



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**  
**The Representative on Freedom of the Media**  
**Teresa Ribeiro**

Vienna, 25 March 2022

Dear Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly!

It is my pleasure to invite you to participate in a Questionnaire on the Safety of Female Journalists Online: the role of Parliamentary action. The questionnaire, a joint initiative by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, aims at identifying and advocating better preventive and protective mechanisms for female journalists within the OSCE region. I presented the questionnaire at the 2021 Winter Meeting; you can find it annexed to this letter and via this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SOFJO-PA>.

Equal opportunities to freedom of expression is indispensable for media freedom and the basis for peace, comprehensive security, and sustainable development. Without diversity or plurality, however, there can be no democracy. Democratic participation at all levels is possible only where everyone can both access information about policies, programmes and issues of public interest, and discuss openly their respective strengths and weaknesses.

Female journalists and parliamentarians share the burden of regularly facing the same patterns of attacks and threats online, resulting in the worrying trend of contradicting and limiting pluralism, being fundamental for democracy. Gender-based online attacks regularly aim at denying women a public voice, leading to self-censorship or worse: women retreating from the public sphere, depriving all of society of diverse information and inclusive public debates.

Parliamentarians have a fundamental role in ensuring that freedom of expression is enabled for all, including by holding governments to account, by addressing harassment and inappropriate behaviour by politicians and public figures, and that ensuring adequate, timely and effective prevention, protection and prosecution mechanisms are in place for the protection of journalists.

In 2018, all OSCE participating States committed themselves to improve the safety of journalists, including by adding a gender perspective to all efforts pertaining to journalists' safety and taking effective measures to end impunity for attacks against them.

Strong responses to online harassment and abuse against women journalists can only be developed if all different stakeholders, including parliamentarians, have a comprehensive understanding of the scope of the problem and of its impact on free expression and the free flow of information.

Based on the results and needs assessment, my Office and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will enable an exchange of good practices to foster initiatives for improved regulatory frameworks and measures for the safety of women journalists. As noted in the email, a first event will take place on Wednesday, 20 April online (15:00 to 17:00 CET).

We count on your support and co-operation. I would kindly ask you to respond to the survey by Wednesday, 13 April.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "T. Ribeiro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Teresa Ribeiro

**ATTACHMENT**  
***SURVEY "Safety of Female Journalists Online: the Role of Parliamentary Action"***

1) Challenges to the safety of journalists today

On a scale of 1 to 4 (or 5) what do you consider the **most pressing challenges** journalists, in particular female journalists, face when exercising their profession in your country and/or in your home constituency? (1 being the least pressing)

- Online harassment/abuse (1-5)
- Physical violence (1-5)
- Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) and/or fear of imprisonment (1-5)
- Disinformation and distrust in the media (1-5)
- Other:

*Optional:* Please provide examples from your country.

2) Protection frameworks ensuring the safety of journalists

Ensuring the safety of journalists requires the existence and implementation of a **legal framework** that adequately recognizes and protects the right to freedom of expression, media freedom, equality, and non-discrimination, in line with international commitments.

- a. How would you assess the current regulatory framework ensuring the protection of journalists in your country?
- Insufficient
  - Needing improvement
  - Sufficient but needing improvement
  - Quite strong
  - Very strong
  - Don't know

*Optional:* Please provide information on existing regulatory frameworks.

- b. In your role as MP, have you within the past two years been engaged/spoken out on the development of new initiatives touching upon the safety of journalists?
- Not engaged
  - Not much engaged
  - Quite engaged
  - Very engaged
  - Part of my day-to-day parliamentary work

*Optional:* Please provide examples of such initiatives.

### 3) Gender-based challenges to women journalists

Similarly to women politicians, two out of three women journalists have experienced online abuse related to their work.

- a. How would you assess the gender-sensitivity in the regulatory framework protecting journalists from harassment, violence and attacks in your country?
- Insufficient
  - Needing improvement
  - Sufficient but needing improvement
  - Quite strong
  - Very strong
  - Don't know

*Optional:* Please provide examples of gender-responsive approaches to the safety of journalists.

- b. In your role as MP, have you within the past two years engaged in ensuring a gender-responsive approach in regard to law-making on freedom of expression and the protection of journalists?
- Not engaged
  - Not much engaged
  - Quite engaged
  - Very engaged
  - Part of my day-to-day parliamentary work

*Optional:* Please provide examples of such engagement.

### 4) Digital technologies and challenges to freedom of expression online

The internet provides unprecedented opportunities to exercise freedom of expression. Yet, **digital technologies** can facilitate the spread of hateful and targeted campaigns.

- a. To your knowledge, has your national legal framework been adapted within the past five years to strengthen the protection against online harassment and abuse (e.g., by adopting new legislation, updating existing legislation, etc.)?
- Yes, new legislation has been adopted
  - Yes, existing legislation has been adjusted
  - No changes have been made
  - Changes are being considered

*Optional:* Please provide examples of existing legal frameworks addressing online harassment and abuse.

- b. In your role as MP, what do you consider the most pressing challenge to ensure freedom of expression online?

## 5) Prevention

In order to effectively address online abuse against female journalists, in addition to strong protection mechanisms, **preventive measures** are equally important.

- a. On a scale of 1 to 5, how supportive are you in dedicating state resources to the implementation of awareness-raising initiatives, trainings or other prevention activities on online abuse against female journalists to the following audience groups (1 being least positive):
- Journalists/Journalist associations (1-5)
  - Media outlets and supervisory boards (1-5)
  - Law enforcement (1-5)
  - Judiciary (1-5)
  - Civil Society (1-5)
  - Education (1-5)
  - Other (1-5)

*Optional:* Please provide examples of existing preventive measures to enhance the safety of journalists.

- b. In your role as MP, have you within the last two years publicly condemned attacks, expressed support, and sensitized citizens about the negative impact of attacks against female journalists?
- Yes, very actively
  - Yes, quite actively
  - Yes, but I would like to be more active
  - No, not much actively
  - No, not actively
- c. If yes, please check the boxes of actions you have taken (multiple answers acceptable)
- Public condemnation of attacks
  - Expressed support
  - Engaged in citizen awareness actions
  - Engaged with Civil Society Organizations
  - Raised parliamentary questions to government
  - Other:

*Optional:* Please provide concrete examples.

## 6) Situational assessment

To what extent do you consider the safety of female journalists, to be a **challenge** in your country today?

- To a very small extent
- To a small extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a large extent
- To a very large extent

7) Follow-up

- a. Which country are you from?
- b. Please insert your name and email if you are interested in activities within the field of freedom of expression/safety of journalists and of female journalists in your PA functions.
  - Name:
  - Email: