

BRIEFING NOTE FOR WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY 2026

This document has been developed by Team Europe Democracy¹ (TED) in support to World Press Freedom Day (WPFDD).

Structure of the document

Part I: A digest of relevant EU standards and initiatives

Part II: Examples of projects and good practice by EU and MS in Third countries

Part III: Sources of information for global trends and country specific situations

World Press Freedom Day 2026 – An overview

Context: global press freedom continues to deteriorate due to conflict, political interference, economic pressure, disinformation, and technology-enabled repression. These trends undermine democratic governance, peace, and sustainable development.

Theme: *Shaping a Future at Peace: Promoting Press Freedom for Human Rights, Development, and Security*
WPFDD 2026 positions freedom of expression as a public good and enabling right, essential for accountability, social cohesion, and resilience.

Policy focus areas: press freedom as a pillar of peace, security, and development; digital transformation, AI, and information integrity; media viability, pluralism, and inclusion.

Strategic relevance for the EU: WPFDD 2026 provides a platform to demonstrate EU leadership and policy coherence by linking internal frameworks (EMFA, DSA, AI Act, Anti-SLAPP) with external action (NDICI–Global Europe, journalist protection, democracy support).

Expected outcome: reinforced international commitments under [Windhoek+30](#) and a Lusaka Call to Action on the Future of Journalism, supporting practical follow-up on journalist safety, media sustainability, and rights-based digital governance.

Key message: press freedom is not only a human right—it is a strategic investment in peace, democratic resilience, and sustainable development.

For additional information see Annex I - World Press Freedom Day 2026 – Summary of the UNESCO Draft Concept Note

From World Press Freedom Day 2025 to 2026: continuity and priorities

As an UN-designated International Day, WPFDD continues to provide a key global platform to assess progress, identify emerging challenges, and renew political commitment to press freedom. World Press Freedom Day (WPFDD) 2025, commemorated globally from 3 to 7 May 2025, focused on the theme “[Reporting in the Brave New World: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) on Press Freedom and the Media](#)”. This edition examined how rapid digital transformation and AI are reshaping journalism and media ecosystems, creating new opportunities for investigative reporting and audience reach while also posing serious risks to editorial independence, information integrity, and media freedom.

World Press Freedom Day 2026 “[Shaping a Future at Peace](#)”, is taking place in Lusaka, Zambia from 4 – 5 May in an increasingly complex global information environment—shaped by digitalisation, AI, disinformation, conflicts and shrinking civic space—the protection of independent, pluralistic, and safe journalism remains more critical than ever.

The European Union continues to play a leading role in advancing press freedom through policy leadership, diplomatic engagement, and sustained financial support. As one of the world’s most significant development aid providers in this field, the EU promotes media freedom, journalist safety, and access to information as integral components of human rights, good governance, and the rule of law.

¹ Team Europe Democracy (TED) is an initiative of the European Commission and 14 of its Member States, which aims to enhance opportunities for democratic progress, by strengthening the coordination and complementarity of European interventions on (i) Accountability & Rule of Law, (ii) Political & Civic Participation and (iii) Media & Digital.

PART I – EU standards and initiatives in support of Media Pluralism and Freedom of Expression

This section provides a summary selection of external action and intra-EU standards and initiatives. It prioritises those which can be easily referred to by EUDs and MS or used as rationale for interactions with counterparts and for activities in Third countries, in the context of this year’s WPFDF focus on Freedom of Expression as an enabler of human rights.

The selection is designed to support World Press Freedom Day (WPFDF) outreach and programming, aligning with the WPFDF 2026 concept note, which frames freedom of expression and access to information as essential enablers of peace, human rights, development, and security.

An increasingly comprehensive and innovative policy approach is being developed to ensure that freedom of expression—an essential human right and a cornerstone of democratic societies—is fully safeguarded within the EU. Relevant measures and initiatives aim to:

- ensure a pluralistic, independent, and economically sustainable media sector;
- strengthen resilience against disinformation, information manipulation, and external interference;
- promote access to reliable, high-quality information to support informed public debate and democratic decision-making;
- enhance media literacy and critical thinking among audiences;
- protect journalists, media professionals, and users from harassment, intimidation, and digital threats, including online violence.
- Protect journalists in time of crisis and war, in line with international humanitarian law

Together, these internal and external EU standards and initiatives provide a coherent policy foundation for WPFDF 2026 activities, enabling EU actors to demonstrate leadership, consistency, and credibility in promoting media freedom, pluralism, and freedom of expression worldwide.

