**MDM PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS AGAINST (ONLINE) INTIMIDATION**

AUSTRIA

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment**

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 3 points**

*Journalists generally rely on support and protection by their employers in case of harassment.*

Harassment rarely happens in Austria, online and offline. Over the last decade, few cases of harassment or online shitstorms happened, according to our respondents of leading news media. Thus, media companies generally have no special legal division in place to protect their journalists. However, if such insults happen, media companies employ specialized lawyers to defend the rights of journalists and help preventing harm from them. This applies both online and offline, and no specific safeguards or provisions are in place for online cases. In the case of ORF, the management has the obligation to defend its journalists in case of any assault (§ 4 ORF Redakteursstatut).

The general level of support is considered fair and sufficient by our journalist respondents.

AUSTRALIA

(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 1 point

*Online harassment has become a mainstay of being a journalist online. Despite its implications for journalists, little has been done to stem the tide.*

While women appear to be targeted disproportionately for harassment online (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, 2019), journalists broadly report aggression appearing in their social media, news commenting, and even email (Koskie, 2018; Wolfgang, 2018). While some journalists and editors have expressed a desire to engage with the audience, the hostility presents a difficult obstacle (Anderson, Brossard, Scheufele, Xenos, & Ladwig, 2014). Nevertheless, news organisations’ initiatives to protect journalists – and their own reputations – have seen inconsistent results (Domingo, 2014; Løvlie, Ihlebæk, & Larsson, 2017). Meanwhile, journalists and news organisations are struggling to balance protections for their journalists, as well as their readers and sources, from hostility while upholding their historic support for freedom of speech (Koskie, 2018).

## BELGIUM

## (F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment

**2 points**

*Flemish journalists mention a rise of (online) harassment and intimidation, but knowledge on what to do against this and where to go to file complaints are limited.*

In a nation-wide 2018 [survey](https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8611443/file/8611447.pdf" \o "https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8611443/file/8611447.pdf), 15.3% of Flemish journalists indicated having experienced harassment or intimidation in their function as a journalist by political sources, advertisers, companies, media publishers and citizens, mostly about their gender (46.7% of said 15.3%), age (30.3%), ethnicity (5.7%) and sexual orientation (2.5%). Notably, female journalists report having experienced this much more regarding their gender than their male counterparts (67.2% vs just 4.3%) (*Profiel van de Belgische journalist*, 2018).

Most of the interviewed journalists said that they have followed (mandatory) trainings for how to respond to physical, verbal and online abuse and aggression, with varying degrees of satisfaction in terms of use and purpose. However, some of the interviewees indicated that instances with abuse and/or aggression are rising as a part of their daily work. None of the interviewed journalists were able to mention specialised legal services at hand provided by their employers in the case of (online) harassment, indicating that knowledge on what to do and where to go is limited. In the same vein, no specific entities to address instances of gender-based harassment were reported.

No concrete examples or cases demonstrating the degree to which leading news media provide support could be given.

CANADA

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment**

**Score: 2**

***No specific laws protect Canadian journalists against online harassment. News organizations apply an ad hoc approach to helping their journalists when they become the target of online trolls.***

A 2019 survey of journalists conducted by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) suggests worry about becoming an online target because of their need to use social media for work (see Figure Eight). Seven in ten Canadian journalists called online harassment, including threats of violence or harm, as the biggest threat they face. Female journalists, in particular, face a range of harassment, including death threats, are and unsolicited sexual messages through social media.  Male journalists interviewed for this study cited “nightmare stuff” they have heard from their female colleagues.

**Biggest threats to Canadian journalists’ safety**

(see Westcott, 2019)

 Canada’s criminal code does not address online harassment of journalists specifically.  To date, Canada’s legal system has not dealt with cases involving harassment or disinformation campaigns aimed at journalists.  An Ontario case in 2016 found a man not guilty of using the Internet to harass a pair of feminist activists (Csanady, 2016).

Most of the journalists and newsroom leaders interviewed for this study expressed concern about online harassment. They described it as a real problem. Yet, most journalists and newsroom leaders detailed ad hoc procedures aimed at protecting journalists who are targeted online. Some journalists described generic policies and training aimed at protecting them from online harassment. A number of interviewees described newsroom bosses as being supportive and understanding when harassment occurs. Union officials who represent Canadian journalists believe news organizations need to do more to protect journalists.

