



CONTROLLING THE MESSAGE

Challenges for independent
reporting in Greece

Controlling the Message: Challenges for independent reporting in Greece

Report of the 1-15 December 2021 joint fact-finding mission

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| Front page: Flags on Greece building – photo by Feyza Nur Demirci from Pexels

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, “Controlling the Message: Challenges for independent reporting in Greece”, outlines the key findings from the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) online fact-finding mission to Greece, which took place from 1 to 15 December 2021. The European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) led the mission, together with representatives from ARTICLE 19, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the International Press Institute (IPI), the Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT), and a representative of Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

The mission, and in turn the report, aims to facilitate a greater understanding of the challenges facing press freedom in the country, currently ranked 70th in RSF’s World Press Freedom Index (4th worst in the EU), and to raise awareness of the issue with political actors and the public.

From discussions with numerous key local stakeholders, the report’s main findings can be summarised as follows:

- The assassination of crime reporter Giorgos Karaivas represents a low point for press freedom in Greece and drew international attention to the country’s significant problems with journalists’ safety. Contrary to the authorities’ promises, investigation progress appears slow and lacks basic transparency. This, coupled with the long-winded investigation into death threats made towards journalist Kostas Vaxevanis, has created a chilling effect and led to mistrust of the government’s ability or willingness to protect the journalistic community.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ ΤΩΝ ΚΥΡΙΟΤΕΡΩΝ ΣΗΜΕΙΩΝ

Η παρούσα έκθεση, «Χειραγωγώντας το μήνυμα: Προκλήσεις για την ανεξάρτητη δημοσιογραφία στην Ελλάδα», παρουσιάζει τα βασικά ευρήματα από την διαδικτυακή επαληθευτική αποστολή για την Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) στην Ελλάδα, η οποία πραγματοποιήθηκε από την 1 έως τις 15 Δεκεμβρίου 2021. Το Ευρωπαϊκό Κέντρο για την Ελευθερία του Τύπου και των Μέσων Μαζικής Ενημέρωσης (ECPMF) ηγήθηκε της αποστολής, μαζί με εκπροσώπους από το ARTICLE 19, την Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Δημοσιογράφων (EFJ), το Διεθνές Ινστιτούτο Τύπου (IPI), το Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT) και έναν εκπρόσωπο των Δημοσιογράφων Χωρίς Σύνορα (RSF).

Η αποστολή, και με τη σειρά της η έκθεση, έχει ως στόχο την καλύτερη κατανόηση των προκλήσεων που αντιμετωπίζει η ελευθερία του Τύπου στη χώρα, που βρίσκεται σήμερα στην 70η θέση στον Παγκόσμιο Δείκτη Ελευθερίας του Τύπου της RSF (4η χειρότερη στην ΕΕ), και να γνωστοποιήσει το θέμα σε πολιτικούς παράγοντες και το κοινό.

Από συζητήσεις με πολλούς βασικούς τοπικούς παράγοντες, τα κύρια πορίσματα της έκθεσης μπορούν να συνοψιστούν ως εξής:

- Η δολοφονία του αστυνομικού συντάκτη Γιώργου Καραϊβάζ αντιπροσωπεύει ένα σκοτεινό σημείο για την ελευθερία του Τύπου στην Ελλάδα και τράβηξε τη διεθνή προσοχή στα σημαντικά προβλήματα της χώρας ως προς την ασφάλεια των δημοσιογράφων. Σε αντίθεση με τις υποσχέσεις των αρχών, η πρόοδος της έρευνας φαίνεται αργή και στερείται βασικής διαφάνειας. Αυτό, σε συνδυασμό με τη χρονοβόρα έρευνα για τις απειλές για την ζωή του δημοσιογράφου Κώστα Βαξεβάνη, έχει δημιουργήσει έναν

- ▶ The systemic crisis affecting press freedom in Greece has been exacerbated by the New Democracy government's attempts to "control the message" and minimise critical and dissenting voices. This has played into a politically polarised and fragmented media market. Newspapers and individual journalists that are ideologically on the side of the opposition or take a neutral stance are singled out by the government for unequal treatment that undermines their journalistic activities. This has been further compounded by a lack of transparency around the allocation of state advertising and its distribution based on established partisan lines.
- ▶ Reporting on the implementation of migration policy, including pushbacks and other human rights violations at the EU border, is increasingly difficult. The press freedom violations faced by journalists doing so are linked to the government's restrictive migration policy and an unwillingness to accept public scrutiny of it, leading to obstructions to reporting such as arbitrary arrest and detention, restriction of access, surveillance and harassment.
- ▶ Reporting on protest is another particularly problematic area of journalistic practice in Greece. Journalists are subject to aggression from both law enforcement officials and protesters. Interlocutors gave examples of journalists being detained, attacked, and prevented from reporting during protests by the police. Journalists interviewed during the mission noted that they do not wear press insignia to avoid confrontations with protesters and further compromising their security. There is a lack of political will to ensure that journalists can safely report from demonstrations, which translates to a lack of adequate protection at the operational level.

ανατριχιαστικό απόηχο και έχει οδηγήσει τη δημοσιογραφική κοινότητα σε δυσπιστία για την ικανότητα ή την προθυμία της κυβέρνησης να την προστατεύσει.

- ▶ *Η συστημική κρίση που επηρεάζει την ελευθερία του Τύπου στην Ελλάδα έχει επιδεινωθεί από τις προσπάθειες της κυβέρνησης της Νέας Δημοκρατίας να «χειραγωγήσει το μήνυμα» και να ελαχιστοποιήσει τις φωνές όσων την επικρίνουν ή διαφωνούν. Αυτό έχει συμβάλει σε μια πολιτικά πολωμένη και κατακερματισμένη αγορά των μέσων ενημέρωσης. Εφημερίδες και μεμονωμένοι δημοσιογράφοι που βρίσκονται ιδεολογικά στο πλευρό της αντιπολίτευσης ή τηρούν ουδέτερη στάση ξεχωρίζονται από την κυβέρνηση και αντιμετωπίζουν άνιση μεταχείριση που υπονομεύει τη δημοσιογραφική τους δραστηριότητα. Αυτό επιδεινώθηκε περαιτέρω από την έλλειψη διαφάνειας σχετικά με την κατανομή της κρατικής διαφήμισης και τη διανομή της με βάση καθιερωμένες κομματικές γραμμές.*
- ▶ *Η δημοσιογραφική έρευνα σχετικά με την εφαρμογή της μεταναστευτικής πολιτικής, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των απωθήσεων και άλλων παραβιάσεων των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων στα σύνορα της ΕΕ, γίνεται όλο και πιο δύσκολη. Οι παραβιάσεις της ελευθερίας του Τύπου που αντιμετωπίζουν οι δημοσιογράφοι συνδέονται με την κατασταλτική μεταναστευτική πολιτική της κυβέρνησης και την απροθυμία να αποδεχθεί τον δημόσιο έλεγχο, εμποδίζοντας έτσι την δημοσιογραφική έρευνα με μεθόδους όπως η αυθαίρετη σύλληψη και κράτηση δημοσιογράφων, ο περιορισμός της πρόσβασής τους, η παρακολούθηση και η παρενόχληση.*
- ▶ *Η δημοσιογραφική κάλυψη μια διαδήλωσης είναι ένας άλλος ιδιαίτερα προβληματικός τομέας της δημοσιογραφικής πρακτικής στην Ελλάδα. Οι δημοσιογράφοι υφίστανται επιθετικότητα τόσο*

- ▶ Legal threats are a significant problem for media freedom in Greece, including criminal lawsuits and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), as well as the threat thereof, targeting mostly journalists who report on corruption and government-critical outlets. The limited resources of Greek journalists and media outlets mean such legal threats can lead to self-censorship.

In light of these key findings, the MFRR issued a series of recommendations to the Greek authorities and to the European community, including the institutions of the European Union and the other EU Member States. The recommendations aim to address the aforementioned issues facing press freedom in Greece and to prevent the further deterioration of an already suffocating environment for independent media.

από την αστυνομία όσο και από διαδηλωτές. Οι ερωτηθέντες έδωσαν παραδείγματα δημοσιογράφων που συνελήφθησαν, δέχθηκαν επίθεση και εμποδίστηκαν από το έργο τους από την αστυνομία κατά τη διάρκεια διαδηλώσεων. Οι δημοσιογράφοι οι οποίοι ερωτήθηκαν για αυτήν την αποστολή, σημείωσαν ότι δεν συνηθίζουν να φορούν διακριτικά Τύπου για να αποφύγουν τις αντιπαραθέσεις με τους διαδηλωτές και να θέσουν σε περαιτέρω κίνδυνο την ασφάλειά τους. Υπάρχει έλλειψη πολιτικής βούλησης να διασφαλιστεί το να μπορούν οι δημοσιογράφοι να κάνουν το ρεπορτάζ τους με ασφάλεια στις διαδηλώσεις, κάτι το οποίο μεταφράζεται σε έλλειψη επαρκούς προστασίας σε επιχειρησιακό επίπεδο.

