



WESTERN BALKANS' JOURNALISTS' SAFETY INDEX

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Foreword

Since 2016, journalists' associations and trade unions from Western Balkans countries have been collecting data and assessing the overall media freedom and safety of journalists in their countries. They have published annual reports, press releases, educational articles and numerous alerts on the pressures and attacks on journalists on the cooperatively created platform <https://safejournalists.net>. As a result of their joint actions, in the past six years, they have undertaken numerous advocacy activities, starting from proposals for amending relevant laws, to pressuring institutions to promptly and thoroughly investigate crimes against journalists and media and organizing public campaigns or debates about pressing issues of concern for the media freedom in their countries.

In 2020 the *Safejournalists.net* partners decided to make one step further – to 'measure' the changes in the environment that have direct or indirect impact on how safe journalists and other media actors feel when practicing their profession. This means that the gathered qualitative data about the various dimensions of the complex notion of 'journalists' safety' should be quantified, scored and aggregated into a composite indicator – Journalists' Safety Index, that measures the changes over the years and across various Western Balkans' countries.

The Western Balkans' Journalists' Safety Index (WB-JSI) is a research-based tool designed to measure and monitor both the environment for journalists' safety and actual safety of journalists in the Western Balkan's countries. The WB-JSI relies primarily on the research evidence compiled according to a rigorous research procedure. Based on that research evidence, a group of experts in each country assesses the situation in terms of each of the 19 indicators.

This research tool will be used by the partners of the platform *Safejournalists.net* to:

- Compare findings under each area year by year and track improvement or deterioration.
- Compare successes or problems in one country to those in another.
- Organize debates on challenges and propose advocacy actions and policy measures in order to improve the safety environments for journalists in their countries.

The WB-JSI was jointly developed by the researchers from the RESIS Institute¹ and partners of the Platform *Safejournalists.net*: Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia, Association of BH Journalists, Trade Union of Media od Montenegro, Association of Journalist of Macedonia,

¹ The researchers of the RESIS Institute (www.resis.mk), Snezana Trpevska and Igor Micevski have developed also the methodology for assessing the levels of media freedom and journalists' safety in the Western Balkans and have been coordinating the advocacy research conducted by the partners of the Platform *Safejournalists.Net* since 2016. Ljubinka Popovska Toševa, statistical expert of the RESIS Institute, was involved in developing the model of aggregation, weighting and calculation of the Index.

Association of Journalist of Kosovo, Croatian Journalists' Association and Association of Professional Journalists of Albania. These partner organizations have nominated researchers who will be responsible for collecting and analysing the data as well as for drafting the narrative reports based on which the scoring process is carried out.

The consultative process consisted of the following stages:

- The draft-theoretical framework was developed by the Research Institute on Social Development (RESIS) in the end of 2020.
- In 2021, legal experts who work with journalists' associations were involved in a series of online consultations to refine the indicators by taking into consideration the local context.
- Next, independent media experts from all countries were involved in evaluating the research narratives produced by the country researchers.
- Also, several cycles of online consultations were organized with the researchers and partners of the Platform safejournalists.net, to refine and finalize the theoretical framework and the research instrument for the scoring procedure.

As such, the Index is a result of a local effort and covers all the specific issues that local partners identified as relevant for their country contexts.

1. The Conceptual Framework

Composite indicators, or indices are widely used tools in assessing various policy fields, as they allow for quantification of complex issues and provide comparisons across countries in an easy comprehensible manner². They enable policy makers, donors, CSOs, media or general public to draw a clear picture on the common trends from the multitude of information and quantitative data and to benchmark countries' performance in a social area.

However, if ambiguously defined and poorly constructed, composite indicators may lead to misleading and simplistic conclusions or recommendations for policy measures. Moreover, even when well-designed, they should always be used in light of the broader social context of the phenomenon they are measuring. Hence, composite indicators must be predominantly seen "...as a means of initiating discussion and stimulating public interest.... with respect to constituencies affected by the composite index."³

1.1. What is the Western Balkans' Journalists' Safety Index?

The WB-JSI is designed as a research-based tool to measure and monitor both the environment for journalists' safety and actual safety of journalists in the Western Balkan's countries. Unlike many other indices that measure media freedom or similar phenomena, this Index relies primarily on the research evidence collected and analysed according to a rigorous research procedure. Then, based on that research evidence, a group of experts in the field assesses the situation in the country in terms of each of the 19 indicators for the safety of journalists.

In a comprehensive study commissioned by the Council of Europe the concept of "favourable environment" is very broadly defined as a complex of "...constantly changing legal, political, economic and socio-cultural realities".⁴ This means that if we want to measure the concept of journalists' safety environment, we must first define its legal, political, economic or other aspects and explain their interconnections and relevance. If understood more broadly, this concept would coincide almost entirely with concepts such as "environment for media and journalists' freedom", "environment for public debate" - or other similar concepts. However, the WB-JSI takes a narrower and a more focused approach focus only on those aspects in the societal environment

² Joint Research Centre-European Commission. *Handbook on constructing composite indicators: methodology and user guide*. OECD publishing, 2008, p.13.

³ Ibid, p.13

⁴ Andreotti, Onur, Nils Muižnieks, Tarlach McGonagle, Sejal Parmar, Başak Çalı, Dirk Voorhoof, Yaman Akdeniz et al. *Journalism at risk: Threats, challenges and perspectives*. Council of Europe, 2015. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680706afe>

which directly affect the journalists' sense of safety, protection and stability while performing their professional duties.

Journalists' associations from the Western Balkan countries have already established a well-designed monitoring tool – a set of qualitative indicators for assessing the broader “*environment for media freedom, freedom of journalists' work and journalists' safety*” in their countries. The third group of indicators of this monitoring tool is focused on the specific aspects of the journalists' safety environment as well as on the manifest effects of this environment – the number of various types of verbal or non-verbal threats and attacks on journalists. Hence, the WB-JSI combines a number of qualitative indicators already contained in the established qualitative methodology and quantifies them through a standardized measurement tool.

1.2. Dimensions of Journalists' Safety

The theoretical framework of the notion of journalist's safety was developed by reviewing numerous documents, studies and other literature concerning the conceptual constitution of the notion of ‘favourable environment for journalists’ to feel protected and safe in their work. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), the Council of Europe, the United Nations and other inter-governmental and international organizations have issued many relevant documents, resolutions and recommendations that emphasize the need for far-reaching measures “...at the international and national levels in order to strengthen the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media actors, and to eradicate impunity.”⁵

The Council of Europe Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) has recently adopted an Implementation strategy for the Recommendation CM/Rec (2016)⁶ aimed at assisting member States in the implementation of selected areas of the “protection and prosecution pillars” and at providing guidance to journalists' associations and other media actors to set effective programmes and to allocate adequate resources for their implementation. Therefore, the original framework for assessing the journalists' safety environment (Part C. Journalists' Safety), developed in 2016 for the Western Balkans Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists' safety, has been upgraded now in order to encompass the new recommendations contained in the CoE's Implementation strategy.

⁵ Council of Europe, *Recommendation CM/Rec (2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors* (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 April 2016 at the 1253rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies). Available at:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016806415d9#_ftn1

⁶ Council of Europe DGI (2020)11, *Implementation Guide to Recommendation CM/Rec (2016)4 on the Protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/safety-implementation-guide-en-16-june-2020/16809ebc7c>

In this and in many other international documents one dominant message is conveyed, that attacks against journalists and other media actors are serious violations of human rights "...because they target not only individuals, but deprive others of their right to receive information, thus restricting public debate, which is at the heart of pluralist democracy."⁷ Hence, in order to create a free and safe environment for the work of journalists and media, the states must fulfil a range of obligations, set out in the relevant international documents. Such obligations are to be fulfilled by the executive, legislative and judicial branches of governments, as well as authorities in charge for maintaining public order and national security.

Taking into consideration the standards and recommendations established by the Council of Europe and other international organisations, we operationalize the concept of "journalists' safety" by considering the following four dimensions:

- (1) *Legal and organisational environment* – the existence and implementation of legal safeguards relevant for the safety of journalists
- (2) *Due Prevention* – the existence and implementation of a range of preventative measures that have direct effects on journalists' protection and safety;
- (3) *Due Process* - the behaviour of state institutions and public officials towards journalists and the efficiency of the criminal and civil justice system concerning the investigations of threats and acts of violence against journalists;
- (4) *Actual Safety* – incidents and instances of various forms of threats and acts of violence against journalists and media.

1.2.1 Legal and organizational environment

This dimension refers to some aspects of the legal and organisational environment which have direct negative impact on their feelings of safety, security and freedom and to the basic socio-economic preconditions for the work of journalists. There are two aspects of the legal framework that can seriously affect the sense of security and freedom of journalists: the quality and application of the legal provisions on defamation and libel and the provisions on the protection of journalistic sources, including the legal provisions on the protection of whistle-blowers. Furthermore, this dimension takes into account the malicious and arbitrary application of other laws in order to intimidate and silence journalists and other media actors. Within this dimension, the restrictiveness of the legislation and its application in terms of freedom of journalistic work and journalistic association are also considered. Finally, the application of the legal provisions that ensure stability and adequate working conditions for journalists in the newsrooms is evaluated.