SWITZERLAND

F11 Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 2020: 2 POINTS

*Online harassment of journalists became a problem in the last years, but Swiss journalists are protected by assistance, e.g. by specialized internal (legal) centres.*

Heinz Bonfadelli

In the last years, critiques, threats and hate speeches, or even personal and physical harassment of media journalists have increased in most countries, and in Switzerland too, not at least by rude persons in the Social Media, but by authoritarian politicians like U.S. President Donald Trump as well. In Germany, e.g. 60 percent of 322 interviewed journalists reported of such incidents in 2019 (Hildebrand 2020). And the Corona crisis of 2020 also was used by autocratic regimes to restrict press and media freedom. For this reason, the editors in chief and the journalists have been asked in our study, how they are protected against this type of (online) harassment by their editorial offices and by their publishing companies.

In general, the situation in Switzerland seems to be so far not a big problem, but there have been obviously at least two publicly known cases of personal attacks, one at the chief-editor of the political weekly magazine *Weltwoche* and the other at a journalist of *Radio Télévision Suisse (RTS)* in Geneva, both in 2019. And some other incidents of cyberstalking have been reported by our interviewed journalists, like an offense of a female journalist by the Albanian community.

It was mentioned in our interviews, that such incidents would be discussed usually with the superiors of the directly concerned journalists, and they would provide assistance. Furthermore, most print media have a legal department or at least a specialized service dealing with the Social Media. And on the national level there exists a *centre for complaints by the Swiss Press Council*. To conclude, at least at the moment, the personal harassment of journalists in Switzerland seems not to be a major problem (so far), compared to staff reductions in most of the editorial offices, especially during the Corona crisis in spring 2020.

CHILE

(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment

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| **Protection of journalists against (online) harassment                                                         1 Point**  *The protection of journalists is irregular, depending on each individual employer and on the context.* |

Chile is in 51st place out of 179 in the Freedom Index from Reporters without Borders, as of 2020. This index states that the journalists in the country are “vulnerable” (RSF, 2020), both regarding the protection of their sources, and when reporting certain issues like corruption cases or the Mapuche conflict.

This report adds that in 2019, after the social upheaval, several journalists were targets of attacks when covering the manifestations. The interviewed editors and journalists corroborate they implemented measures such as reporting with mobile phones instead of microphones and cameras, without identifications linked to their media, and parking their cars away from the events.

“There were a lot of aggressions against us since the protests started. There were colleagues who were feeling very badly, and because of this, the medium organized workshops with psychologists. There were cathartic moments in the team chat group. Some of them were very affected by the comments they received in social media”, states one journalist.

The way to react to these attacks, whether they happen in person or online, is different for each medium. As mentioned in F8, the same happens with sexual harassment, the decisions to back up the journalists depend on the employers and higher command positions. A journalist comments, regarding sources that call to criticize the coverage: “Many times you do no find out about this, but the editors defend you”.

In some media houses, when the work of one journalist is in question, the medium publishes other content that backs up the previous work. In other cases, if they are well-known journalists, the medium gives them space to defend themselves on air or in the paper; the medium may simply not react; or the journalist could do it through their personal social media accounts.

One of the interviewed editors tells that she has taken special care to back up her journalists, because when she was a reporter she had the experience of being attacked on social media and by sources and felt she did not receive the support needed: “Other journalists defended me personally”. Another editor, as the command position, considers that the support is in taking no part on the criticism to the journalist. Meanwhile, another editor reflects on this and comments: “Maybe we should have to start taking care”.

Two editors mention that they see zero contribution on making comments available on their websites and use the same adjective for them: “vicious”, which is why they have disabled that section. One of them says: “We used to have a journalist dedicated to moderating comments, but a few years ago we decided to close them”. There is also consensus from journalists and editors on their view that Colegio de Periodistas, under their current administration, is an entity that attacks them rather than protects them.

GERMANY

(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment        2 points**

*Journalists can rely on their employers in such cases, but the news media organizations decide on the individual case, if they like to provide assistance.*

In Germany, online harassment in the sense of hate speech or shitstorms against journalists is increasing rapidly. A recent survey among 322 journalists of the University of Bielefeld and the special service *Mediendienst Integration* among journalists revealed that over 60% of the respondents had been harassed online during the last 12 months and that shitstorms at social media like Twitter belong to their daily routine (Zick et al. 2020). Compared to 2017 figures rose 20% and the researchers observe a radicalization of assaults, mainly from the extreme right (Zick et al. 2017). 16% of the Journalists reported offences or even death threats and also physical assaults while doing their work. Particularly women are in the focus of online hate, as a female editor-in-chief indicates.