1- Internal EU initiatives

This subsection can be used when referring of EU’s promotion of fundamental rights, a healthy and resilient information ecosystem at home. The references are presented in chronological order.

- The [European Democracy Shield \(2025 EDS\)](#) is an EU framework designed to protect democratic processes and public debate from foreign information manipulation and interference, disinformation, cyber-enabled influence operations, and the misuse of digital technologies. Building on the European Democracy Action Plan, it strengthens early detection, coordination, and response across EU institutions and Member States, with a particular focus on safeguarding the information space in full respect of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and media freedom.

In the context of WPFDF 2026, it reinforces the EU’s commitment to protecting democratic debate without restricting free and pluralistic media, recognising that democratic resilience depends on informed citizens and open civic space.

- The [Media Freedom Act \(2024 MFA\)](#) is a landmark EU law safeguarding media freedom, independence, and pluralism by protecting editorial autonomy, enhancing transparency of media ownership, and preventing political and economic interference. It strengthens the independence of public service media, ensures fairness in state advertising, provides safeguards against unjustified content removal by major online platforms, and reinforces cooperation among independent media regulators.

In the context of WPFDF 2026, it exemplifies the EU’s commitment to freedom of expression as an enabling right, serving as a key reference for EU Delegations and Member States in policy dialogue and WPFDF-related engagement.

- The [EU Artificial intelligence Act \(2024 AIA\)](#) establishes the world’s first comprehensive risk-based framework for artificial intelligence, ensuring that AI systems used in the EU respect fundamental rights, democracy, and the rule of law. It is highly relevant to media freedom and freedom of expression, given AI’s growing role in content creation, distribution, moderation, and surveillance. The Act sets strict obligations for high-risk AI systems, prohibits certain practices incompatible with fundamental rights, and introduces transparency requirements for AI-generated or manipulated content.

In the context of WPFDF 2026, it reinforces the principle that technological innovation must remain subordinate to fundamental rights, providing a key reference for EU Delegations and Member States when promoting media freedom and freedom of expression in policy dialogue and WPFDF-related activities.

- The [Anti-SLAPP Directive \(2024\)](#) protects journalists, media outlets, and civil society from abusive lawsuits intended to silence public participation. It introduces safeguards such as early dismissal of manifestly unfounded cases, penalties for abusive litigants, compensation for victims, and measures to

prevent forum shopping, supported by training for legal professionals and awareness-raising among media actors.

In the context of WPF 2026, it underlines that freedom of expression and access to information require effective protection against intimidation, reinforcing these rights as enablers of accountability, democratic participation, and human rights.

- The [Digital Markets Act \(2022 DMA\)](#) regulates large online platforms designated as gatekeepers to ensure fair, contestable digital markets. While primarily a competition instrument, it has important indirect implications for media freedom and pluralism, particularly by addressing practices such as self-preferencing, unfair ranking, and restrictive access to data that affect the visibility and sustainability of journalistic content.

In the context of WPF 2026, it supports a healthier information ecosystem by promoting pluralism, competition, and innovation, creating conditions in which independent media can contribute to informed democratic debate.

- The [Digital Services Act \(2022 DSA\)](#) establishes an EU framework for regulating online intermediaries and platforms to create a safer, more transparent, and rights-respecting digital environment. It is directly relevant to media freedom, freedom of expression, and access to information, as it governs content moderation, systemic risk management, and the shaping of public discourse. The DSA introduces enhanced obligations for very large online platforms and search engines, including transparency requirements, risk assessments related to disinformation and civic discourse, effective redress mechanisms, and safeguards for journalistic content.

In the context of WPF 2026, it illustrates how rights-based platform governance can protect democratic debate and media pluralism while tackling systemic online harms.

The DSA complements the Digital Markets Act (DMA): while the DMA addresses competition and gatekeeper power, the DSA focuses on platform responsibilities for content, systemic risks, and fundamental rights.

- The [Recommendation on the Safety of Journalists \(2021\)](#) calls on Member States to strengthen the protection of journalists by ensuring effective investigation and prosecution of attacks, improving cooperation between law enforcement, judicial authorities, and media actors, and providing targeted training to address impunity and the specific risks faced by journalists.

In the context of WPF 2026, it emphasises the creation of a safe and enabling environment, encouraging national action plans, rapid response mechanisms, and access to legal, psychological, and social support, recognising journalist safety as essential to media freedom, democratic accountability, and the enjoyment of all human rights.