⁷ Ibid.

1.2.2. Due Prevention

This dimension refers to the necessary preventive measures that must be taken by states in order for journalists and media workers to receive timely and prompt protection in situations where there is a danger or threat to their safety. Such preventive measures are the mechanisms (hotline, emergency contact point or similar) established by the competent institutions through which journalists and media workers can quickly and easily report cases of threat and receive advice or legal assistance on what to do and where to turn to. Another form of prevention are the measures of special protection of journalists in situations when there is a real and serious danger to their lives or physical safety. A third important aspect of prevention is the protection of women journalists which refers to the obligations of the states to prevent and combat gender-based threats, (sexual) aggression and violence. In this connection, Article 19 of the Istanbul Convention requires that victims (in this context woman journalists) be provided with information on the different types of support services and legal measures available in cases of violence against women. A further important aspect of prevention dimension is whether state institutions and public officials timely and unequivocally condemn threats and attacks on journalists and media workers. Finally, in this dimension, a quite relevant indicator is also the awareness, attitude and behaviour of police officers towards the journalistic profession, which is here generally described as 'sensitivity' of police authorities of the important role played by journalists and other media actors in the society.

1.2.3. Due Process

The third dimension consists of indicators that determine the extent to which the competent institutions and the judicial system conduct timely and efficient investigations and procedures to identify and sanction the perpetrators of attacks on journalists and media actors. For example, the establishment of specific units within the police, as well as in the prosecutor's office, with specific expertise in human rights and the safety of journalists can improve the effectiveness and impartiality of investigations. Next, investigations into serious physical attacks and ill-treatment of journalists and other media actors must be effective and respect the essential requirements of adequacy, thoroughness, impartiality and independence, promptness and public scrutiny. Third important aspect of this dimension is related to the efficiency of the measures undertaken by the relevant authorities to identify and sanction the perpetrators of various forms of online harassment (bullying, stalking, doxing, hacking, communicating hateful speech and threats, trolling etc.) of journalists and media actors. The fourth indicator is related to the level of transparency of investigations of all types of violence, life-threats and intimidation of journalists and other media actors. Finally, the fifth indicator in this dimension refers to the question whether the institutions have established sound statistical systems for recording data about the various types of attacks on journalists and media actors.

1.2.4. Actual Safety

This dimension refers to the real aspects of journalists' safety, i.e. the threats, harassment and physical attacks that actually occurred in the respective year. The four indicators rely on the previously developed categorization of types of threats and attacks on journalists, media actors and organizations, according to which the partners in the regional platform Safejournalists.net record the specific cases in their own databases. While doing this they follow strict criteria and guidelines for detecting, verifying, and documenting each individual case. Hence, this data does not necessarily have to match the data held or published by the state authorities. The killings of journalists are not included in the scoring procedure, because they are a rare occurrence in the countries of the region, but if a killing happens, it will be separately addressed and highlighted in the publication of national reports related to this Index.