“You have hundreds of comments on some topics within minutes. And that is when you write as a woman, and even more so when you have an immigrant background [...] that is really ugly. There is practically no topic that I can write about [...] where you don&apos;t get sexist comments, no matter what you write about.[…] and here we have to protect our colleagues.” Claudia Neuhaus, a well-known football reporter in the public service TV-provider ZDF, experienced a sexist shitstorm just because she presented the football world cup for men in 2018 (Bau 2018). Also for *ZDF*-presenter Dunja Hayali shitstorms via Twitter are part of her daily life. Hayali unifies in herself various diversity characteristics and speaks out against hate, what makes her an obvious target to right-wing extremists. She gets support by the legal department of the *ZDF* and personally copes by imitating assaulters and sometimes visits them at home with a camera-team to talk about their offence and her feelings about it.

“We have become more aware of the problems, we are also working with the police […]. However, I have to say that I am shaken by the low clarification rate by the police,” is the observation of a colleague of her.

WDR-investigative journalist Georg Restle received a death threat via mail which according to Police is linked to the extreme-right murderer of a politician (Huber 2019). Also, journalists asserted to a minority are constantly under threat.

“Our moderator […] is black and […] he is latently exposed to [shitstorms]. After this [...] broadcast he was affected by a huge shitstorm and also here [...] on the street. He is a freelance, but of course we protect him. […] The legal department says it can cost 3.000 or maybe 50.000 €. But we protect him, no matter what.”

In the face of these alarming developments the respondents report also a high amount of shitstorms and hate speech online against staff, particularly women are confronted by sexist hate. Not all media organisations have special units to support journalists. *Der Spiegel* and *Stern* make an effort to establish internal units or ombudspersons. Respondents point out that the organisations provide psychological and legal aid, if the case can clearly be associated with work. However, no relevant provisions in work contracts are in place and there seems to be a grey zone of assaults between private and work life where the companies may be reluctant to help. On the other hand, the detection-rate of the law-enforcement agencies is very low.

**DENMARK**

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment      3 points**

*There is increasing awareness for the issue of online harassment, and internal policies to address the issue are in place – however not always well-implemented in practice. The trade union provides an ample level of assistance and guidance.*

Our interviewees state that online harassment is an increasing problem, especially but not exclusively for female reporters. Several Danish media have updated policies dealing with cyber harassment. One study conducted in 2018 suggests however that these policies have not yet been fully translated into solid procedures for handling incidents of online harassment. Consequently, journalists may fail to report these incidents and not all incidents are necessarily reported to the police (Østergaard, 2019). All interviewees find that when a journalist experiences and reports online harassment or other types of harassment, the editors are there to help and have the resources to do so. Moreover, Journalistforbundet, the trade union for Journalists, provides ample guidelines and assistance for its members, including freelance journalists, such as a 24/7 emergency phone number, and has in 2019 founded a “digital self-defense group” for journalists (Therkildsen, 2019).

FINLAND

### (F11 NEW) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 3 points

*All the largest news media in Finland have their own internal protocols and guidelines for protecting their journalists against external interference and harassment and freelancers may get help from a special fund. Online harassment is also going to be criminalized.*

Despite top rankings in the World Press Freedom Index ever since it was established in 2002, external interference of journalists is by no means a new phenomenon in Finland. However, online harassment and intimidation of journalists covering the aftermaths of the refugee crisis and immigration became a public concern in 2016 after several cases had been reported in the media. One exceptional case was the knife assault on Turku market square in March 2018 as described by the editor-in-chief of *Turun Sanomat (TS)*:

Moderation is necessary [online], a few years ago when the Turku knife assault happened it was a huge effort, 500-1000 daily posts needed to be handled. Two people did it on the side of their main task. Since two years ago the commentators must register themselves. That helped the situation, now the amount of comments can be handled well … After the knife attack there were 200 hate mails in one month, mostly from the ‘racists’ but also from the ‘suvakit’ [anti-racists].  If our reporter is harassed, he does not hesitate to mention it. But there is a serious risk for self-censorship, where a reporter does not have the strength to write a story because of the expected shitstorm that will follow (TS editor-in-chief 2020).

Later in the same year, there was also a very exceptional conflict between the prime minister of Finland and public broadcaster Yle (see F5 and F6). (Hiltunen 2018)

A study conducted in 2017 revealed that although severe interference was rare, lower lever external interference of journalists was even more common it had been expected. For example, 60% of respondents had experienced verbal abuse in their work and 15% faced it regularly (Hiltunen 2018). According to the editor in-chiefs of the leading news media, both male and female journalists have been targeted especially online, but female reporters have been harassed more often and more seriously.