- ▶ *Οι νομικές απειλές αποτελούν σημαντικό πρόβλημα για την ελευθερία των μέσων ενημέρωσης στην Ελλάδα, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των ποινικών αγωγών και των Στρατηγικών αγωγών προς αποθάρρυνση της συμμετοχής του κοινού (SLAPPs), καθώς και την απειλή της χρήσης τους, οι οποίες στοχεύουν κυρίως δημοσιογράφους που ερευνούν την διαφθορά αλλά και ΜΜΕ τα οποία επικρίνουν την κυβέρνηση. Οι περιορισμένοι πόροι των Ελλήνων δημοσιογράφων και των μέσων ενημέρωσης σημαίνουν ότι τέτοιες νομικές απειλές μπορούν να οδηγήσουν σε αυτολογοκρισία.*

Υπό το φως αυτών των σημαντικών ευρημάτων, το MFRR εξέδωσε μια σειρά συστάσεων προς τις ελληνικές αρχές και την ευρωπαϊκή κοινότητα, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των θεσμικών οργάνων της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και των άλλων κρατών μελών της ΕΕ. Οι συστάσεις αποσκοπούν στην αντιμετώπιση των προαναφερθέντων ζητημάτων που αντιμετωπίζει η ελευθερία του Τύπου στην Ελλάδα και στην πρόληψη της περαιτέρω επιδείνωσης ενός ήδη ασφυκτικού περιβάλλοντος για τα ανεξάρτητα μέσα ενημέρωσης.

INTRODUCTION

The suffocating climate for independent journalism in Greece has been a source of increasing concern for the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) since the project launched in March 2020. Rooted in a steady stream of [alerts registered on the Mapping Media Freedom platform](#), the perception emerged of a landscape in which it is difficult for journalists to report on matters in the public interest, to hold the government to account for its actions, and to work safely and unobstructed by undue pressure and interference. In Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, the country dropped five spots from 2020 to reach 70th place in the 2021 ranking.

In light of this alarming situation, the MFRR decided to organise an online fact-finding mission, with a view to deepening the understanding of the crisis and generating more attention for the problem among political actors and the public at large. The mission took place between 1 and 15 December 2021 and was led by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), joined by representatives of MFRR partners ARTICLE 19, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT). A representative of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) also participated in part of the mission.

In its meetings, the fact-finding mission did not cover the entire breadth of the media landscape but rather focused on a limited number of problem areas, which were selected based on analysis of the alerts on Mapping Media Freedom and further informed by preliminary desk research and consultation with local stakeholders. These are also reflected in this report, which focuses on the assassination of

ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ

Το ασφυκτικό κλίμα για την ανεξάρτητη δημοσιογραφία στην Ελλάδα είναι πηγή αυξανόμενης ανησυχίας για το Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) από τότε που ξεκίνησε το πρότζεκτ τον Μάρτιο του 2020. Με βάση μια σταθερή ροή [ειδοποιήσεων που καταχωρήθηκαν στην πλατφόρμα Mapping Media Freedom](#), προέκυψε η εικόνα ενός τοπίου στο οποίο είναι δύσκολο για τους δημοσιογράφους να ερευνήσουν θέματα δημοσίου συμφέροντος, να ζητήσουν από την κυβέρνηση να λογοδοτήσει για τις πράξεις της και να εργαστούν με ασφάλεια και ανεμπόδιστοι από αδικαιολόγητες πιέσεις και παρεμβάσεις. Στον Παγκόσμιο Δείκτη Ελευθερίας του Τύπου των Δημοσιογράφων Χωρίς Σύνορα, η χώρα έπεσε πέντε θέσεις από το 2020 και έφτασε στην 70η θέση στην κατάταξη του 2021.

Υπό το πρίσμα αυτής της ανησυχητικής κατάστασης, το MFRR αποφάσισε να οργανώσει μια διαδικτυακή διερευνητική αποστολή, με σκοπό να εμβαθύνει την κατανόηση της κρίσης και να προσελκύσει την προσοχή των πολιτικών παραγόντων και του κοινού γενικότερα. Η αποστολή πραγματοποιήθηκε μεταξύ 1 και 15 Δεκεμβρίου 2021 και ηγήθηκε από το Ευρωπαϊκό Κέντρο για την Ελευθερία του Τύπου και των Μέσων Ενημέρωσης (ECPMF), με την συμμετοχή εκπροσώπων του MFRR, συνεργατών από το ARTICLE 19, της Ευρωπαϊκής Ομοσπονδίας Δημοσιογράφων (EFJ), του Διεθνούς Ινστιτούτου Τύπου (IPI) και του Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT). Ένας εκπρόσωπος των Δημοσιογράφων Χωρίς Σύνορα (RSF) συμμετείχε σε μέρος της αποστολής.

Στις συναντήσεις της, η διερευνητική αποστολή δεν κάλυψε όλο το εύρος του τοπίου των μέσων ενημέρωσης, αλλά επικεντρώθηκε σε περιορισμένο αριθμό προβληματικών περιοχών, οι οποίες επιλέχθηκαν με βάση την ανάλυση των

Giorgos Karaivaz and death threats against Kostas Vaxevanis; polarisation and fragmentation of the media landscape; reporting on migration and on protests; and legal threats.

These choices entail that a number of important challenges for media independence and pluralism in Greece remained outside the scope of the mission and this report. These prominently include a lack of independence of the public service media. Additionally, also the landscape for local media and diversity and social inclusiveness within the profession are problematic.

For this fact-finding mission, the MFRR met with: Dimitris Karaivaz, the son of murdered reporter Giorgos Karaivaz; journalists, photo-reporters and editors Ingeborg Beugel, Katy Fallon, Franziska Grillmeier, Ole Jacobs, Athanasios Kamilalis, Thanasis Karampatsos, Stavros Malichudis, Maria Panagiotou, Iliana Papangeli, Fabien Perrier, Tony Rigopoulos, Dimitris Rizoulis, Marily Stroux, Tasos Telloglou, Dimitris Terzis, Michael Trammer, Thanasis Voulgarakis, Augustine Zenakos, and one journalist who wished to remain anonymous; representatives of journalists' unions and associations Elena Rizeakou (President of the Panhellenic Federation of Journalists Unions), Maria Antoniadou (President of the Journalists Union of Athens Daily Newspapers), Themis Beredimas (President of the Journalists Union of Periodical and Electronic Press), Nikolaos Karras and Vassilis Kontogoulidis (President and Secretary General of the Journalists' Union of Macedonia and Thrace Daily Newspapers), Dimitris Hortargias (President of the Journalists Union of Thessalia, Sterea Hellas and Euboea), Kyriakos Kortesis (President of the Journalists Union of Peloponnese, Epirus, Islands), Wassilis Aswestopoulos (Secretary General of the Union of Press Photographers of Greece), and Nektaria

ειδοποιήσεων από το Mapping Media Freedom, την προκαταρκτική έρευνα και την διαβούλευση με τοπικούς παράγοντες. Αυτά αντικατοπτρίζονται και σε αυτή την έκθεση, η οποία επικεντρώνεται στη δολοφονία του Γιώργου Καραϊβάζ και τις απειλές θανάτου κατά του Κώστα Βαξεβάνη, την πόλωση και τον κατακερματισμό των μέσων ενημέρωσης, την δημοσιογραφική κάλυψη του μεταναστευτικού και των διαδηλώσεων και τέλος τις νομικές απειλές.

Αυτές οι επιλογές συνεπάγονται ότι μια σειρά από σημαντικές προκλήσεις για την ανεξαρτησία και τον πλουραλισμό των μέσων ενημέρωσης στην Ελλάδα παρέμειναν εκτός του πεδίου της αποστολής και της παρούσας έκθεσης. Σε αυτά περιλαμβάνεται η έλλειψη ανεξαρτησίας των δημόσιων μέσων ενημέρωσης. Επιπλέον, το τοπίο για τα τοπικά μέσα ενημέρωσης είναι επίσης προβληματικό ως προς την αποδοχή της διαφορετικότητας και την κοινωνική ένταξη μέσα στον κλάδο.

Για αυτή τη επαληθευτική αποστολή το MFRR συναντήθηκε με: τον Δημήτρη Καραϊβάζ, τον γιο του δολοφονημένου δημοσιογράφου Γιώργου Καραϊβάζ, τους δημοσιογράφους, φωτορεπόρτερ και συντάκτες Ingeborg Beugel, Katy Fallon, Franziska Grillmeier, Ole Jacobs, Αθανάσιο Καμηλάλη, Θανάση Καραμπάτσο, Σταύρο Μαλιχούδη, Μαρία Παναγιώτου, Ηλιάννα Παπαγγελή, Fabien Perrier, Tony Rigopoulos, Δημήτρη Ριζούλη, Marily Stroux, Τάσο Τέλλογλου, Δημήτρη Τερζή, Michael Trammer, Θανάση Βουλγαράκη, Αυγουστίνο Ζενάκο και έναν δημοσιογράφο που θέλησε να διατηρήσει την ανωνυμία του, την εκπρόσωπο των σωματείων και συλλόγων δημοσιογράφων Έλενα Ριζεάκου (Πρόεδρος της Πανελληνίας Ομοσπονδίας Ενώσεων Συντακτών), την Μαρία Αντωνιάδου (Πρόεδρος της Ένωσης Συντακτών των Ημερησίων Εφημερίδων Αθηνών), τον Θέμη Μπερεδήμα

Stamouli and Giorgos Christides (President and Assistant Treasurer of the Foreign Press Association of Greece); researchers Antonis Kalogeropoulos, Lambrini Papadopoulou and Nikos Smyrniaios; and lawyer Yiota Massouridou. The MFRR wishes to thank all those who met with its researchers.

On 22 March 2022, representatives of the fact-finding mission met with Dr Dimitrios Galamatis, Secretary General of Communication and Media, to discuss the findings and recommendations also reflected in this report. The MFRR is grateful for this opportunity, but regrets that other repeated requests for meetings with the Ministry of Civil Protection and the Ministry of Justice, before and after the fact-finding mission, remained unanswered.

Given the sensitive nature of some of the topics discussed or fear of reprisals, a significant number of interlocutors requested to speak off the record. Consequently, many of the quotes in this report are not attributed, including some from people who did agree to speak on the record to avoid accidental identification of others.