1.3. Indicators

Dimension 1: LEGAL AND ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT	
Indicators	Indicative questions
1. Legal provisions related to defamation and their implementation do not produce chilling effects on journalists and media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do applicable laws still contain provisions on the basis of which journalists can be held accountable for criminal offenses against honor and reputation? - Are provisions in the defamation laws severe against journalists and protective of state officials? - Whether the legislation foresees sanctions that are not proportionate to the attributed offence? - Do journalists illustrate occasions of defamation law discouraging investigating and critical writing? - Was there a court verdict against a journalist last year in which the plaintiff was an influential politician? - Do journalists think that such a verdict had the effect of self-censorship on journalism? - Were there any court cases last year in which penalties imposed against journalists were not proportionate to the offence of defamation? - Were there administrative penalties that produce chilling effect? - Do state officials abuse their (procedural) rights during the relevant court proceedings initiated against journalists? - Do some judgments from previous years still have a strong negative effect on journalists?
2. Confidentiality of journalists' sources is guaranteed in the legislation and respected by the authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is confidentiality of journalists' sources guaranteed in the law? - Are these guarantees respected by the authorities in practice? - Were there any instances where journalists were asked to disclose their sources - was that justified to protect the public interest, to solve a given criminal case etc.? - Were there sanctions applicable against journalist who refuse to disclose identity of source? - If yes, have there been cases of these sanctions being imposed?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were there any cases where state authorities ordered journalist to hand over his computer or a cell phone and that way (potentially) compromised his sources? - Do investigative journalists who work on corruption and crime feel free to seek access to and maintain contacts with sources of information?
<p>3. Other laws are implemented objectively and allow the journalists and other media actors to work freely and safely</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Were there examples of discriminatory or arbitrary application of other laws against journalists and media (anti-terrorism, national security, public order, hate speech, blasphemy, defamation, memory laws etc.)? - Were there attempts to silence journalists on the basis of legal provisions related to dissemination of misinformation, fear, panic or similar? - Are there any safeguards in the legislative framework that protect journalists and media from SLAPP lawsuits? - Were there examples of SLAPP lawsuits to censor, intimidate, and silence journalists by burdening them with the cost of a legal defence? - Were there cases of multiple lawsuits against journalists, initiated by powerful individuals or groups, for alleged defamation - aimed at preventing the journalist or media outlet from investigating and reporting on corruptive and illegal practices? - Are the rights of journalists and their safety endangered in situations when journalists report on protests (for example, when the state also restricts the right to freedom of assembly)?
<p>4. Journalists are free to pursuit their profession and to establish, join and participate in their associations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do journalists have to be licensed by the state to work? - Were there any attempts in the past year to introduce licenses by the state? - Have journalists been refused the right to report from certain events on the ground of not having an accreditation? - Do journalists have a problem to be recognized as journalists in relevant proceedings before public authorities? - Are journalists free to organise themselves in professional associations? - Were there any pressures and obstacles last year (from the authorities, media owners or other powerful people) for journalists to join their associations? - Are there parallel or fake media organizations whose work is supported by the government or by powerful political organizations in order to undermine the critical position of the genuine journalistic associations?
<p>5. Journalists' job position is stable and protected at the workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do journalists work on the basis of signed employment contracts? - Do journalists employed in the media have temporary or permanent employment contracts? - Do they have adequate social security? - How high are the journalists' salaries? Are they paid regularly? - In what state are journalists' working conditions? What are the biggest problems they face in the workplace? - What are the working conditions of freelance journalists? - Are there trade unions in the private media and do media owners support journalists' membership in unions? - Are there collective agreements signed for protection of labour rights of journalists in the private media? - Do journalists have access to free legal aid (provided by the media outlet where they are employed) in criminal and civil matters when they are subject of criminal or civil proceedings due to their reporting?

Dimension 2: DUE PREVENTION

Indicators	Indicative questions
<p>1. Journalists and media actors have access to immediate and effective protective measures when they are threatened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the relevant state institutions established effective mechanisms (hotline, emergency contact point or similar) by which all individuals, including journalists and media actors, can easily and immediately report hate speech and serious life threats? - If yes, how many journalists reported threats through such mechanisms? - Have the institutions responded appropriately and immediately? - What kind of measures have been undertaken by the institutions? - How responsive are state institutions (police) in cases when journalists are subject to threats? - Were there any examples when a relevant institution (Ministry of Interior, Public Prosecutor etc.) did not process/accept a report of a journalist or media outlet for a violation of their rights?
<p>2. Journalists and other media actors (whose lives or physical integrity are at a real and immediate risk) have access to special protection/safety mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there a protection/safety mechanism at national level, with capacity to provide physical protection to individuals who are at risk, including journalists (especially those working on corruption and organised crime)? - Is there a procedure of systematic risk-assessment in order to identify specific protection needs of the journalist or any other citizen who is a victim? - Are there available types of help and support service organisations providing such help to the victim in a timely manner?
<p>3. Female journalists have access to legal measures and support mechanisms when faced with gender-based threats, harassment and violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the Istanbul Convention already incorporated in the national legislation, or is there a current initiative for aligning the national legislation with the Convention? - If yes, what preventive measures are envisaged in the law for preventing and addressing any form of genderbased violence? - Is there a law which oblige the state institutions to provide free legal aid to all women who are subject to gender-based threats, harassment or violence? - Have the relevant institutions established a system or support service for providing regular information on security measures, legal advice and other useful information for the victims of gender-based violence? - Have female journalists (victims of harassment, threats or attacks) approached institutions for advice, legal aid or protection? - Did the institutions respond appropriately to their requests? - Do female journalists who are discriminated against or harassed in the newsrooms have the opportunity to seek help from state institutions for gender-based discrimination? - Were there any such examples and how effectively did the institutions respond?
<p>4. The practice of regular public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and media has been established</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the state institutions and most influential political parties set up a regular practice of public condemnation of threats and attacks on journalists and other media actors? - Do public officials, political leaders and politicians in general in their public statements clearly and explicitly condemn the attacks on journalists and discourage potential perpetrators? - Do public officials create atmosphere in which journalists (particularly the investigative ones) don't feel safe and free to do their job (by using pro-government media for that purpose, for example)?

<p>5. Police authorities are sensitive to journalists' protection issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are police officers educated and familiar with basic international human rights standards and the role of journalists in a democratic society? - Have the police authorities adopted protocols or guidelines prohibiting harassment, intimidation or physical attacks on journalists? - Did the police officers pay due attention to the issue of journalists' safety last year? - Did the police authorities generally show a positive attitude towards cooperation with journalists' associations? - Have there been cases of ungrounded detention of journalists by police in the recent past?
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Dimension 3: DUE PROCESS	
Indicators	Indicative questions
<p>1. Specialised investigation units and/or officers are equipped with relevant expertise for investigating attacks and violence against journalists</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there specific units/employees within the police and prosecutors' offices dedicated to investigations and prosecutions of acts of violence against journalists? - Are these units or employees equipped with necessary resources and knowledge? - Do police and prosecutors have the necessary understanding - on criminal offences applicable to violence and attacks against journalists? - Are there guidelines or other documents adopted to ensure efficient detection and prosecution of aggression and violence against journalists? - Is there a cooperation between the staff of the relevant institutions on the issue of investigation of threats and attacks on journalists?
<p>2. Investigations of serious physical attacks on journalists and other media actors are carried out <u>efficiently</u> (independently, thoroughly and promptly)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the investigations independent from those implicated in the events? - Are the investigations comprehensive in scope and address all of the relevant background circumstances, including any discriminatory motivation, any political motivation and possible link between the violence and the exercise of journalistic activities by the victim? - Are the investigations prompt in order to demonstrate that such crime is assigned highest priority and to secure quality evidence? Are procedural deadlines stalled in detriment of the investigation of the case? - Are attacks towards journalists qualified under the right criminal offence? <p>(All the cases that happened in the past years should be taken into consideration)</p>
<p>3. Journalists and other media actors are efficiently protected from various forms of online harassment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the available legal measures to address the various forms of online harassment? - Is the protection against harassment regulated in the criminal code as criminal offence? - What forms of harassment are explicitly regulated in the legislation? - What type of incidents of online harassment did the journalists report in the past year? - What was the rate of success of the implementation of the available legal measures?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What measures were undertaken by the relevant institutions to protect the journalists from online harassment?
4. Investigations of all types of violence, life-threats and intimidation of journalists and other media actors are conducted <u>transparently</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do the complainants/victims have effective access to the investigatory procedure? - Do they receive information on the investigation, including having access to the case file and to present evidence? - Are press sections of courts and prosecution offices giving frequent and truthful information on the status of the proceedings? - Do the complainants/victims have effective access to the investigatory procedure? - Do they receive information on the investigation, including having access to the case file and to present evidence? - Are press sections of courts and prosecution offices giving frequent and truthful information on the status of the proceedings? <p>(All the cases that happened in the past years should be taken into consideration)</p>
5. Quality statistics collection systems established by state authorities to stem impunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there reliable statistical data recorded by state authorities? - Is this data disaggregated according to various criteria (number of complaints reported, investigations opened, prosecutions and convictions related to threats, attacks against and killings of journalists and other media actors)? - Is this data disaggregated according to the gender, ethnicity and other socio-demographic criteria?

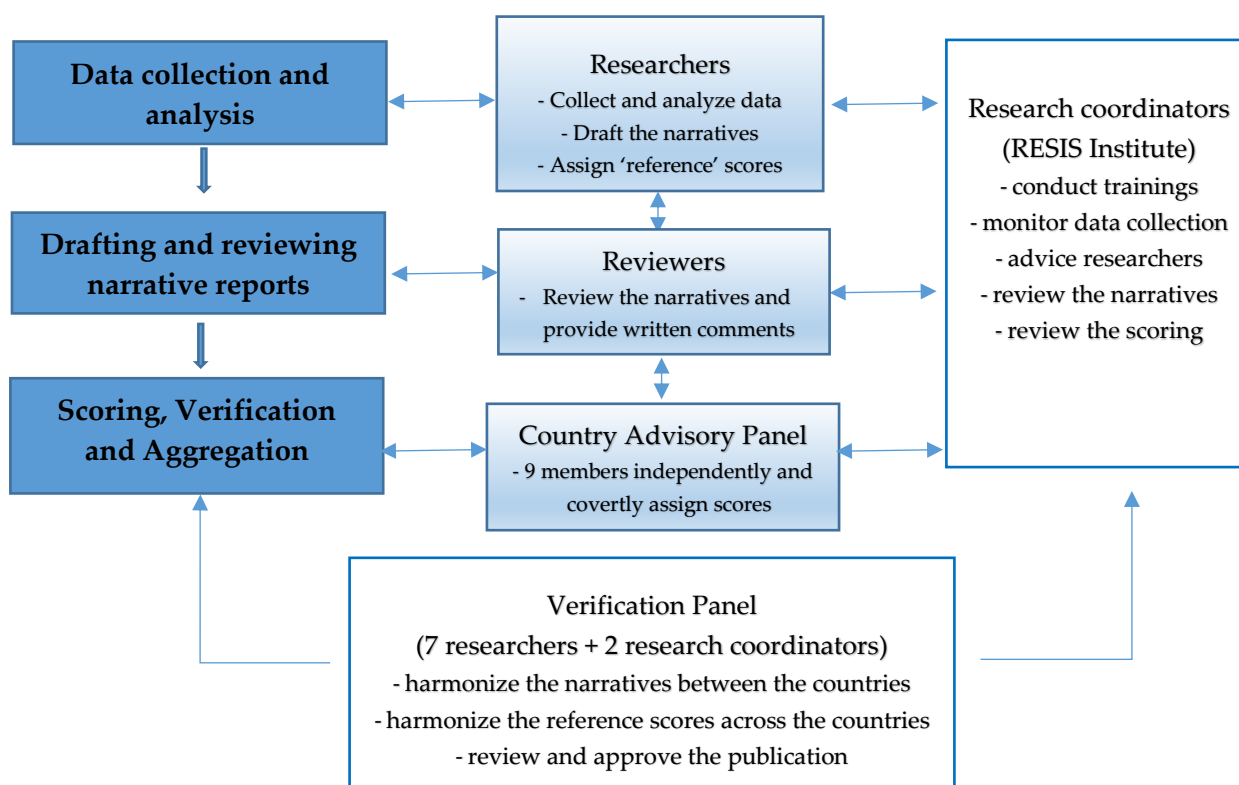
Dimension 4: ACTUAL SAFETY	
Indicators	Indicative questions
1. Non-physical threats and harassments	<p>How many cases are registered during the year?</p> <p>These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - surveillance or trailing; - harassing phone calls; - arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment; - aggressive declarations by public officials; - other forms of pressure that can jeopardise the safety of journalists in pursuing their work. <p>These types of threats <u>do not</u> include mobbing and bullying in the working environment.</p>
2. Threats against the lives and physical safety of journalists	<p>How many threats are registered during the year?</p> <p>These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - references to killing journalists, journalists' friends, family or sources; - references to making physical harm against journalists, journalists' friends, family or sources; <p>These threats may be: made directly or via third-parties; conveyed via electronic or face-to-face communications; may be implicit as well as explicit.</p>
3. Actual attacks	<p>How many attacks are registered during the year?</p> <p>These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actual physical or mental harm,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - kidnapping, - invasion of home/office, - seized equipment, - arbitrary detention, - failed assassination attempts, etc. <p>Killings will not be included in the annual scoring process, since they have not been registered in the WB countries in the past decade. However, if a killing happens, it will be separately presented in the annual report.</p>
<p>4. Threats and attacks on media outlets and journalists' associations</p>	<p>How many cases are registered during the year?</p> <p><u>Threats</u> may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - harassing phone calls; - arbitrary judicial or administrative harassment; - aggressive declarations by public officials; - other forms of pressure (inscriptions, threatening posts etc.). <p><u>Actual attacks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - invasion of offices, - seized equipment, broken equipment, vehicles etc.

2. Protocol for constructing the Index

In principle, the quality and accuracy of composite indicators, especially those aimed at assessing complex policy areas such as journalists' safety environment, depends largely on the quality of procedures for data collection, analysis, scoring and verification. The general rule is that poor data will produce poor results. Hence, compared to many other similar indices that are based only on the perceptions of several experts in the specific field, this Index relies primarily on the research evidence compiled according to a rigorous research procedure.