All the largest news media in Finland have by now created their own internal protocols and guidelines for protecting their journalists against external interference and harassment. All of them are also ready to take legal action and give the most serious cases to the police. Small and local media do not necessarily have their own guidelines yet, but they can utilize the public version of *Yle* *guidelines for safer interaction* released in early 2020. (Harvia and Naskali 2020).

At the moment, online shaming, harassment or illegal threats are not crimes as such, but the Finnish government is going to change the situation by reforming the existing legislation. This would provide better protection not only for the police, prosecutors and judges but also for example nurses, paramedics and professional journalists (see C2).

Besides company-specific policies and practices for protecting permanently employed journalists from harassment, a special Support Fund of Journalistswas established in 2019 to help especially Finnish freelancers. During its first year of operation the fund altogether 41 000 euros as four support grants covering for example loss of income, moving expenses and crisis therapy (Jokes 2020).

**GREECE**

**F11. Protection of journalists against (online) harassment**

**How do leading news media support and protect their journalists in case of harassment, in particular online?**

**2 Credits:** Journalists can rely on their employers in such cases, but cost or other reasons sometimes compromise the assistance provided by news media organizations.

**Summary:   
In case of harassment the main type of support offered to journalists from their media organizations is legal support. However, not all journalists feel adequately protected or there are cases where they felt no level of support towards them, especially in cases of women journalists.**

One of the editors-in-chief in our research describes how their organization supported them when they received threats:

“I have been threatened and I have called the legal service to the Cybercrime Division and we have done what we needed to do. On the threat level, on the level of comments each and everyone says whatever he/she wants. If someone is stalking you, then yes we can use our legal service. Thank god they are here and we have enough to go and get the job done”.

Another editor-in-chief also mentions how his/her organization supported journalists that were actually attacked:

“A few years ago, we had a reporter that was assaulted by a police officer during a protest. He was hurt so bad that he had to be taken to the hospital. Someone from the website went with him to the hospital […] and he was with him. Whatever he needed the website was there for him, because that is what needed to be done”.

But the main type of support offered to journalists from their organizations is legal support, as one of the editors-in-chief mentions: “When this starts becoming intimidating or you see someone obsessed and is trying to hack you, for example, or is sending threatening letters, that’s where the legal division of the organization steps in and protects you again”.

However, not all journalists feel adequately protected, as in the case of a woman editor-in-chief, who felt that her organization did not support her as much as they could have done it: “Limited support I would say. I had a bad example. I was attacked by members of the *Golden Dawn* party and I didn’t feel like my newspaper supported me especially. I think it is an issue of sensibility, they probably felt that I did not need support”.

Therefore, it can be concluded that in most cases of harassment Greek journalists receive different forms of protection and support from their media organizations.

HONG KONG

*F11: Protection of journalists against (online) harassment                       1* points

*Journalists generally rely on the support and protection of their employers in cases of harassment. The Hong Kong Journalists Association and other news worker groups have made a joint declaration against police harassment of journalists.*

Harassment of Hong Kong journalists was an exception in the past, but both physical and verbal harassment have occurred frequently since the anti-government movement broke out in June 2019. Journalists rely on the support and protection of their employers, the HKJA and labor unions.

All of the respondents mentioned that their media companies had invested more in safety gear to protect their journalists, with one company even buying bulletproof jackets. The editorial departments of some media outlets condemned the police for brutality against their reporters. Some respondents mentioned that their management teams promised to discuss police harassment with the police at the managerial level, and had even boycotted police press conferences. Many interviewees believed that there was nothing more their organizations could do for them, although a few have urged their senior colleagues to speak out for them.

At the same time, the HKJA and other news worker groups have issued numerous statements and written an open letter to the HKSAR Chief Executive urging the police to stop the harassment of reporters. Reporters also protested against police brutality at a police press conference. However, there has been no reduction in police brutality throughout the continuing protests.

Some respondents mentioned that their companies had reminded their staff about the need to ensure the privacy of their social media accounts to avoid doxing. Some outlets had also avoided the use of by-lines on articles over sensitive issues or chosen not to show reporters’ faces on camera to prevent their identities being disclosed. *Apple Daily* successfully applied for a court order to protect their journalists from doxing activities.

ICELAND

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment**

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 2 points**

*Journalists can usually rely on support and protection by their employers in case of harassment, but guidelines are often lacking.*

In Iceland, overt threats and harassment of journalists are rare, but do happen occasionally in a mild and non-violent manner. Usually in the form of a phone call, email or posts and comments on social media. According to the journalists interviewed, none of them had experienced any serious threats but several had received some unfriendly comments offline and online, particularly the female journalists. On some occasions these had been discussed with their boss, who had offered support. The editors interviewed mentioned that their outlet would offer support to the journalist in case of harassment and most discussed this in relation to contacting the police. The interviews illustrated that the public service broadcaster, RÚV*,* and the private media house, Sýn, appeared to have the clearest structure in case journalists need protection.