(Πρόεδρος της Ένωσης Συντακτών Περιοδικού και Ηλεκτρονικού Τύπου), τον Νικόλαο Καρρά και τον Βασίλη Κοντογουλίδη (Πρόεδρο και Γενικό Γραμματέα της Ένωσης Συντακτών Ημερησίων Εφημερίδων Μακεδονίας και Θράκης), τον Δημήτρη Χορταργιά (Πρόεδρο της Ένωσης Συντακτών Θεσσαλίας, Στερεάς Ελλάδας και Εύβοιας), τον Κυριάκο Κορτέση (Πρόεδρο Ένωσης Συντακτών Πελοποννήσου, Ηπείρου, Νησιών), τον Βασίλη Ασβεστόπουλο (Γεν. Γραμματέα της Ένωσης Φωτορεπόρτερ Ελλάδας) και την Νεκταρία Σταμούλη και τον Γιώργο Χρηστίδη (Πρόεδρο και Βοηθό Ταμία της Ένωσης Ξένου Τύπου Ελλάδος), τους ερευνητές Αντώνη Καλογερόπουλο, Λαμπρινή Παπαδοπούλου και Νίκο Σμυρναίο και την δικηγόρο Γιώτα Μασουρίδου. Το MFRR επιθυμεί να ευχαριστήσει όλους όσους συναντήθηκαν με τους ερευνητές του.

Στις 22 Μαρτίου 2022, εκπρόσωποι της διερευνητικής αποστολής συναντήθηκαν με τον Δρ Δημήτριο Γαλαμάτη, Γενικό Γραμματέα Επικοινωνίας και Ενημέρωσης, για να συζητήσουν τα πορίσματα και τις συστάσεις που παρουσιάζονται σε αυτήν την έκθεση. Το MFRR είναι ευγνώμων για αυτή την ευκαιρία, αλλά λυπάται που άλλα επανειλημμένα αιτήματα για συναντήσεις με το Υπουργείο Προστασίας του Πολίτη και το Υπουργείο Δικαιοσύνης, πριν και μετά τη διερευνητική αποστολή, παρέμειναν αναπάντητα.

Δεδομένης της ευαίσθητης φύσης ορισμένων από τα θέματα που συζητήθηκαν αλλά και του φόβου για αντίποινα, ένας σημαντικός αριθμός συνομιλητών ζήτησε να μιλήσουν ανεπίσημα. Κατά συνέπεια, πολλά από τα αποσπάσματα σε αυτήν την έκθεση δεν αποδίδονται, συμπεριλαμβανομένων ορισμένων τα οποία είναι από άτομα που συμφώνησαν να μιλήσουν επισήμως έτσι ώστε να αποφευχθεί η τυχαία αναγνώριση άλλων.

1. THE ASSASSINATION OF GIORGOS KARAIVAZ

On 9 April 2021, veteran crime reporter Giorgos Karaivaz was fatally shot outside his home in Athens, where he was ambushed by unidentified assailants. Although in the immediate aftermath the authorities promised to prioritise the case and make every effort to swiftly bring the perpetrators and masterminds to justice, no arrests have since been made nor have any suspects been publicly identified to date. The unresolved assassination in broad daylight in Athens constituted a tragic low-point for journalists' safety in Greece that drew the international community's attention.

When asked by the fact-finding mission about his confidence that those responsible for his father's killing will be brought to justice, Dimitris Karaivaz replied by referencing the general crime-solving rate in Greece, saying "statistically speaking, the chances are slim". He did express trust that police are investigating possible links between the assassination and Giorgos Karaivaz's journalistic activity. Several other MFRR interlocutors were far more critical, expressing the opinion that the police and government have done too little so far and, in one case, characterising the lack of progress as "suspicious" considering the nature of Karaivaz's work.

It has been remarkable how little media coverage there has been around the killing. A mission interlocutor noted that even Karaivaz's own station, despite producing sentimental videos, has not been asking hard questions or publicly demanding justice for the killing of their colleague. Another journalist characterised the mood as one of "complacency, a certain acceptance that this is how it is". Dimitris Karaivaz in this regard said that "people are not willing to act for

change, to actually fight in the way my father did, using facts and words."

The [European Commission Recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union](#) provides that "Member States should investigate and prosecute all criminal acts committed against journalists, whether online or offline, in an impartial, independent, effective, transparent and timely manner, making full use of existing national and European legislation, to ensure that fundamental rights are protected and justice is swiftly delivered in particular cases and prevent the emergence of a 'culture' of impunity regarding attacks against journalists" (Rec. 4). [Council of Europe Recommendation 2016\(4\) on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors](#) provides further detail, in general requiring that "investigations into killings, attacks and ill-treatment must be effective and therefore respect the essential requirements of adequacy, thoroughness, impartiality and independence, promptness and public scrutiny" (Rec. 18).

The dearth of information about the investigation into Karaivaz's assassination makes it impossible to assess to what extent the investigation meets many of the criteria set out in these standards. However, it is clear that the requirements of transparency and public scrutiny are not currently being met, also when taking into account that there is an evident need for discretion in what is likely a complex inquiry. This uncertainty has a chilling effect and creates mistrust about the government's ability or willingness to protect the journalistic community.

On 23 April 2021, less than one month after the murder of Karaivaz, [Kostas Vaxevanis](#), the editor of government-critical outlet Documento,

published an article stating he had been informed that there was a “price on his head”. After the threat was reported, Vaxevanis was placed under police protection and a preliminary investigation was launched. A colleague of Vaxevanis said the threat had not come as a surprise: “when people in power keep saying a journalist is dirty because their paper reveals scandals, it is only a matter of time before someone who disagrees with you escalates to physical violence.” Another journalist and friend of Vaxevanis said that upon learning about the murder contract, “I became like an empty balloon”, vividly illustrating its chilling effect. During the fact-finding mission, we heard criticism of the length of the investigation, following the initial swift arrest of three suspects shortly after the complaint was filed. At the end of February 2022, [it was reported](#) that television presenter Menios Fourthiotis will face trial in the case on charges of inciting to commit a crime, set for June 2022.

2. POLARISATION OF A FRAGMENTED MEDIA LANDSCAPE

“It is difficult to convey the extent to which there is no dispassionate reporting in mainstream Greek media.” In one stark sentence, one of the mission’s interlocutors captured the character and intensity of the crisis of political polarisation and fragmentation of the Greek media landscape. It is a problem with deep roots, shaped by more than a decade of severe financial and political crisis, which “have harmed the way journalism is understood” in a profound way. While the situation to an extent “has been the same for many years now”, most of the mission’s interlocutors agreed that the deterioration of press freedom accelerated after Nea Dimokratia’s electoral victory in July 2019. The current government, we heard again

and again, is “obsessed with controlling the message” and minimising critical and dissenting voices.

The media market in Greece is highly fragmented, both as concerns the number of outlets and as concerns the readers, who are mostly not loyal to a specific outlet. During the financial crisis, numerous major outlets closed or changed hands as business tycoons capitalised on the situation to acquire media companies, with significant job losses occurring in the process. Under the current administration, this capture of media by business interests is a bigger problem for media pluralism and professional reporting than it was in the past, as the interests of owners and the government’s politics often align, making it difficult to find strong oppositional voices in these media. These oligarchs’ cross-ownership in industries tied to public tenders has increased the risk for interference in independent journalism. The result is that media pluralism in Greece is weak and that this segment of the media ecosystem is characterised by a largely pro-government narrative. This dynamic went hand in hand with a huge digital disruption that created fragmentation, as many journalists opened up their own online news portals, frequently employing just a handful of journalists and mostly running copy/paste stories from other sources, especially the public news agency, to generate clicks on social media with little regard for quality. When it comes to online news consumption, there is little brand loyalty and people read whatever is in their social media feed or sent to them by peers.

In addition to feeding into this polarisation and fragmentation by further distorting the Greek media market through the distribution of state support along partisan lines (see below), newspapers and individual journalists that are ideolo-

gically on the side of the opposition or take a neutral stance are singled out by the government for unequal treatment that undermines their journalistic activities. For instance, Documento suffered losses to its advertising revenue as private companies were [reportedly](#) pressured by the government to no longer advertise there. The fact-finding mission also heard from many independent journalists working for a variety of outlets or freelance that invitations for interviews are frequently ignored by government politicians and public authorities and that information that ought to be public is only made available after repeated requests or not at all. These media and journalists are also accused of spreading “fake news” and engaging in “defamation journalism”, among other efforts to undermine their work.

Under the Mitsotakis administration, foreign correspondents have also dealt with some of these pressures. For instance, the fact-finding mission heard about (unsuccessful) efforts by the Greek government to undermine and discredit correspondents’ work with their editors back home, by writing to their editors-in-chief to challenge the veracity of their reporting or to offer them exclusive interviews with members of the government directly, bypassing the local correspondents. One interlocutor said through its various actions, it was clear that the government not only “wanted to attack a specific correspondent” but also all foreign correspondents: “it was like a signal that we had to take care what we are going to write.”