- The [European Democracy Action Plan \(2020 EDAP\)](#) is a comprehensive EU framework to strengthen democratic resilience, built around three pillars: free and fair elections, media freedom and pluralism, and countering disinformation and foreign information manipulation. It supports independent journalism, addresses economic pressures on the media sector, promotes transparency of media ownership, and provides the policy foundation for key initiatives such as the European Media Freedom Act and the Anti-SLAPP Directive.

In the context of WPF 2026, it highlights the importance of pluralistic, independent, and resilient media ecosystems as a prerequisite for democratic governance, accountability, and the enjoyment of all human rights.

- The [Media and Audiovisual Action Plan \(2020 MAAP\)](#) provides an EU framework to support the recovery, resilience, and long-term sustainability of the media and audiovisual sectors, recognising their role in democratic life, cultural diversity, and freedom of expression. It focuses on financial resilience for independent and local media, digital and green transformation, and strengthening media pluralism and quality journalism.

In the context WPF 2026, it highlights economic sustainability as a precondition for editorial independence, contributing to resilient media ecosystems that enable accountability and democratic debate.

2- External action

This subsection can be used when referring of EU's promotion of fundamental rights, a healthy and resilient information ecosystem in external actions and relations. The references are presented in chronological order.

- The [OECD Principles for Support to Media and Information Environments \(2024\)](#) provide the first government-endorsed international framework guiding public support to media and

information ecosystems in ways that strengthen democratic governance, information integrity, and freedom of expression. Endorsed by the EU and increasingly used in development cooperation, they promote rights-based, transparent, inclusive, and independent support aimed at fostering pluralistic, resilient, and sustainable media ecosystems, while safeguarding editorial independence and avoiding political or market distortion.

In the context of WPF 2025 and WPF 2026, they reinforce the message that strong media and information ecosystems are foundational enabling conditions for democratic governance and the enjoyment of all human rights, providing a key multilateral reference for EU external action.

- The [NDICI–Global Europe](#) is the EU’s main financing instrument for external action, supporting democracy, human rights, peace, and sustainable development in partner countries. It places strong emphasis on freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information, and civic space as enablers of democratic governance, funding actions that support independent media, journalist safety, media pluralism, access-to-information frameworks, and civil society.

In the context of WPF 2026, it underpins the EU’s external commitment to safe, pluralistic, and enabling information environments, linking media freedom to anti-corruption, rule of law, gender equality, climate governance, and the enjoyment of all human rights.

- The [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy \(2020–2027\)](#) is the overarching framework guiding the European Union’s external action on human rights and democratic governance. It places freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information, and the protection of journalists and human rights defenders at the centre of EU human rights policy and underpins EU engagement in third countries, including programming financed through NDICI–Global Europe.

The Action Plan places increased emphasis on digital rights (including AI and election integrity), business and human rights (corporate accountability and investigative journalism), and countering disinformation and foreign interference while safeguarding free expression. Operationally, it guides EU support for access-to-information reforms, independent and pluralistic media, journalist safety, media literacy, and an open, secure, and non-discriminatory internet.

In the context WPF 2026, it reinforces the EU’s commitment across the world to media freedom as an enabling right, essential for accountability, civic participation, and the realisation of all other human rights.

- **The EEAS leads yearly or bi-yearly formal human rights dialogues with 60+ third countries.** Freedom of media, freedom of expression, transparency are always one of the agenda points.
- **The Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategies** are country-specific frameworks guiding the engagement of the European Union on democracy and human rights in partner countries. Jointly developed by EU Delegations and Member States, they provide a coherent basis for political dialogue, programming, public diplomacy, and coordinated EU action, including support for freedom of expression, media freedom, and access to information. The strategies identify country-level priorities, risks, and opportunities, such as threats to media pluralism, journalist safety, digital repression, and shrinking civic space, and help align NDICI–Global Europe programming and WPF-related activities with local contexts. These strategies guide the day-to-day actions and interaction of the EU Delegations in the country, but also various meetings and visits.

In the context of WPF 2026, they are a key tool for translating the EU’s global commitments into country-level action, embedding media freedom within broader objectives on democracy, rule of law, anti-corruption, and human rights.

- The [EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline \(2014\)](#) provide the EU’s core normative framework for promoting and protecting freedom of expression and access to information in its external action. They reaffirm freedom of expression as a fundamental and enabling human right and offer practical guidance for EU engagement through political dialogue, development cooperation, and public diplomacy, covering legal frameworks, media pluralism, journalist protection, access to information, and digital rights.