ITALY

**Harassment and abuse in the newsroom - see F11**

**Good practices**

As stated above, all the Italian media unions - FNSI (National Federation of the Press), USIGRAI (RAI internal union) and ODG (Ordine dei Giornalisti) and Assostampa - have an **Equal Opportunity Commission/Committee**. In addition, at the sub-national level, most of the Journalists’ associations have an Equal Opportunities Commission. This is a positive development and it would be important to investigate their capacity to make change happen and influence professional practices; yet no systematic study has been conducted on their activities and impact.

Civic networks and groups are also active in conducting advocacy to foster the principles and goals of the Beijing PfA Section J, including: [Pari o Dispare](http://pariodispare.org" \o "http://pariodispare.org), the Observatory on Gender Discrimination; [SNOQ](http://www.senonoraquando.eu" \o "http://www.senonoraquando.eu), a movement which attempts to improve the social position of women in Italy; [Donne in Quota](https://www.donneinquota.org" \o "https://www.donneinquota.org), a civic organisation that fosters women’s representation in society and politics. For instance in May 2020, Noi rete donne, Donne in quota, Rete per la parità and GiULiA Globalist and social media campaign (#datecivoce) developed a networked exposure of the RAI public service’s non-responsiveness to existing normative frameworks in the appointment of director of channels and newscasts.

Addressing a gap in the literature concerning gender based violence against journalists, a research project titled **‘ADVOOCATE - Addressing visual imagery in online harassment and/or offline abuse against women (photo-) journalists’** (ongoing 2019-2021, University of Padova) explores the complex interplay between online harassment and offline aggressive behaviour and physical attacks of female (photo-) journalists. Visual imagery has increasingly become a powerful tool for human rights practice, but also for harassment and abuse against women media professionals in the digital sphere. The project takes into consideration all such aspects together and in their interconnections.

Addressing both organisational matters and media content in relation to gender in/equalities is a major EU-funded project – **Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries** (AGEMI, 2017-2019) – co-coordinated by the University of Padova. The project aimed at disseminating good practices to foster women’s empowerment in the media and fostering relationships between media and journalism students and media practitioners, thus bridging the transition from education to employment. AGEMI has created a set of unprecedented resources: a Resources Bank of global good practices; a series of thematic learning units with video lectures and interviews with experts; an APP for mobile to conduct media monitoring activities. All such resources are translated in English, French and Spanish and are openly accessible online at: [www.agemi-eu.org](http://www.agemi-eu.org" \o "http://www.agemi-eu.org).

### (F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment                                          1 point

***Italy features as the first country in Europe where journalists’ safety is threatened, through online harassment, personal assaults, but most of all intimidation, often connected to reporting activities on organized crime and mafia issues. No specific protection mechanisms have been adopted by the newsrooms against online harassment or threats apart from the legal guardianship in the exercise of the journalistic profession. No mechanisms is in place to protect women professionals from off-line (in the field and in the newsroom) and online harassment.***

**Protection of journalists against (online) harassment**

The overall situation of journalists in the country is dangerous and this represents a huge challenge to media professionals’ freedom of expression: according to the 2018 Index on Censorship and the European Center for Press and Media Freedom (2018, see also [Mapping Media Freedom](https://mappingmediafreedom.org/index.php/category/italy/" \o "https://mappingmediafreedom.org/index.php/category/italy/)), Italy features as the first country in Europe where journalists’ safety is threatened, with reported 83 cases between 2014 and 2018, including online harassment, personal assaults, but most of all intimidation, often connected to reporting activities on mafia issues. At present, about 20 journalists are living under round-the-clock police protection as indicated by the [2020 World Press Freedom Index](https://rsf.org/en/italy" \o "https://rsf.org/en/italy). Although Italy scored two points higher in comparison to the year before, taking the 41st position in the index, attacks against journalists are still on the rise, particularly in the Lazio and other Southern regions of Italy.

Crucial to reporting cases of harassment and threats, and to Raise awareness on the issue, is the work of [Ossigeno per l&apos;informazione](https://www.ossigeno.info" \o "https://www.ossigeno.info), an association which monitors press freedom in Italy.

**Women’s freedom of expression, gender-based violence and harassment in newsroom**

Women’s freedom of expression is also challenged by acts of violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV), particularly against women working in the media sector (see [International Federation of Journalists](https://www.iwmf.org/" \o "https://www.iwmf.org/) study 2018; and global surveys conducted by the [International Women’s Media Foundation](https://www.iwmf.org/" \o "https://www.iwmf.org/) IWMF 2018).