The MFRR’s interlocutors representing the profession’s unions said that for Greek journalists, the financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures meant the collapse of working relations and a new “harsh reality”, as Themis Beredimas called it, as collective labour agreements for the private sector went out the win-

dow. The representatives of journalists’ unions and associations all pointed out that their members have paid a particularly hard price in this regard. The reforms have created a system in which the workload for journalists is very heavy but the wages are “indecent”, as Maria Antoniadou characterised the situation. Poor labour conditions in themselves constitute a form of indirect pressure. Elena Rizeakou in this regard said that it is easy to intimidate or influence a journalist who is desperate to keep their job. She also stressed that the precarious conditions have served to disincentivise investment in investigative and quality journalism. Nikolaos Karras and Vassilis Kontogoulidis additionally underlined that also local and regional outlets have been particularly affected by the crisis. Dimitris Hortargias qualified “financial reasons and the economic crisis” as the main reason why “most of the media are in dire straits” and said the problems for journalists are “all-encompassing” as pay has hit “rock bottom”. Kyriakos Kortesis called the picture “unusual by European standards” and said the economic crisis has been a “catalyst for adverse developments” in the Greek media landscape.

Despite these challenges, a number of newer and predominantly digital independent outlets deliver high-quality and critical journalism on topics in the public interest. However, their funding basis and revenue streams are often limited, as is their audience reach.

The situation overall serves to undermine the public’s trust in media. “The situation is extreme,” said one interlocutor: in much of the media, every piece of news is presented as a government success story. Consequently, a significant part of the public pays little attention and is unlikely to believe newspaper reports, as they are convinced that all news is partisan. Another interviewee characterised it as “a desper-

ate situation” for impartial and professional reporting, as many readers put undue trust in low-quality journalism and opinionated blogs on current affairs just because they are different from traditional media. “The solution is worse than the problem,” they added, saying that it has created fertile ground for the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

2.1 Allocation of state advertising: the Petsas list scandal

The allocation of state advertising to media in Greece suffers from a problematic lack of transparency. While this is not a new phenomenon, a scandal that erupted during the COVID-19 pandemic serves to illustrate the severity of the problem. The so-called Petsas list, named after former Deputy to the Prime Minister and government spokesperson Stelios Petsas, is exemplary of the lack of transparency in state funding of media in Greece.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the government allocated 20 million euros to distribute among media outlets to publish public health messages. In Ministerial Decision 179 of 15 March 2020 on the unpaid transmission of public health awareness messages by state-owned and private TV channels and radio stations, provision was also made for commissioning communication and information services in derogation from applicable national law. Petsas assigned this awareness-raising campaign to the Greek branch of advertising company Initiative Media, which was tasked with managing the distribution of an initial 11 million euros of state funds to media outlets. On 25 April, another 9 million was allotted to the campaign. Following pressure from opposition parties, civil society and a few media outlets, the government even-

tually disclosed the list. On 09 June, it submitted only the names of 1232 supported outlets, which included non-existent websites, personal blogs and a religious outlet that advocated that communion, which involves sharing eating utensils, is harmless during the pandemic. In early July 2020, the eventual disclosure of the sums allocated to each outlet confirmed that the funds had been distributed along outspoken partisan lines and certain newspapers including Documento were excluded altogether.

A parliamentary inquiry about the Petsas list, among other state funding of the media including a second Petsas list, the financing of EnterpriseGreece for a foreign promotion campaign and the public financing for the owner of OpinionPoll, was launched. The MFRR’s interlocutors were unanimously pessimistic about the inquiry commission’s ability to bring transparency to the matter. Representation in the commission follows that of the plenary and decisions are taken by simple majority, entailing the governing party New Democracy’s members having de facto complete control over the proceedings. They have used their majority to exclude key actors (including Petsas himself) from testifying before the commission. Formally, it remains unclear who really decided which media received how much funding and on which basis those decisions were taken.

In an attempt to create more transparency, watchdog organisation Vouliwatch has filed a [freedom of information request](#) demanding the disclosure of the amounts received by the media and the criteria that formed the basis for deciding the distribution, which was tacitly rejected by the authorities. In February 2022, the

Administrative Court of Appeal of Athens ruled this rejection illegal and ordered that the case be referred back to the Administration. Subsequently, Vouliwatch has called on the General Secretariat of Communication and Media to comply with the operative part of the ruling and submit the requested public documents or to provide sufficient reasons for the rejection of the request.

3. REPORTING ON MIGRATION

Migration policy, human rights violations committed in its implementation including push-backs, and the humanitarian crisis that the refugee stream has created are highly sensitive topics for Mitsotakis’ administration. Consequently, journalists who cover the issue are faced with a host of press freedom violations described in this chapter, as the authorities attempt to keep the inhumane consequences of the EU’s refugee policies and their implementation by the Greek authorities out of the public eye and concealed from scrutiny by obstructing independent reporting on the matter.

3.1 Obstructions to reporting from refugee camps and other migration hotspots

Access to refugee camps has become more difficult in recent years. Under Prime Minister Mitsotakis, and with EU funding, the government has been establishing new [much-criticised](#) refugee camps, creating a highly-controlled environment. The only way in is through formal media visits organised by the authorities, “but what we see there, is not how the people will live the day after you leave.” Many of the mission’s interlocutors never received a response to their requests to enter the facilities. On these official camp tours, journalists can only go to particular places and only speak with specific people. One reporter described how a ministry

official tugged on their clothes to steer them away from a refugee with whom they wanted to speak. Overall, they said that “access is allowed, but not in a setting that is appropriate for a journalist interviewing someone.” Many of the mission’s interlocutors noted that there is no privacy and law enforcement or government officials are always within earshot. Sometimes, they interfere with conversations and even insult the refugees being interviewed. The journalists themselves face outright hostility from these officials, who often tell reporters to leave or demand access to phones or materials.

Several interlocutors told the mission how law enforcement uses arbitrary arrest and deprivation of liberty as a tactic to harass journalists and interfere with their reporting from migration hotspots. The practice appears to be very common. “We all share the same experience,” one reporter told the fact-finding mission in this regard. The method seems to be applied most commonly although not exclusively against non-Greek EU citizen freelance journalists. They all described variations on a similar pattern: reporters are stopped in the location from which they are trying to report and, despite – or perhaps as a consequence of – showing their press cards and other identification documents on the spot in cooperation with law enforcement demands, are transferred to police stations far away from the site. They are then held for up to seven or eight hours, disrupting their ability to work. Subsequently, they are released, most of the time without any charges and without being provided with any official documentation. In the majority of cases, the police do not provide any legal basis for the detention and the affected journalists were not provided with an explanation of the reasons for their arrest. In some cases, journalists were not allowed to communicate with a lawyer or their equipment was confiscated or searched. Inter-

viewed journalists said that when they raised their detention rights with police officers, they were ridiculed and foreign reporters were told that “here, things are different”.

In a typical but particularly egregious case, which the MFRR and partner organisations [raised with the Greek authorities](#), a German documentary crew were unjustly detained and mistreated by the police on the island of Samos while making a film about climate-induced migration in October 2020. Photojournalist Manuel Tysarzik and video editor Larissa Rausch were detained alongside a project coordinator from German Climate Foundation and another team member. They were stopped by a police car and, after presenting their German press identification, were requested to follow the officers to the station, where they were held for eight hours. During this time, they were harassed and denied food by police officers who often did not wear protective face coverings, in breach of COVID-19 regulations. Initially, repeated requests to contact a lawyer were denied with the explanation that they had not been formally arrested. When legal representatives were finally allowed in, all four of the crew were subjected to unnecessary and humiliating strip searches before being released.

In May 2021, a reporting team from Dutch broadcaster VPRO was [arbitrarily detained](#) by police while trying to document an alleged pushback of refugees and migrants in the forest near Dikaina. Police, who claimed reporter Bram Vermeulen and his team had been in a restricted military area, ordered them to stop filming and took them to a police station. Officers demanded access to the team’s recordings, which they refused. They were released after half an hour. Throughout detention, requests for clarification about whether they were under arrest were ignored. The crew

rejects the allegation that they were in a restricted area and said they had accreditation from the Greek authorities to be there.

In November 2021, German freelance journalist and photographer Tim Lüddeman and his team were [detained](#) on the island of Lesbos, while they were taking pictures of the refugee camps from the outside. A policeman searched their smartphones, which they were using so as not to raise suspicion. The pictures of the day were stored elsewhere and police did not check them but they did ask the journalist to delete previous pictures of the camp in Moria before they would let them go, which Lüddemann refused to do. The group was let go after a few hours.

In addition to obstructing journalistic activity, the harassment of reporters by law enforcement also appears to have an intimidatory and dissuasive goal. One journalist told the MFRR fact-finding mission that the police interrogation came with a clear warning: “just be careful what you are writing and where you are going.” Although it is rare for criminal charges to be brought against journalists in this context, several of the journalists with whom the MFRR mission met expressed worry about the possibility they may be accused of espionage or human trafficking. It also contributes to a climate of hostility: “the presumption seems to be that I’m there as a spy to wreak havoc, not as a journalist”, said one interviewee. The perception in this regard is that the atmosphere has become more tense over time as the migration crisis deepened and in particular in the past year, which was linked to an increase in reporting on pushbacks. Reporting done on this topic is often portrayed as “Turkish propaganda”.

According to affected journalists, responsibility for the harassment and obstruction they exper-



ience lies across the board from the highest ranks of government, who want the humanitarian and human rights impact of their migration policies to remain unseen, down to the police officers on the street who act with impunity. Holding the state security organs accountable for their conduct is difficult and the mission’s interlocutors unanimously questioned the effectiveness of internal disciplinary processes.

In addition to harassment by law enforcement officials themselves, police also inadequately protect journalists reporting on migration when they face [violence from extreme right-wing and fascist groups](#). The MFRR mission heard from several reporters who work in migration hotspots that when tensions with the local community are high, police often stand aside and observe without intervening, blaming the journalists for the situation and telling them “you do

not need to be here”. This inaction on the scene of the incident subsequently follows through in the investigation when a complaint is filed. “I do not have the feeling that the Greek police have any interest in pursuing this,” said one affected journalist in this regard.