PART II - Examples of good practice by EU and MS to support Media Pluralism and Freedom of Expression in Third countries

This section proposes a selection of concrete interventions in Third countries in coherence with actions set out in the EU Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan (external action) and EU Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline. They reflect regional, thematic, donor, partner and beneficiaries diversity.

The European Union and its Member States support media pluralism, freedom of expression, and digital democracy in third countries through capacity-building for independent media and regulators, initiatives to enhance democratic participation through digitalisation, and actions to strengthen women's and girls' access to information and media. They also address disinformation, promote media literacy, support trusted sources of information, and reinforce the digital and physical safety of journalists. In parallel, the EU and Member States coordinate support to civil society organisations, regional and international partners (including the African Union and the United Nations), and, where possible, national authorities to advance reforms in support of media freedom and democratic governance.

The case studies presented have been selected based on their geographical balance, replicability, and practical value for EU Delegations and Member States, as well as their credibility, including demonstrated impact and trusted partners.

1) GLOBAL: AGILE – Advancing Global Independent and Local Media (2024-2028)

Themes: media freedom and resilience; access to reliable information; ethical use of AI; inclusion and sustainability.

Donors: European Union

Lead partner: **Internews Europe**. Consortium partners: CFI Media Development, Thomson Media, ARTICLE 19, Fojo Media Institute.

Objectives: to strengthen the resilience of at-risk independent media in countries where media freedom is under acute threat, while scaling innovative and ethical approaches to information production and distribution.

Activities: AGILE operates through five workstreams covering: access to trusted information; inclusion of marginalised voices; sustainable media business models; advocacy for enabling legal environments; and learning for the future of journalism, including training, grants, safety support, and pilot initiatives on ethical AI use.

Why it's good practice: AGILE combines journalist safety, innovation, inclusion, sustainability, and policy advocacy in one global programme, aligning strongly with WPF 2025 (AI and digital risks) and WPF 2026 (freedom of expression as an enabling right).

Further information: https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/projects/https%3A_en

2) GLOBAL: Brave Media (2024-2027)

Themes: public interest journalism; media freedom and resilience; journalist safety; disinformation and trust; gender equality; media sustainability.

Donor: European Union

Lead partner: **BBC Media Action**. Consortium partners: Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ); Equal Rights and Independent Media (ERIM); International Federation of Journalists (IFJ); Fondation Hirondelle; Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA); Samir Kassir Foundation; SembraMedia; World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

Objectives: Brave Media strengthens the resilience of independent public-interest media facing political, legal, economic, and security pressure, supporting locally led solutions that enable safe operations, institutional capacity, and the delivery of trusted information.

Activities: the project provides mentoring and support to media outlets and journalists, technical assistance, cross-regional learning, policy engagement, and financial support to 40 independent media outlets, including 12 women-led organisations.

Why it's good practice: Brave Media integrates safety, sustainability, gender equality, and learning in a single programme, addressing immediate risks and long-term challenges through replicable, locally grounded approaches aligned with WPF priorities.

Further information: https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/projects/brave-media-supporting-independent-media-worldwide_en

3) AFRICA: Fostering trust in information, reducing disinformation (2023-2027)

Themes: response to disinformation, access to reliable information; media literacy; whole-of-society approach.

Donors: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), EEAS

Lead partners: GIZ, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Code for Africa

Objective: to improve the handling of disinformation in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal.

Activities: the project focuses on four areas – understanding disinformation flow in the region, creating fact-based content, raising awareness among the population, and enabling dialogue and peer learning.

Why it's good practice: the programme strengthens the capacity of government, civil society, and media actors to counter disinformation through a whole-of-system approach, which enables tailored engagement and effectively addresses the root causes of disinformation impact.

Further information: <https://www.giz.de/en/projects/strengthening-resilient-information-ecosystems-west-africa>

4) ASIA Community Radio for Minority Voices in Bangladesh (2025)

Themes: community media; access to information; inclusion of minorities; media and local accountability; civic participation.

Donor: European Union

Lead partner: Free Press Unlimited. Consortium partners: ARTICLE 19; local media and civil society alliance including SoMaSHTe, Radio Mahananda, Radio Nalta, and Radio Pallikontho

Objectives: the project aimed to strengthen community radio as a platform for plainland ethnic minorities in rural Bangladesh, enabling marginalised groups to voice concerns, access reliable information, and engage with local authorities on issues affecting their rights and livelihoods.