According to the association ([Ossigeno 2019](https://www.ossigeno.info/giornaliste-minacciate-in-italia-i-dati-di-ossigeno/" \o "https://www.ossigeno.info/giornaliste-minacciate-in-italia-i-dati-di-ossigeno/)) between 2014 and 2019 the number of Italian women journalists that have received threats was 358 (21% of all professional journalists whose cases have been identified, which are nevertheless only a minor segment of a much larger phenomenon). Between 2015 and 2019, women journalists threatened in Italy were 21% of 1,706 reporters who have suffered attacks and violence. The percentage of women journalists threatened was already at 24% in the first three months of 2019: out of a total of 73 threatened, 18 are women (Della Morte, 2019).

Women journalists are therefore exposed to a double threat: as women and as professionals. Only in 2017, 106 women journalists have received sexist insults, threats (including sexual) and intimidations. Well known are the cases of Marilena Natale, who was assigned police protection due to threats received by a mafia organisation, and of Lidia De Angelis who was physically assaulted in the street while performing her job. The most dangerous area for women media professionals are the Lazio region (34% of reported cases) followed by the Southern regions of Puglia, Calabria and Campania.

Since 2013, the femicide commission of the Italian Senate of the republic has been active. During this time a significant number of hearings have been addressed to monitor information and media professionals sector ([http://www.senato.it/leg/18/BGT/Schede/Commissioni/0-00141.htm](http://www.senato.it/leg/18/BGT/Schede/Commissioni/0-00141.htm" \o "http://www.senato.it/leg/18/BGT/Schede/Commissioni/0-00141.htm)).

From the interviews conducted with members of the Equality Commissions of OdG, FNSI and Assostampa what emerges as a particularly worrisome and generalised situation whereby women, who are exposed to **acts of abuse and harassment** - including physical, psychological, economic, as per the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe 2010) - do not denounce/make public such acts.

In Italy, the National Federation of the Italian Press ([Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana](https://www.fnsi.it/" \o "https://www.fnsi.it/)- FNSI 2019) in collaboration with other media bodies, under supervision of statistician Linda L. Sabbadini, promoted the first quantitative study carried out in the country to assess the status of sexual violence and harassment of women journalists. The sample included 1,132 female professionals, working in radio, TV, news agency, and print press. The results indicate that 85% of female journalists interviewed had experienced some form of sexual harassment or abuse during the lifespan of their professional careers; 42.2% have experienced these abuses in the last 12 months. These striking figures show that Italian journalism has a sexual violence problem. The available data only concerns offline experiences of abuse: as of today there are no data on online harassment and abuse of women media professionals working in the country. Nor are there initiatives or mechanisms to address the problem by news organisations: the interviews conducted for the MDM project indicate that the issue is overlooked and there is wide resistance in denouncing instances of harassment by individual women journalists.

In the same direction goes a research project conducted at the University of Padova ‘ADVOOCATE - Addressing visual imagery in online harassment and/or offline abuse against women (photo-) journalists’ (2019-2021). The project explores the complex interplay between online harassment and offline aggressive behaviour and physical attacks of female (photo -) journalists and will carry out part of its activities (national survey and dissemination) in collaboration with the CPO of the FNSI. Developing guidelines for comprehensive policies - aims at collecting relevant data and provide an evidence-based understanding of the situation in the country, particularly on three different types of abuses: gender-based hate speech, image-based abuse, and digital attacks. Furthermore, in partnership with the [SPRITZ](https://spritz.math.unipd.it/index.html" \o "https://spritz.math.unipd.it/index.html) (Security & Privacy) research group, the same project is currently retrieving and analysing data from Twitter to explore positive and negative engagements between Twitter users and male and female Italian journalists.

A meaningful development has been, in recent years, the collaboration of the above mentioned Commissions with women professional associations, such as GiULiA Globalist, in the organisation of training opportunities, in joining forces to highlight and denounce ongoing problematic issues and in the elaboration and dissemination of tools to address specific problems. [GiULiA giornaliste](https://giulia.globalist.it" \o "https://giulia.globalist.it) has also started a collaboration with [VOX: Italian Observatory](http://www.voxdiritti.it" \o "http://www.voxdiritti.it) on fundamental rights to develop a project to monitor hate speech against women in the media. The theme was also addressed in the fourth edition of the *[Forum of women journalists of the Mediterranean area](https://giornaliste.org/en/home-english/" \o "https://giornaliste.org/en/home-english/)* (Bari, November, 2019) where women professionals from across the Mediterranean region gathered with advocates and researchers. Beside discussing the status of women in the Mediterranean region, Italian journalists also debated the challenges and lack of support from the leading news media in the country, which increase their vulnerability in reporting on mafia issues in the regions of Lazio and Puglia.