3.2 Case study: Surveillance of Stavros Malichudis

On 14 November 2021, journalist Dimitris Terzis published a [report](#) in Efimerida ton Syntakton (EFSYN) documenting the [secret monitoring](#) by the National Intelligence Service (EYP) of, among others, a journalist who had written a story about a 12-year-old boy from Syria living in a refugee camp on Kos, whose artwork was exhibited in a museum and published on the website of French newspaper Le Monde. In an op-ed published two days later on the Reporters United website, Stavros Malichudis re-

Refugee camp Chios island, Vial hotspot, March 2020 – photo: Wassilis Aswestopoulos

vealed that [“I am the journalist monitored by EYP”](#), having recognised the description of events in Terzis’ reporting and identified himself as the journalist in the story.

The revelations about the surveillance did not come as a surprise. Malichudis and several other interlocutors told us a running inside joke among reporters, who have been saying “hello to the others on the line” when they call each other for a while. “I’m afraid that probably most of my colleagues are being surveilled,” said one interlocutor. Another said that surveillance “was a common secret, and now it’s official.” They added that when reporting at the borders and lately, also on the islands, “you’ve always had the feeling that you were observed and spied on”, also including instances of physical surveillance.

It is the assessment of the fact-finding mission that the confirmation of these suspicions has had a clear chilling effect, creating additional concerns among many in the journalistic community. “I notice I have been using the phone much less,” said one reporter. Another said that it “has changed the nature of communications with colleagues and with sources.” A journalist who regularly writes about migration said they worried about surveillance because the government is so keen to discredit anyone covering this topic. Another expressed worry about how the situation may affect their sources. It was also pointed out that while those working for big media organisations can have their phones and other equipment checked by experts, this is not an option for smaller outlets or freelancers.

One of the mission’s interlocutors said the Greek public was largely indifferent to surveillance, which is often seen as commonplace. The journalist said the media have been unin-

terested in covering the topic because proving surveillance is difficult, resource-intensive, and may involve phone companies, who are big advertisers, overall making the topic unattractive. Notably, the recent revelation received only limited coverage in mainstream Greek media: many did not even mention that journalists are being spied upon now.

It [remains the MFRR’s view](#) that the surveillance of Stavros Malichudis, in addition to raising privacy concerns, may constitute a serious violation of the protection of journalistic sources, as safeguarded under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The refusal of the Greek authorities to engage meaningfully on the matter moreover serves to exacerbate the revelation’s chilling effect in this regard. The practice also falls far short of the standard set out in the European Commission’s [Recommendation](#) (Rec. 26), which provides that “Member States should ensure full implementation of the European and national legal frameworks on confidentiality of communications and online privacy with a view to ensuring that journalists and other media professionals are not subject to illegal online tracking and surveillance.”

3.3 Case study: Harassment of Ingeborg Beugel

In November 2021, Dutch journalist Ingeborg Beugel left Greece after she was subjected to a campaign of harassment and attempts to discredit her work following a confrontation with Prime Minister Mitsotakis at a press conference with Mitsotakis and his Dutch counterpart, Mark Rutte. Beugel asked Mitsotakis a pointed and very direct question about refugee push-backs, to which he responded that he would not accept insults of himself “or the Greek people”, defending his government’s migration policy as “tough but fair”.

After the press conference, Beugel found herself at the centre of attention on Greek social media and pro-government newspapers, where she was intentionally and systematically targeted by a [defamatory campaign and threats of violence](#). After she was recognised in the street, she was accosted by a stranger who called her “a Turkish whore” before throwing a stone, which did not cause her any serious injury. A complaint filed by Beugel’s lawyer received no further follow-up by the police. As a consequence of the campaign against her, Beugel was forced to flee her home of almost 40 years and temporarily return to the Netherlands.

To the mission, Beugel described the situation as deeply distressing. She said that she did not read the torrent of social media messages about her as “it kills your soul” and expressed concern about the emotional impact of the situation on her family and others close to her.

4. REPORTING ON PROTESTS

The data collected through the MFRR’s monitoring, as [reflected on Mapping Media Freedom](#), indicates that reporting on protest is another particularly problematic area of journalistic practice in Greece, largely but not exclusively affecting photo-reporters.

As concerns demonstrations, the MFRR fact-finding mission’s interlocutors unanimously described a lack of adequate police protection from violent protesters. In addition, the police force itself continued to be a source of aggression against journalists and to obstruct reporting. A number of these instances have been documented on Mapping Media Freedom. For example, on 03 February 2021, Documento photojournalist [Mario-Rafael Biko](#) was detained

while covering a protest in Athens, despite showing officers his journalistic ID. At the police station, he was not permitted to communicate with his employer or a lawyer. Biko was released without charge. One week later, on 10 February, a group of police officers in riot gear assaulted photojournalist [Yannis Liakos](#) in front of the main building of the Greek Parliament while he was covering a violent protest, resulting in him being thrown to the ground and getting kicked. On 26 February, at least [15 photo-journalists and media workers](#) were obstructed, harassed and targeted with disproportionate force by the police while covering a far-left protest in Athens. At least seven were injured. On 05 November, photojournalist [Orestis Panagiotou](#) was hospitalised with fractures in his foot after being hit by a water cannon at close range while covering a protest by firefighters.

These recorded incidents are only the tip of the iceberg, and the MFRR fact-finding mission heard that police aggression is so commonplace that pushing and shoving with police shields is a standard occurrence, “we don’t even talk about that.” Moreover, our interlocutors expressed low confidence in the police’s internal disciplinary mechanisms, saying that administrative inquiries carry on for extended periods and only rarely return disciplinary sanctions against officers. When they do, penalties are light.

Aggression also comes from protesters. Journalists interviewed during the mission said they usually do not wear press insignia, as this could explicitly identify them as media workers and lead to increased hostility. At a minimum, they noted, it would “create conversations and verbal harassment.” When protesters do assault or harass reporters, police do not intervene to protect them and are just “looking on”.



Clashes of protestors, mainly anarchists with the police in Athens on April, 16 2015. The protest rally was against the gold mines of Chalkidiki / Skouries – photo: Wassilis Aswestopoulos

The mission also heard allegations of “doxing” by police officers, who use their private phones to photograph ID cards, possibly to disseminate journalists’ private information.

Risks are currently highest at protests against the government’s pandemic-related measures, in particular when they are organised by far-right groups. These were also active during the protests against the name change of the Republic of North Macedonia, at the beginning of 2019. On the other side of the political spectrum, the mission’s interlocutors mentioned an informal understanding with anarchist groups, who were said to largely tolerate photo-reporters’ presence, as long as the protesters’ faces are not pictured. Nevertheless, several interlocutors also noted extreme left-wing groups physically attacking reporters. One anarchist group has been writing slogans on the walls of

journalists’ houses and organising short protests which, while controversial, journalists described as “a very intense intervention” rather than an attack. Regardless of political orientation, the MFRR mission heard, “everyone disagrees with the media from a different direction, but they can all agree to disagree with us.” This was deemed unsurprising: “in all mainstream media, everything is covered from the government’s point of view. Of course that creates mistrust.”

At the beginning of 2021, the [Ministry of Civil Protection launched](#) the ‘National Plan for the Management of Public Outdoor Assemblies’, a plan for policing protests that raised concerns it could unduly limit journalists and photojournalists’ ability to report from within or nearby demonstrations. Under the stated aim of improving journalists’ safety and ensuring the

right to information while allowing for “unhindered conduct of police operations, especially in cases where there are incidents,” journalists under the plan were restricted to a demarcated area, approved beforehand by the police. Later on the evening of 21 January, the Ministry issued a statement to clarify the measures, stating that journalists and photojournalists would be allowed to move freely. The designated area would be a safe zone to use if they were in danger. The journalists with whom we met during the MFRR fact-finding mission said this was never implemented.

The situation in Greece does not meet any of the European Commission’s specific [recommendations](#) on the protection and safety of journalists during protests and demonstrations. These guidelines provide that the role of journalists during public gatherings should be recognised and that standard operating procedures and risk mitigation strategies that improve journalists’ safety should be established. These processes should be underpinned by dialogue between law enforcement and the journalistic community (Recs. 19-23).

In Greece, there is a lack of recognition at the political level of journalists’ role at protests, evidenced by the fact that there is no unequivocal condemnation of police violence against them. As one mission interlocutor put it: “if the minister always backs up the police, it won’t stop.” Furthermore, as concerns establishing effective operating procedures, the National Plan fails to meet the standards set out in the Recommendation and in any case, the protection that the plan was supposed to offer has not materialised, as it was never implemented.

At the operational level, the widespread nature of police violence and obstruction of reporting points to a lack of orders that prohibit such viol-

ence or prioritise facilitating journalists’ capacity to work safely and effectively. Such orders ought to be accompanied by appropriate policies that support them and capacity-building to ensure adequate implementation. The MFRR mission heard that as a matter of course, “there is no attempt to first try to de-escalate” and that police in the street “cannot control their own anger.”

It is evident that the lack of adequate disciplinary proceedings creates a climate in which there is no accountability for law enforcement personnel when they are aggressive toward reporters, obstruct their reporting or fail to adequately protect them in the protest context.

5. LEGAL THREATS

5.1 SLAPPs and criminal lawsuits

In 2021, the MFRR documented a SLAPP against small independent media outlet Alterthess and its journalist [Stavroula Poulimeni](#) by Efstathios Lialios, a gold mining executive. Lialios demanded EUR 100,000 in damages over an article published on 27 October 2020, which reported on his and his colleague’s first instance conviction for their role in systematic pollution. The Court of Appeal of Thessaloniki later confirmed the verdict. In his lawsuit, filed after the appeals court ruling and over one year after the publication of the impugned article, Lialios claims that his and his colleague’s names should not have been published and that his reputation had been damaged subsequently. The lawsuit is clearly aimed at silencing Alterthess and its journalist, rather than settling a legitimate dispute. The grounds are baseless: the trial was public, court reporting is standard journalistic practice, and publishing the names of those convicted was in the public interest

particularly given the seriousness of the environmental claims.

