



MEDIA FREEDOM RAPID RESPONSE

Legal Support for Journalists, Media Workers and Whistleblowers

Too often journalists and media workers are threatened with legal action, solely for doing their job. This can include threats of defamation actions, alleged violations of privacy laws, and overly restricted media and press laws. This is a distinct threat to press and media freedom and so the MFRR offers paid support for legal representation (for lawyer's and court's fees), opinion writing and advice. As well as that, the MFRR offers support for legal reform movements to challenge laws that targets press and media freedom.

Support offers

Media professionals in need and organisations advocating for better legislation can apply for support from the MFRR for the following:

GENERAL GUIDANCE

For information as to options, risks and general guidance on navigating existing or possible legal threats

ACCESS TO LEGAL ADVICE

Legal advice can be secured for relevant law and strategies for litigation or preparation

ACCESS TO EXPERTISE

Expertise can include experts in policy and law-making, as part of reform or legislative processes

ENGAGEMENT IN LITIGATION

This includes financially supporting access to legal representation in both national and international litigation (directly or indirectly)

What is covered

Legal support offered through the MFRR covers a range of situations. Every case is scrutinized on its own details by ECPMF and the Legal Affairs Committee, with support tailored to best support the individual journalist or whistleblower speaking to the media. While there is no threshold that is required to be met to qualify, in terms of the nature of the threat, legal support has been delivered in the following circumstances:

- Funds (between €1,000 and €5,000 per case) to secure legal representation if you, your colleagues or your outlet is threatened with a lawsuit, such as defamation, alleged breaches of privacy, source and journalistic material protection, whistleblowing, or bullying and harassment

- Commissioning legal analysis or opinions based on key laws, reforms or legislative changes related to free expression and media freedom
- Ability to access legal guidance to enable journalists, media workers and outlets to plan work and avoid undue legal threats
- To contribute legal analysis and advice for public engagement campaigns around law reform. This includes work to amend, create or repeal legislation that strengthen free expression and press freedom.

What is not covered

Due to pressures on the fund and complexity around cases, this fund cannot be used for labour disputes or for support of speech that is considered by the Legal Affairs Committee to be hate speech or inciting violence. In very limited cases, we can support cases where the journalist or media worker instigated the legal action, but this will be determined and scrutinised on a case-by-case basis by the Legal Affairs Committee.

Persons/organisations who might be eligible to apply

- Working or based within EU Member States or Candidate Countries
- Employed or freelance journalists
- Freedom of expression activists or advocates
- Bloggers
- Organisations supporting the right to freedom of expression
- Whistleblowers who have spoken to or released documents to the media

To Apply

You can access support through our form: <https://www.ecpmf.eu/support-programmes/legal-support/>

For full criteria related to the fund: https://www.ecpmf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how_to_apply_for_legal_support.pdf

For more information please contact legal@ecpmf.eu

Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR) is an Europe-wide mechanism, which 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.mfr.eu