In the model below we present graphically how the WB-JSI Protocol is structured:



01

Data Collection and Analysis

1. **Partners** nominate experienced **Researchers** according to strict selection criteria (knowledge in the respective areas, previous research experience, published papers, analytical and writing skills).
2. **Research Coordinators** prepare a detailed *Research Plan* with strict deadlines for data collection and analysis and for drafting the narrative reports, according to which the whole process is monitored.
3. **Research Coordinators** conduct training for the **Researchers**, both for the methods of data collection and analysis and for the writing skills, the scoring procedure etc.
4. **Researchers** collect secondary data, review the literature, conduct interviews, and focus groups and analyse the collected data and documents.
5. **Research Coordinators** coordinate and monitor the research process.

02

Drafting and Reviewing Narrative Reports

1. **Researchers** write draft narrative report based on the data analysis, providing precise and concise answers to all indicative questions under each Indicator within the four dimensions.
2. **Research Coordinators** review the first draft of the narrative reports in terms of its completeness, accuracy, logic of argumentation and quality of findings.
3. **Researchers** implement the suggestions and instructions, revise the report and send the text to two **Reviewers** (legal and media expert) who review and provide written comments.
4. **Research coordinators** organise a working meeting (with **Reviewers** and **Researchers**) to discuss the inconsistencies and agree the final revisions of the narratives. Researchers incorporate the agreed changes in the narrative reports.
5. **Research Coordinators** organize a regional meeting with the **Verification Panel** to discuss the narratives across the countries on the level of each Indicator, to ensure comparability of qualitative data for the later scoring stage. Adjustments are made concerning inconsistencies between countries.
6. **Research Coordinators** finalize and share the cleared and comparatively harmonised narrative reports to the **Partners** and **Researchers**.

03

Scoring, Verification and Aggregation

1. **Researchers** assign the reference scores independently, based on the narrative reports.
2. **Research Coordinators** organise a second meeting of the **Verification Panel** to harmonise the reference scores. The assigned 'reference scores' are discussed and adjusted on the level of each indicator, considering the within country narratives and across country comparisons. At the end of the meeting the scores are locked and covert - they are *not shown* to the **Advisory Panel**.
3. Simultaneously with this process, **Advisory Panel** is convened at a country level consisting of 9 experts and experienced journalists. The final narratives are sent to the members of the Advisory Panel, with detailed instructions about how to assign scores in the structured questionnaire.
4. The individual members of the **Advisory Panel** *independently* and *covertly* assign their scores for each indicator in the structured questionnaire (each individual score *is not to be shown* to other members of the AP).
5. **Researchers** collect the scores, fill in the respective template with collected scores and send back the document to **Research Coordinators**.
6. **Research Coordinators** organize a working meeting with the statistician to analyse the final scores and to identify eventual errors and inconsistencies in the scoring process.
7. **Statistical expert** aggregates the scores, assign weighs, and calculate the Index for each country.
8. **Research Coordinators** convene a meeting of the **Verification Panel** to review and finally agree the publication of the Index.

3. How we measure the journalists' safety?

3.1. How is Journalists' Safety Index designed?

The WB_JSI combines the information from the existing assessments of the level of media freedom and journalists' safety in the Western Balkans' countries, conducted annually by the *Safejournalists.Net* partners, with additional empirical information gathered by local researchers specifically for this purpose. All this information is then checked and entered into a Matrix of narrative explanations for each specific indicator. The main purpose of the Matrix is to provide as much substantive data as possible and to avoid subjective judgments of the experts of the advisory panels who will be completing the expert survey and assigning the scores. The matrix with narrative explanations for each indicator is then edited in a narrative report that is published together with the scores.

The expert survey consists of a structured questionnaire that is completed by the members of the national advisory panels individually and independently, based on the collected and analysed research data (narrative explanation) for each indicator. The questionnaire consists of a semantic-type ordinal scale where the end values (1 and 7) and the middle value (4) are also narratively described to provide orientation for the scorers. Members of the national advisory panels are requested to carefully read the narrative explanation in the Matrix and then to assign their score on the scale, by providing also brief justification of the score. Below is presented an example of assigned score for the indicator that measures the protection of journalists at the workplace.

Indicator 1.5 Journalists' job position is stable and protected at the workplace

Question	
To what extent is the journalists' job position stable and protected at the workplace?	Brief justification of the score
1	There are regular and systemic violations of journalists' labour rights, their job position is entirely unstable and unprotected at the workplace.
2	
3	
4	Some labour rights are not respected, and job position of some journalists is unstable and unprotected.
5	
6	
7	In general, journalists enjoy fully their labour rights, their job status is stable, and they feel safe and protected at the workplace.