The SLAPP against Poulimeni is part of [a string of recent suits](#) by multinational companies and executives that have targeted independent journalists in Greece. For instance, journalist [Thodoris Chondrogiannos](#) was targeted by a recycling company and [Tasos Sarantis](#) was sued by a renewable energy company over their reporting. Besides lawsuits, pre-litigation legal threats also occur, for example against leading investigative journalism platforms [Solomon and Reporters United](#), who were served legal notice by non-governmental organisation Hopeten in December 2021. The outlets had emailed the NGO to seek its comment on a story they were researching concerning the millions of euros in public funding it had received since its establishment in 2021 to provide housing for asylum seekers. In response they received the legal notice, which questioned the journalistic credentials of the reporter who had sent the questions and made other inferences about the work of the two journalistic organisations.

During the MFRR mission, we heard different experiences from reporters regarding SLAPPs or other forms of abusive litigation. It is most problematic for reporters who report on corruption and for government-critical outlets. Some interlocutors noted the high costs associated with both legal defence, in cases where lawsuits are initiated, and with pre-publication legal review as a pre-emptive measure. Especially for small media outlets, this can constitute a significant burden on very limited resources.

Journalists in Greece also continue to face criminal charges related to their work. In March 2021, an arrest warrant was issued against Documento editor and journalist Kostas Vaxevanis for allegedly violating data privacy

rights. The warrant was valid for 24 hours and was not acted upon. Following Documento's publication of allegations that protesters had been beaten and threatened by officers of the Attica General Police Directorate (GADA), the outlet received a statement of denial signed by 22 GADA officers, which it published in full on its website, including the names of the signatories. Those signatories then filed a criminal lawsuit for publishing the names and allegedly violating their personal data, saying the publication has slandered and exposed them to online threats.

[Vaxevanis](#) and another (former) journalist, [Ioanna Papadakou](#), also face criminal conspiracy charges linked to their reporting on the [Novartis scandal](#), which concerns bribery, and the ["Lagarde list"](#), which concerns tax avoidance. The charges against the journalists are linked to a parliamentary inquiry launched in 2020 against former Deputy Justice Minister Dimitris Papangelopoulos (Syriza) over allegations he sought to incriminate political opponents during an investigation into the Novartis scandal. Papadakou appeared before the Special Ministerial Court on 25 January 2022. She has been charged with complicity in a conspiracy to allegedly fabricate a scandal against Novartis to extort money. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in 2020, the [company agreed to pay a settlement](#) with the US Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission, and acknowledged having made illegal payments to Greek healthcare providers and officials as part of a scheme to bribe employees of state-owned and -controlled hospitals to increase sales of Novartis-branded products. As concerns the ["Lagarde list"](#), a document that has been associated with tax avoidance and that contains the names of about 2000 Greek businesspeople, politicians and relatives who held HSBC accounts in Geneva, Papadakou is accused of de-

faming a Greek-Israeli businessman reportedly on the list. Furthermore, she is also accused of alleged membership in a criminal gang led by former Deputy Minister of Justice Dimitris Papangelopoulos and of having fabricated these scandals to politically benefit Syriza. Vaxevanis was summoned on charges of membership in a criminal organisation and conspiracy to expose an innocent person to prosecution or punishment; to extort a written or oral testimony of an accused or witness; and, to commit a breach of duty. The charges against him centre around the allegation that Documento was used to enable Papangelopoulos to falsely incriminate his political opponents. The severe nature of the charges, which carry heavy prison sentences, and their connection with investigative reporting on corruption, [raise concerns](#).

As a consequence of legal threats such as those described in this chapter, some of the journalists with whom the MFRR fact-finding mission met said that at times, they are forced to "tone things down" in their investigative reporting as a consequence. They noted that while they try to have pieces reviewed before publication, a lack of funding means this is not always possible.

5.2 "Fake news" amendment of the criminal code

On 11 November 2021, the Greek parliament passed [amendments to Article 191 of the Criminal Code](#) that had been advanced by the Ministry of Justice, which include penalties for disseminating "false news that is capable of causing concern or fear to the public or undermining public confidence in the national economy, the country's defence capacity or public health". It adds that "if the transaction was performed repeatedly through the press or online, the perpetrator is punished with imprisonment of at least six months and a fine." In such cases, the

publisher or owner of a media outlet responsible also potentially faces prison sentences and financial penalties.

At the time the amendment was proposed, the MFRR [expressed concern](#) about these changes to the law, which we deem problematic because of the vague definitions that are open to misuse. The Greek unions likewise [criticised](#) the amendment, warning it could lead to journalists being jailed or fined for reporting on matters in the public interest.

During the mission, we inquired among interlocutors about the chilling effect of this change in law and heard a range of opinions. Some indicated they considered it a very serious issue and said they were personally worried about the potential for abusive prosecution under the new provisions. Journalists who report on migration expressed particular concern in this regard. Others doubted the amendment would have any concrete impact as "laws need an apparatus to implement them." Nevertheless, they considered the change in law problematic as it is indicative of a certain direction of travel in the country, where the introduction of restrictive legislation is preferred over exploring other options to fight misinformation and disinformation. These could include strengthening the media's deontology and establishing independent watchdogs, among other things. One journalist in this regard said the amendment exemplifies the "immense need" of the government to control what is being written.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenges to the independence of the media and the safety of journalists are systemic in Greece. While the problems examined in this report are not unique to the country, their intensity is highly problematic and sets it apart from most other EU Member States, where journalists and media workers enjoy better protection and more opportunities to report critically on all matters in the public interest.

The overall result is that news that is inconvenient or unflattering for the government, which includes reporting on serious human rights violations, does not get reported in many outlets, creating a serious obstacle for the general public's access to information about current affairs and, subsequently, their informed participation in the democratic process. The current situation can only be understood by taking a long view, including the lasting impact of the economic crisis and historic problems with the rule of law and accountability of law enforcement agencies and personnel. In a sense, few of the problems journalists in Greece face are new. Yet, the crisis has deepened as the result of the New Democracy government's obsession with controlling the message, as we heard again and again in the course of this fact-finding mission.

The assassination of veteran crime reporter Giorgos Karaivaz in April 2021 has shone a spotlight on the deeper problems regarding the safety of journalists in the country. Despite the Greek authorities' promises of swift justice for the perpetrators and masterminds, progress in the investigation appears to be slow and a complete lack of transparency in this regard feeds doubts about the government's ability and willingness to protect the journalistic community. Ensuring impunity for this gruesome crime is

ΣΥΜΠΕΡΑΣΜΑΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΤΑΣΕΙΣ

Τα προβλήματα ως προς την ανεξαρτησία των μέσων ενημέρωσης και την ασφάλεια των δημοσιογράφων είναι συστημικά στην Ελλάδα. Αν και τα προβλήματα που εξετάζονται σε αυτήν την έκθεση δεν είναι αποκλειστικά ελληνικά, η έντασή τους είναι εξαιρετικά προβληματική και την διαφοροποιεί από τα περισσότερα άλλα κράτη μέλη της ΕΕ, όπου οι δημοσιογράφοι και οι εργαζόμενοι στα μέσα ενημέρωσης απολαμβάνουν καλύτερη προστασία και περισσότερες ευκαιρίες να κάνουν κριτική έρευνα για όλα τα θέματα του δημοσίου συμφέροντος.

Το συνολικό αποτέλεσμα είναι ότι οι ειδήσεις που είναι άβολες ή μη κολακευτικές για την κυβέρνηση, μερικές από τις οποίες περιλαμβάνουν ειδήσεις για σοβαρές παραβιάσεις των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων, δεν αναφέρονται σε πολλά από τα ΜΜΕ, δημιουργώντας έτσι ένα σοβαρό εμπόδιο στην πρόσβαση του κοινού σε πληροφορίες σχετικά με τα τρέχοντα θέματα και, στη συνέχεια, επηρεάζεται η ενημερωμένη συμμετοχή τους στη δημοκρατική διαδικασία. Η τρέχουσα κατάσταση μπορεί να γίνει κατανοητή μόνο με μια πιο σφαιρική εικόνα η οποία να συμπεριλαμβάνει το μακροχρόνιο αντίκτυπο της οικονομικής κρίσης και των προϋπαρχόντων προβλημάτων με την νομοθεσία αλλά και τη λογοδοσία των οργάνων επιβολής του νόμου. Κατά μια έννοια, λίγα από τα προβλήματα που αντιμετωπίζουν οι δημοσιογράφοι στην Ελλάδα είναι καινούργια. Ωστόσο, η κρίση έχει γίνει βαθύτερη ως αποτέλεσμα της εμμονής της κυβέρνησης της Νέας Δημοκρατίας με το να ελέγχει το μήνυμα, όπως ακούσαμε ξανά και ξανά κατά τη διάρκεια αυτής της διερευνητικής αποστολής.

Η δολοφονία του βετεράνου αστυνομικού συντάκτη Γιώργου Καραϊβάζ τον Απρίλιο του 2021

swiftly ended would be an important first step towards creating an enabling and safe environment for journalists to work.