**Institutional responses and newsroom practices**

According to the journalists’ interviewed, **no specific protection mechanism has been adopted by the newsrooms against online harassments or threats apart from the legal guardianship in the exercise of the journalistic profession**. With regard to the attacks received via social media, a journalist from *Sky Tg24* claims: «There is no support policy active in this sense. […]. If it happens, it is a matter that is independently managed by you with the platform». On the same point, a journalist from *Repubblica*: «We have full legal coverage with respect to menaces, for example, or libel lawsuits. It is normal. No other kinds of protection are provided».  As far as *Repubblica* and *l’Espresso* (GEDI group) are concerned, many journalists – such as Federica Angeli, Salvo Palazzolo, Lirio Abate, Paolo Berizzi and the most known Roberto Saviano – received a personal protection measure after being menaced by organised crime or extremist political movements: «Many police agents protect threatened colleagues – adds the journalist from *Repubblica* – but we talk about threats other than stalking or the insult of "keyboard lions"». In this regard, *Repubblica’s* editor-in-chief, speaks about the measures undertaken: «There is our solidarity with those who are victims of this type of action […], but then there is the support of the institutions, the support of the police when it becomes necessary. The management is committed to ensuring that our most exposed journalists are always protected». In general, the informal support from the colleagues as well as, in more critical cases, the stances of the editorial board and the unions are commonly prevalent facing harassment, as underlined by all journalists interviewed.

It should be highlighted that in recent years – and possibly following the spead of the #MeeToo movement - some Italian leading media have adopted specific provisions to specifically address cases of gender-based discrimination and harassment. In 2017, public service broadcasting RAI renewed its norms against harassment in the workplace, banning any verbal or physical sexual molestation inasmuch has “the purpose or in any case the effect of violating the dignity and freedom of the person who undergoes it and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere” (RAI 2017; p. 1). Likewise, the code of ethics of [Mediaset](https://www.mediaset.it/gruppomediaset/bin/60.$plit/Codice%20Etico%20-%205.02.2019.pdf" \o "https://www.mediaset.it/gruppomediaset/bin/60.$plit/Codice%20Etico%20-%205.02.2019.pdf) and [GEDI group](https://www.gedispa.it/fileadmin/user_upload/CodiceEtico2020.pdf" \o "https://www.gedispa.it/fileadmin/user_upload/CodiceEtico2020.pdf) (owner of *Repubblica* and l’*Espresso*) as well as the code of conduct of [Comcast](https://www.sky.it/content/dam/skyit/it/other/pdf/Code-of-Conduct-Italia.pdf" \o "https://www.sky.it/content/dam/skyit/it/other/pdf/Code-of-Conduct-Italia.pdf) (*Sky Italia*) prohibit any form of harassment and gender discrimination to the person. In particular, these forbid “violence or sexual harrassment” and any kind of discrimination “referred to personal and cultural diversity” (Mediaset 2019; p. 12) through “the promotion and the respect of human rights” (GEDI group 2020; p. 5), also encouraging employees to denounce “without fear of retaliation” (Comcast 2020; p. 11).

 SOUTH KOREA

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **(F11 NEW) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment** | | 11 |
| Question | How do leading news media support and protect their journalists in case of harassment, in particular online? | |

*Cyber-stalking is a huge problem in Korea. Most firms protect and try to prevent traumatic experience, especially for those less experienced. (Score: 2)*

Cyber stalkings have emerged as big problems in Korea. Especially violent news comments, sometimes with personal threats, are almost prevalent with polarized political environment. Journalists’ work emails are disclosed on the articles they author, and some receive emails with profanities for no evident reason. No specific law is in place to protect the journalists from these comments or emails. Currently, libel laws apply to the online comments and they are the only legal protection journalists get.

Interviews show that firms provide therapies and other medical costs. However, what is more dangerous in terms of harassment is not harassment itself, but self-monitoring due to repeated incidents.

NETHERLANDS

### (F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 3 points (2010: /)**

*(Online) harassment is an increasing problem in the Netherlands. Persveilig.nl was launched as a contact point to address problems. In general, journalists are supported and protected by their employer’s legal department.*

Dutch journalists are confronted with harassment, ‘shit storms’ or insults, especially online. In most cases things abate of themselves, but sometimes the media company’s legal department has to be called upon, and a report may be issued to the police. The general level of support provided is considered fair and sufficient by the journalists interviewed.

The website *Persveilig.nl* (press safe.nl) was launched in November 2019 as a contact point where journalists can report threats of all kinds related to their profession. *Persveilig.nl* is a collaboration between the *Nederlandse Vereniging van Journalisten* (NVJ, the Dutch Association of Journalists), the *Genootschap van Hoofdredacteuren* (the Association of Editors in chief), the Police, and the Public Prosecutor&apos;s Office. Strikingly, only a few of the journalists we interviewed had heard of the initiative.

Security agents now protect NOS crews filming demonstrations. It has been commonly held over the last few years that organized crime groups are threatening crime reporters. An attack against the building of *De Telegraaf* in 2018 was directly linked with the newspaper’s coverage of organized crime. However, the reporter in question and his family are under the constant protection of security agents.

**PORTUGAL**

**(F11 NEW) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 3 points**

*There have been no such situations in the country; it is not an issue (at least for now).*

To our knowledge, there have been no cases of online harassment involving journalists. Furthermore, the editors and journalists we interviewed, as well as the president of the Portuguese Journalists’ Union confirmed they do not have notice of such situations. Nothing is previewed in the journalists’ labour contracts on this particular issue, but it is not difficult to forecast that both the media company and the union would guarantee legal help and protection if necessary.

The only situations of some kind of harassment against journalists have occurred in the coverage of football games or activities. In some cases, directors of a certain club try to prevent this or that particular journalist of accessing its facilities, with the argument that they are biased and unfriendly; in other cases, similar attitudes are taken by organized groups of fans, somehow threatening the free presence of journalists in the area and trying to condition their professional work. When this eventually happened, both the medium they work for and the Journalists’ Union gave public and juridical support, and no serious consequences came from the incidents.

SWEDEN

(F11 NEW) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 3 POINTS

*Better security for all staff*

Sweden, like many other countries, reports more cases were journalists are threatened or harassed. Leading politicians have declared that such actions should be perceived as threats to democracy and free media. Significant steps to protect journalist have also been taken by news media companies. They provide full and unlimited legal support for their journalists.

The public service company Sveriges Television has established a special cyber security team to counter attacks against individual reporters and against the journalism produced. Some 35 cases/day are handled, including hate mail, digital and physical threats, and acts of violence. Cases are reported to the police and security consultants are involved to provide protection for reporters and their families. In some instances, newsrooms have been evacuated after threats. The financial cost for security measures has quadrupled over the last five years. On the company level cyberattacks and political attacks from other countries have been directed against investigative reporting on money laundering in the eastern parts of Europe and against reporting on human rights in China (Stjärne  2020.

UNITED KINGDOM

## (F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment

**(F11) Protection of journalists against (online) harassment 2 points**

*UK journalists with formal contracts enjoy a range of support mechanisms relating to abuse and harassment online. Legal protections also apply in some cases. However, freelance journalists, an increasing proportion of the workforce, report little or no access to support networks.*

A 2019 review of UK newsroom practices for protecting journalists from online abuse and harassment, covering broadcast and print organizations and news agencies, found a range of established and developing policies. These included the implementation of detailed guidelines for journalists and editors in the event of harassment and procedures for the reporting of incidents to management. Some newsrooms employ voluntary trauma risk and mental health training, peer monitoring of abusive communications and regular meetings between social media editors and news teams to monitor the effects of potential abuse. Newsrooms were also found to implement guidelines for social media use by employees, including preventative measures and privacy protection, blocking policies and threat reporting mechanisms. Some news organizations also utilized social media teams who liaise with platforms in cases of sustained online harassment campaigns (Trionfi & Luque, 2019, p.55-58). Freelance journalists, however, reported that they had little or no access to these support networks (Trionfi & Luque, 2019, p.54).

Journalists in England and Wales also have access to protections in law (different legal jurisdictions operate in Scotland and Northern Ireland, though similar legislation is in place there). The Malicious Communications Act 1988 specifies that it is an offense to send communication that is “indecent or grossly offensive, threatening or false, if the purpose of the communication is to cause distress or anxiety. The Communications Act 2003 (s.127) outlines the criminal offense of sending messages through a public communications network that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character, or to send false information for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another. The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 prohibits actions amounting to harassment. There is some lack of clarity in these pieces of legislation and their application to journalism, such as the definition of “grossly offensive” messages in the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and the inclusion of coordinated online “pile-on” behaviour under the definition of harassment (Feikert-Ahalt, 2019, pp.47-50). Other legislation, such as the Public Order Act 1986 and the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 are relevant to protections from malicious communication.