3.2. How are the different scores tested, weighted, and aggregated?

The verification procedure is a very important step in developing any composite indicator and implies various analytical methods and statistical procedures aimed at achieving validity and reliability of the scores at both national and comparative level. In the calculation of Journalists' Safety Index (JSI), as a composite indicator, the additive linear aggregation method is used.

The steps followed in the designed verification, aggregation, and weighting model for construction the WB-JSI are:

- To avoid as much as possible the subjectivity of the experts who assess the situation in their countries, this Index relies primarily on research data collected and verified through a rigorous research procedure. Based on the research data, the country researchers assign *reference scores* for each indicator. These scores serve as an accurate data driven orientation in the subsequent scoring process and statistical procedure of validation and aggregation of all other scores. These researcher's reference scores (RS) are then validated at both (1) country level - in relation to the research evidence about the situation in the country, and at (2) comparative (between country) level - in relation to the research evidence about the situation in all other countries. In the further text, the mathematical notation RS_{ij} is used for the researcher's reference score, where the small subscript i denotes the dimension from 1 to 4, the small subscript j denotes the indicator j in the specific dimension i with values from 1 to 5 in the first three dimensions and 1 to 4 in the last dimension.
- Once the structured questionnaire has been completed by the advisory panels in all countries, with all ordinal scales in place, *a template for country calculations* is filled in by the researchers where both the reference score and the panelists' scores are incorporated. In the further text the mathematical notation J_{ijk} is used for each panelist's score, where the small subscript i denotes one dimension from 1 to 4, the small subscript j denotes an indicator j in the specific dimension i with values from 1 to 5 in the first three dimensions and 1 to 4 in the last dimension. The subscript k is the order number of the panelist with values from 1 to 9.
- By means of a statistical procedure, the panelists' scores that significantly deviate from the reference score, either in a positive or in a negative direction, are adjusted for each particular indicator. The *allowed deviation* from the reference score is +1.5 or -1.5, with a limited maximum value of 7 and a limited minimum value of 1.

The score of panelist k , J_{ijk} in the dimension i for the indicator j , will be adjusted to the value $J_{cor_{ijk}}$ and the value will belong to the interval $[\max(RS_{ij} - 1.5, 1), \min(RS_{ij} + 1.5, 7)]$. The minimum value of the lower bounder of the interval is 1, and the upper bounder of the interval is 7, because the used ordinal scale is with integers from 1 to 7. The value of adjusted $J_{cor_{ijk}}$ is calculated by the rule bellow:

$$Jcor_{ijk} = \begin{cases} \min(RS_{ij}+1.5, 7), & \text{if } J_{ijk} \geq \min(RS_{ij}+1.5, 7) \\ \max(RS_{ij} - 1.5, 1), & \text{if } J_{ijk} \leq \max(RS_{ij} - 1.5, 1) \\ J_{ijk}, & \text{if } J_{ijk} \in (\max(RS_{ij} - 1.5, 1), \min(RS_{ij} + 1.5, 7)) \end{cases}$$

- Then, the average value of each indicator **j** in the dimension **i** for all nine panelists is calculated from the adjusted scores of the panelists:

$$AverJcor_{ij} = \frac{1}{9} \sum_{k=1}^9 Jcor_{ijk}$$

- The final value of each indicator j in the dimension **i** (**Ind_{ij}**), is then calculated according to a formula in which the reference score participates with 60%, and the panelists' average score with 40%:

$$Ind_{ij} = 0.6 * RS_{ij} + 0.4 * AverJcor_{ij}$$

- The value of each dimension **i** (**Dim_i**) is then calculated as the average value of the final values of each indicator:

$$Dim_i = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{j=1}^n Ind_{ij}$$

where **n** is the number of indicators per dimension (for dimensions i=1,2,3, **n** is 5 and for the fourth-dimension **n** is 4).

- The aggregation of the values of all dimensions also implies a decision about the relative weights of various dimensions in the overall composite indicator. Based on the theoretical framework and expert opinions on the importance of each dimension in the complex notion of 'journalists' safety', the following weights are applied in the calculation procedure: (1) Legal and Organizational Environment – 15%, (2) Due Prevention – 15%, (3) Due Process – 20%, (4) Actual Safety – 50%.
- The value of the overall Journalists' Safety Index (JSI) for each particular country is then calculated as a sum of weighted four dimensions:

$$JSI = 0.15 * Dim_1 + 0.15 * Dim_2 + 0.20 * Dim_3 + 0.50 * Dim_4$$



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