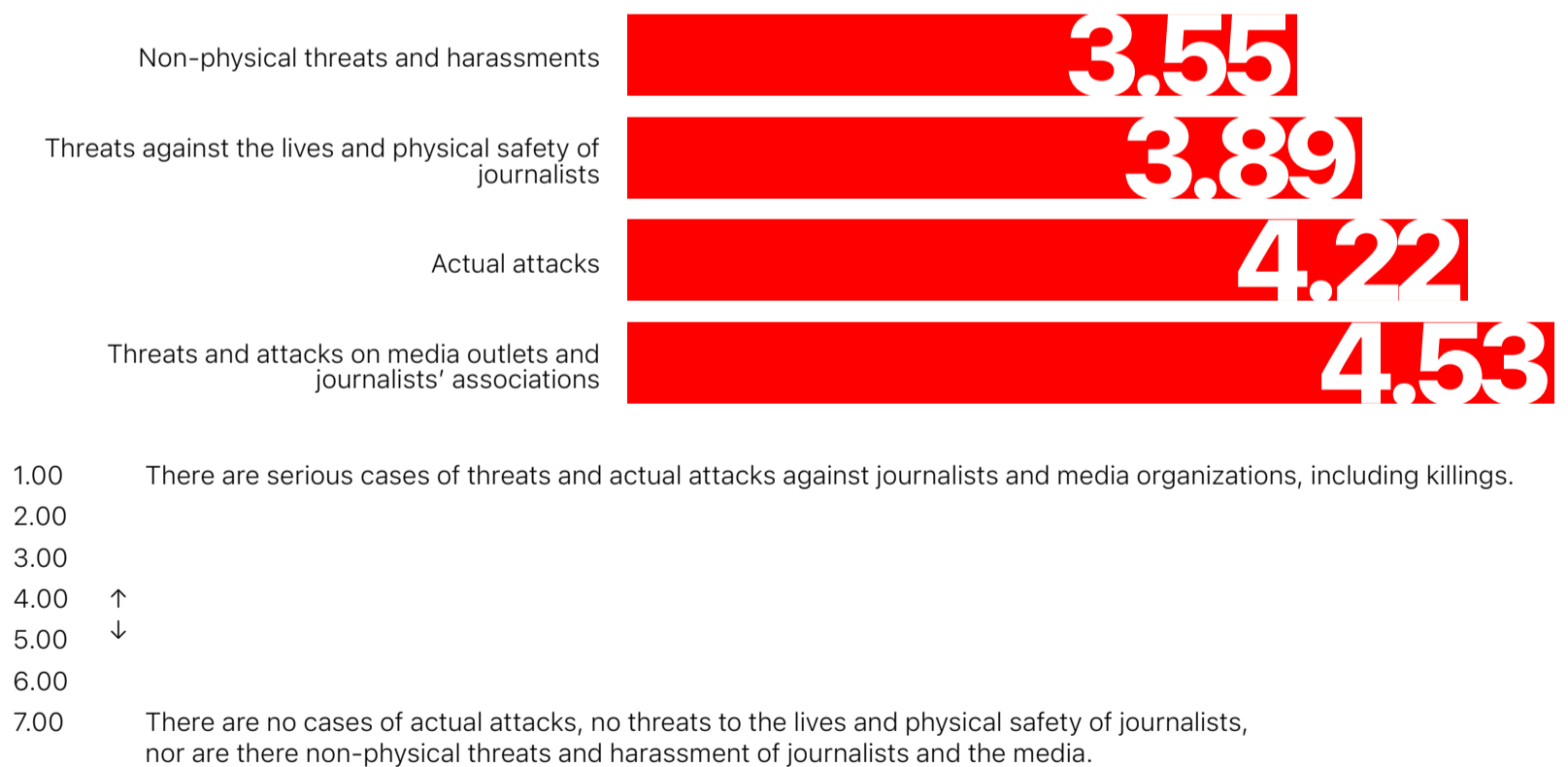
### — QUALITY STATISTICS COLLECTION SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED BY STATE AUTHORITIES TO STEM IMPUNITY

**Score for 2024: 3.33 / Score for 2025: 3.47**

During 2025, a limited but significant step forward was noted in the area of statistical monitoring of attacks on journalists and media workers. The Ministry of Interior published a special link on its official website for monitoring these incidents, which leads directly to the official website of the AJM and to the public Register of Attacks maintained by the AJM. However, the situation in the judiciary remains unchanged. Judicial institutions still do not have functional statistical systems that allow recording and searching for cases according to the profession of the parties.

# IV

## Actual Safety



#### INDICATOR 4.1

##### — NON-PHYSICAL THREATS AND HARRASSMENT

**Score for 2024: 3.55 / Score for 2025: 3.55**

During 2025, AJM registered two cases of threats, insults and disqualifications against groups of journalists and media outlets: the first case concerns the attacks directed via Facebook by the former editor of a national television station, Dragan Pavlovic Latas, against journalists from several media outlets, abusing private photos from their profiles; the second case concerns a series of posts by Zoran Bozinovski that attacked a group of women journalists on gender grounds and violated their privacy and reputation. In 2024, only one incident in this category was registered.

#### INDICATOR 4.2

##### — THREATS AGAINST THE LIVES AND PHYSICAL SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

**Score for 2024: 3.53 / Score for 2025: 3.89**

In 2025, not a single case falling into this category was recorded, unlike in 2024 when there was one such case.

#### INDICATOR 4.3

##### — ACTUAL ATTACKS

**Score for 2024: 4.22 / Score for 2025: 4.22**

There were three cases of this type recorded in 2025. In these cases, the competent authorities acted relatively efficiently and they were quickly finalized with a court conviction for the attackers.

#### INDICATOR 4.4

##### — THREATS AND ATTACKS ON MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATIONS

**Score for 2024: 4.53 / Score for 2025: 4.53**

AJM did not register any attacks of this type in 2025. If we compare the status of for this indicator to previous years, the situation remains unchanged.

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