The Greek media landscape shows high levels of political polarisation in a distorted market. The result is precarious working conditions for journalists and media workers, a skewing of the news in favour of a pro-government narrative and low public trust in the media. There is a clear need to create more transparency of government support to the sector and for the government to stop playing into the polarisation trend by treating pro-government, pro-opposition and neutral outlets equally and according to objective standards.

Unobstructed reporting on migration is increasingly difficult. To an extent, independent reporting on the issue has never been particularly welcomed and the rise in media freedom violations in this area of work is linked to the increasing intensity of the refugee crisis from 2015 onward, which led to more journalists focusing on the issue. However, the intensification of press freedom violations is also the specific consequence of the current government's politics and attitude, where it appears content to implement a highly-restrictive migration policy but suffers no public scrutiny of it. Subsequently, the MFRR found a number of highly problematic practices by the authorities are very prevalent, including obstructing journalists' access to refugees, the use of arbitrary arrest and deprivation of liberty as a tactic to harass them and interfere with their reporting and surveillance by state security agencies. In addition, journalists and media workers face physical attacks and harassment by private individuals, which is not met with an adequate response from the authorities.

έριξε φως στα βαθύτερα προβλήματα που σχετίζονται με την ασφάλεια των δημοσιογράφων στη χώρα. Παρά τις υποσχέσεις των ελληνικών αρχών για ταχεία επίλυση της έρευνας για τους δράστες και τους εγκέφαλους του εγκλήματος, η πρόοδος της έρευνας φαίνεται να είναι αργή και η παντελής έλλειψη διαφάνειας σε αυτό το θέμα τροφοδοτεί αμφιβολίες για την ικανότητα και την προθυμία της κυβέρνησης να προστατεύσει τη δημοσιογραφική κοινότητα. Η διασφάλιση της ταχείας άρσης της ατιμωρησίας αυτού του φρικτού εγκλήματος θα ήταν ένα σημαντικό πρώτο βήμα προς τη δημιουργία ενός ευνοϊκού και ασφαλούς περιβάλλοντος για να εργαστούν οι δημοσιογράφοι.

Το τοπίο των ελληνικών μέσων ενημέρωσης δείχνει υψηλά επίπεδα πολιτικής πόλωσης σε μια διαστρεβλωμένη αγορά. Το αποτέλεσμα είναι επισφαλείς συνθήκες εργασίας για τους δημοσιογράφους και τους εργαζόμενους στα μέσα ενημέρωσης, μια παραμόρφωση των ειδήσεων υπέρ μιας φιλοκυβερνητικής αφήγησης και χαμηλή εμπιστοσύνη του κοινού στα ΜΜΕ. Υπάρχει σαφής ανάγκη να υπάρξει περισσότερη διαφάνεια στην υποστήριξη που παρέχει η κυβέρνηση στον τομέα, όπως επίσης και να σταματήσει η κυβέρνηση να παίζει με την τάση πόλωσης και να αρχίσει να αντιμετωπίζει τα φιλοκυβερνητικά, τα αντιπολιτευόμενα και τα ουδέτερα μέσα ενημέρωσης ως ισότιμα με βάση αντικειμενικά κριτήρια.

Η ανεμπόδιστη δημοσιογραφική έρευνα σχετικά με το μεταναστευτικό γίνεται ολοένα και πιο δύσκολη. Ως ένα βαθμό, η ανεξάρτητη δημοσιογραφική έρευνα πάνω στο θέμα δεν ήταν ποτέ ιδιαίτερα ευπρόσδεκτη και η αύξηση των παραβιάσεων της ελευθερίας των μέσων ενημέρωσης σε αυτόν τον τομέα συνδέεται με την αυξανόμενη ένταση της προσφυγικής κρίσης από το 2015 και μετά, η οποία οδήγησε περισσότερους δημοσιογράφους να

When reporting on protests, journalists and media workers face aggression and intimidation from law enforcement and protesters. There is a lack of political will to ensure that they can safely report from demonstrations, which translates at the operational level to a lack of adequate protection. The situation in this regard fails to meet any of the recommendations issued by the European Commission to the Member States in September 2021.

Concerning reporting on migration and on protests, the lack of accountability for law enforcement personnel who are aggressive towards journalists or who fail to uphold their duty to protect them is deeply worrying. The lack of adequate disciplinary proceedings and oversight damages the rule of law.

Legal threats constitute a significant problem. On the one hand, the authorities' readiness to threaten prosecution on serious criminal charges including human trafficking and espionage, as well as the government's introduction of overly broad criminal provisions regarding "fake news", coupled with severe sanctions, constitutes a pervasive and deeply concerning problem. On the other hand, SLAPPs and criminal lawsuits, while not prevalent for all, undermine affected reporters' and outlets' ability to freely report on matters of public interest. The threat of costly lawsuits on already scarce resources can lead to self-censorship.

Despite this bleak picture, there are also reasons for optimism about the future of Greek media. For one, in this challenging landscape, there are a number of recently-established outlets and collaborative projects that deliver high-quality reporting on migration, corruption, human rights violations, social issues and other matters in the public interest. Moreover, a new generation of journalists is entering the field,

επικεντρωθούν στο θέμα. Ωστόσο, η εντατικοποίηση των παραβιάσεων της ελευθερίας του Τύπου είναι ταυτοχρόνως απόρροια της πολιτικής και της στάσης της σημερινής κυβέρνησης, η οποία φαίνεται ικανοποιημένη με την εφαρμογή μιας άκρως περιοριστικής μεταναστευτικής πολιτικής, αλλά δεν ανέχεται τον δημόσιο έλεγχο. Στη συνέχεια, το MFRR διαπίστωσε ότι ορισμένες εξαιρετικά προβληματικές πρακτικές από τα όργανα του νόμου είναι πολύ διαδεδομένες, συμπεριλαμβανομένης της παρεμπόδισης της πρόσβασης δημοσιογράφων στους πρόσφυγες, της χρήσης αυθαίρετων συλλήψεων και στέρησης της ελευθερίας ως τακτικής παρενόχλησής τους και παρέμβασης στην έρευνα αλλά και την παρακολούθησή τους από κρατικές υπηρεσίες ασφαλείας. Επιπλέον, οι δημοσιογράφοι και οι εργαζόμενοι στα μέσα ενημέρωσης αντιμετωπίζουν σωματικές επιθέσεις και παρενοχλήσεις από ιδιώτες, κάτι το οποίο δεν αντιμετωπίζεται αποτελεσματικά από τις αρχές.

Όταν καλύπτουν διαδηλώσεις, οι δημοσιογράφοι και οι εργαζόμενοι στα μέσα ενημέρωσης αντιμετωπίζουν επιθετικότητα και εκφοβισμό από τις αρχές και τους διαδηλωτές. Υπάρχει έλλειψη πολιτικής βούλησης για να διασφαλιστεί η ασφάλεια των δημοσιογράφων στις διαδηλώσεις, κάτι που μεταφράζεται, σε επιχειρησιακό επίπεδο, σε έλλειψη επαρκούς προστασίας. Η κατάσταση ως προς αυτό δεν πληροί καμία από τις συστάσεις που εξέδωσε η Ευρωπαϊκή Επιτροπή προς τα κράτη μέλη τον Σεπτέμβριο του 2021.

Όσον αφορά την δημοσιογραφική έρευνα για τη μετανάστευση και τις διαδηλώσεις, η έλλειψη λογοδοσίας από τους αστυνομικούς που είναι επιθετικοί προς τους δημοσιογράφους ή που αποτυγχάνουν να εκπληρώσουν το καθήκον τους το οποίο είναι να προστατεύσουν τους δημοσιογράφους, είναι βαθιά ανησυχητική. Η

who seem to be less tolerant of putting up with the faults of a system that finds itself in deep crisis.

Following its fact-finding mission and in light of these findings and conclusions, the MFRR issues the following recommendations:

To the Greek authorities:

- ▶ Ensure the perpetrators and masterminds behind the killing of Giorgos Karaivaz are swiftly brought to justice, while also improving the possibility for proportionate public scrutiny of the investigation.
- ▶ Ensure all attacks against media including physical attacks, intimidation and threats are properly investigated and prosecuted.
- ▶ Create transparency in the allocation of state advertising budgets and other financial support to the media and ensure it is distributed following objective criteria and not along partisan lines.
- ▶ Treat media outlets equally regardless of their political orientation and involve representatives of the journalistic community in any strategic decisions regarding their safety and press freedom, including the adoption of policing guidelines and pertinent legislative proposals.
- ▶ Send a clear political signal that underscores the importance of journalists' safety and the need to recognise the role of independent journalism in a democratic society, and actively work to create a conducive environment for reporting.
- ▶ Halt hostile rhetoric against journalists and refrain from discrediting, demeaning and vilify-

έλλειψη επαρκών πειθαρχικών διαδικασιών και εποπτείας βλάπτει το κράτος δικαίου.

Οι νομικές απειλές αποτελούν ένα σημαντικό πρόβλημα. Από τη μία πλευρά, η ετοιμότητα των αρχών να εξαπολύουν απειλές χρησιμοποιώντας σοβαρές ποινικές διώξεις, συμπεριλαμβανομένης της εμπορίας ανθρώπων και της κατασκοπείας, καθώς και η θέσπιση από την κυβέρνηση υπερβολικά ευρέων ποινικών διατάξεων σχετικά με τις «ψευδείς ειδήσεις», σε συνδυασμό με αυστηρές κυρώσεις, συνιστά ένα βαθιά ριζωμένο και ανησυχητικό πρόβλημα. Από την άλλη πλευρά, οι SLAPPs (Στρατηγικές αγωγές προς αποθάρρυνση της συμμετοχής του κοινού) και οι ποινικές αγωγές, αν και δεν είναι διαδεδομένες για όλους, υπονομεύουν την ικανότητα των θιγόμενων δημοσιογράφων και των μέσων ενημέρωσης να κάνουν την δουλειά τους ελεύθερα όσον αφορά θέματα του κοινού συμφέροντος. Η απειλή δαπανηρών αγωγών πάνω σε ήδη περιορισμένους πόρους μπορεί να οδηγήσει σε αυτολογοκρισία.

Παρά τη ζοφερή αυτή εικόνα, υπάρχουν και λόγοι αισιοδοξίας για το μέλλον των ελληνικών ΜΜΕ. Για παράδειγμα, σε αυτό το δύσκολο τοπίο, υπάρχει μια σειρά από πρόσφατα ιδρυθέντα ΜΜΕ και συνεργατικά πρότζεκτ που παρέχουν δημοσιογραφική κάλυψη υψηλής ποιότητας για τη μετανάστευση, τη διαφθορά, τις παραβιάσεις των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων, τα κοινωνικά ζητήματα και άλλα θέματα δημόσιου συμφέροντος. Επιπλέον, μια νέα γενιά δημοσιογράφων εισέρχεται στον κλάδο, οι οποίοι δείχνουν να είναι λιγότερο ανεκτικοί στα ελαττώματα ενός συστήματος που βρίσκεται σε βαθιά κρίση.

Μετά τη διερευνητική αποστολή του και υπό το φως αυτών των ευρημάτων και συμπερασμάτων, το MFRR εκδίδει τις ακόλουθες συστάσεις:

ing national and international reports and media, online and offline.

- ▶ Implement the European Commission Recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union and the Council of Europe Recommendation 2016(4) on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors.
- ▶ Address the lack of accountability for law enforcement personnel who attack or harass journalists and media workers or fail to protect them against harassment and violence by others, including by strengthening disciplinary mechanisms.
- ▶ Build the capacity of law enforcement personnel about the function and place of independent journalism and the police's role in ensuring that reporters and media workers can carry out this vital task.
- ▶ Ensure criminal charges are only brought against journalists where they are warranted. Threatening criminal prosecution on charges of human trafficking or espionage for legitimate and in fact much-needed independent and critical reporting on migration is wholly unacceptable.
- ▶ Amend the criminal code provision on “fake news” (Art. 191) to remove overly broad definitions that allow for its abusive application.
- ▶ Reform the legal framework to prevent Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) by private actors and offer support to the targets of such abusive litigation.

Προς τις ελληνικές αρχές:

- ▶ Βεβαιωθείτε ότι οι δράστες και οι εγκέφαλοι πίσω από τη δολοφονία του Γιώργου Καραϊβάζ θα οδηγηθούν γρήγορα στη δικαιοσύνη, βελτιώνοντας παράλληλα τη δυνατότητα για αναλογικό δημόσιο έλεγχο της έρευνας.
- ▶ Βεβαιωθείτε ότι όλες οι επιθέσεις κατά των μέσων ενημέρωσης, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των φυσικών επιθέσεων, του εκφοβισμού και των απειλών, διερευνώνται ικανοποιητικά και διώκονται όπως πρέπει.
- ▶ Πρέπει να υπάρχει διαφάνεια στην κατανομή των κρατικών διαφημιστικών προϋπολογισμών και άλλων οικονομικών ενισχύσεων στα μέσα ενημέρωσης και διασφάλιση της διανομής τους με αντικειμενικά κριτήρια και όχι με βάση κομματικές γραμμές.
- ▶ Να αντιμετωπίζετε τα μέσα ενημέρωσης ισότιμα, ανεξάρτητα από τον πολιτικό τους προσανατολισμό και να εμπλέκετε εκπροσώπους της δημοσιογραφικής κοινότητας σε οποιοδήποτε στρατηγικές αποφάσεις σχετικά με την ασφάλεια των δημοσιογράφων και την ελευθερία του τύπου, συμπεριλαμβανομένης της υιοθέτησης κατευθυντήριων γραμμών αστυνόμευσης και σχετικών νομοθετικών προτάσεων.
- ▶ Στείλτε ένα σαφές πολιτικό μήνυμα το οποίο να υπογραμμίζει τη σημασία της ασφάλειας των δημοσιογράφων και την ανάγκη αναγνώρισης του ρόλου της ανεξάρτητης δημοσιογραφίας σε μια δημοκρατική κοινωνία και εργαστείτε ενεργά για τη δημιουργία ενός ευνοϊκού περιβάλλοντος για τη δημοσιογραφία.
- ▶ Σταματήστε την εχθρική ρητορική κατά των δημοσιογράφων και αποφύγετε την απαξίωση, την υποτίμηση και τη δαιμονοποίηση των

To the European community including the institutions of the European Union and the other EU Member States:

- ▶ Demand justice for the assassination of Giorgos Karaivaz and keep the issue on the international agenda until all those responsible have been held to account.
- ▶ Reform refugee and asylum policy with a view to improving human rights protection and ensure these policies are implemented with sufficient transparency to allow for public scrutiny.
- ▶ Enact effective anti-SLAPP legislation at the EU level and support journalists and others who are targeted by these abusive lawsuits.
- ▶ Enact a Media Freedom Act that effectively supports media pluralism.

εγχώριων και διεθνών ρεπορτάζ και μέσων ενημέρωσης, είτε διαδικτυακά είτε έντυπα.

- ▶ Εφαρμόστε την σύσταση της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής για τη διασφάλιση της προστασίας, της ασφάλειας και της ενδυνάμωσης των δημοσιογράφων και άλλων εργαζομένων των μέσων ενημέρωσης στην Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση αλλά και τη Σύσταση 2016(4) του Συμβουλίου της Ευρώπης σχετικά με την προστασία της δημοσιογραφίας και την ασφάλεια των δημοσιογράφων και άλλων παραγόντων των μέσων ενημέρωσης.
- ▶ Αντιμετωπίστε την έλλειψη λογοδοσίας για το προσωπικό της αστυνομίας που επιτίθεται ή παρενοχλεί δημοσιογράφους και εργαζόμενους στα μέσα ενημέρωσης ή δεν τους προστατεύει από την παρενόχληση και τη βία από άλλους, με την ενίσχυση των πειθαρχικών μηχανισμών μεταξύ άλλων μέτρων.
- ▶ Καλλιεργήστε την ικανότητα των αρχών να καταλαβαίνουν τη λειτουργία και τη θέση της ανεξάρτητης δημοσιογραφίας και παράλληλα τον ρόλο της αστυνομίας στη διασφάλιση αυτού του ζωτικής σημασίας καθήκοντος που οι δημοσιογράφοι και οι εργαζόμενοι στα μέσα ενημέρωσης φέρουν εις πέρας.
- ▶ Βεβαιωθείτε ότι ασκούνται ποινικές διώξεις κατά δημοσιογράφων μόνο όπου δικαιολογούνται. Η απειλή ποινικής δίωξης με κατηγορίες όπως εμπόριο ανθρώπων ή κατασκοπεία όταν πρόκειται για μια νόμιμη και στην πραγματικότητα τόσο αναγκαία ανεξάρτητη και κριτική δημοσιογραφική έρευνα για τη μετανάστευση, είναι εντελώς απαράδεκτη.
- ▶ Τροποποιήστε τη διάταξη του ποινικού κώδικα για τις «ψευδείς ειδήσεις» (άρθρο 191) έτσι ώστε να αφαιρεθούν οι υπερβολικά ευρείς ορισμοί που επιτρέπουν την καταχρηστική εφαρμογή του.

- Μεταρρυθμίστε το νομικό πλαίσιο έτσι ώστε να αποτρέπεται η χρήση των SLAPPs (Στρατηγικών αγωγών προς αποθάρρυνση της συμμετοχής του κοινού) από ιδιωτικούς φορείς και να παρέχετε υποστήριξη στους στόχους τέτοιων καταχρηστικών αγωγών.

Προς την ευρωπαϊκή κοινότητα, συμπεριλαμβανομένων των θεσμικών οργάνων της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης και των άλλων κρατών μελών της ΕΕ:

- Απαιτήστε δικαιοσύνη για τη δολοφονία του Γιώργου Καραϊβάζ και διατηρήστε το θέμα στη διεθνή ατζέντα μέχρι να λογοδοτήσουν όλοι οι υπεύθυνοι.
- Μεταρρυθμίστε την πολιτική για τους πρόσφυγες και το άσυλο με σκοπό τη βελτίωση της προστασίας των ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων και την διασφάλιση της εφαρμογής αυτών των πολιτικών με επαρκή διαφάνεια ώστε να επιτρέπεται ο δημόσιος έλεγχος.
- Θεσπίστε αποτελεσματική νομοθεσία κατά των SLAPP (Στρατηγικών αγωγών προς αποθάρρυνση της συμμετοχής του κοινού) σε επίπεδο ΕΕ και υποστηρίξτε τους δημοσιογράφους και όποιους άλλους στοχοποιούνται από αυτές τις καταχρηστικές αγωγές.
- Θεσπίστε έναν νόμο για την ελευθερία των μέσων ενημέρωσης που να υποστηρίζει αποτελεσματικά τον πλουραλισμό των μέσων ενημέρωσης.



MEDIA FREEDOM RAPID RESPONSE

Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) tracks, monitors and responds to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and Candidate Countries. This project provides legal and practical support, public advocacy and information to protect journalists and media workers. The MFRR is organised by an consortium led by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) with ARTICLE 19, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), the Institute for Applied Informatics at the University of Leipzig (InfAI), International Press Institute (IPI) and CCI/Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT). The project is co-funded by the European Commission.

www.mfrr.eu