Activities: through *The Collaboration Lab*, the project supported community radio stations with training, small grants, and editorial guidance. Activities included capacity-building for radio crews and ethnic youth, inclusive programming on land rights, education, health, and environmental issues, expansion of broadcast reach, and facilitated dialogue between communities and local government representatives.

Why it's good practice: the project demonstrates how community radio can empower marginalised groups, strengthen local accountability, and translate access to information into concrete outcomes. It is locally led, low-cost, and highly replicable, with clear impact on policy responses at local level. The strong involvement of ethnic youth and collaboration between media and civil society align closely with WPFDP priorities on inclusion, access to information, and freedom of expression as enabling rights.

PART III – Sources of information for global trends and country specific situations

- [Reporters Without Borders current Press Freedom Index](#) (January-December 2025). Alternatively, the [RSF barometer](#) shows, in real time, figures of journalists and media workers killed and imprisoned in relation to their journalistic activities. The data is searchable per country, gender, type of abuse year.
- [CPJ's databases](#) provides details on cases – useful to quote specific stories.
- Freedom House's [Freedom on the Net](#) annual survey and analysis 2025.
- UNESCO - World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development Global report. <https://www.unesco.org/en/world-media-trends>. The most recent UNESCO figures are usually embargoed and provided a few days before May 3rd.

Other resources

- Source to identify experts in the areas of media and freedom of expression: see IFEX member list <https://ifex.org/members/> CSOs specialised in defending press freedom and <https://gfmd.info/members/> for those focused on media development and journalism support.
- UNESCO – [Global monitoring on journalist safety](#), [access to information](#), [media development indicators](#), and [AI governance](#).
- OECD – [Hub on information integrity](#) and [principles on relevant and effective support to media and the information environment](#).
- [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) – Country reports, special procedures, and thematic mandates.
- [UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression](#) – Country visits and thematic reports.
- [Council of Europe – Platform for the Safety of Journalists](#) (alerts and country follow-up).

- [International Federation of Journalists](#) – Country updates, union reports, and safety alerts.

Where to find material for EU and MS staff on Media Pluralism and Freedom of Expression:

- The [EU International Partnerships Academy](#) and EU Human Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Expression Online and Offline: Policy Essentials Handbook.
- [Protecting the Safety of Journalists, Protecting Freedom of Expression: A Handbook for EU Delegations](#): practical information about threats to journalists, and examples of EU Delegation actions to respond to urgent threats to journalists, practical suggestions for longer-term efforts and programmes to enhance journalists' security to fight the chronic impunity for violations and crimes against journalists.
- The [Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom](#) (CMPF) is an EU-funded research centre based at the European University Institute in Florence. It provides independent research, monitoring, and policy analysis on media pluralism, media freedom, and freedom of expression in Europe and beyond.
- The [ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism](#) (2015-ongoing) is the European Union's flagship mechanism for supporting human rights defenders at risk worldwide, delivering rapid, practical assistance through a consortium of 12 NGOs funded by the EU. The initiative provides emergency grants, temporary relocation, legal and medical support, security measures, training, and organisational assistance, enabling defenders to continue their work in contexts of heightened threat and shrinking civic space. A 24/7 online platform allows urgent cases to be addressed swiftly, while support to local HRD organisations strengthens longer-term resilience at country level.
- The [Media Rapid Response project](#) (2020-ongoing) tracks, monitors and reacts to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and Candidate Countries. This project provides legal and practical support, public advocacy and information to protect journalists and media workers. It is organised by an alliance led by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) including ARTICLE 19 Europe, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), International Press Institute (IPI) and CCI/Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBC Transeuropa).
- The [EU Toolbox against Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference \(2022-ongoing\)](#) is a coordinated framework that enables the European Union to detect, analyse, prevent, and respond to foreign information manipulation targeting democratic processes, public debate, and fundamental rights. It combines early warning, situational awareness, strategic communication, diplomatic measures, and cooperation with Member States and partners, while ensuring full respect for freedom of expression and media freedom.

Beyond WPF

WPF is an opportunity to initiate coordinated strategic thinking about MS and EU engaging in FoE support activities in the longer term. All angles cited above are possible. Coordination processes led by international CSOs may already exist and those could be invited for an initial conversation. Initial needs assessment may be done by inviting local CSOs - media associations, investigative journalism groups, human rights organisations or academics to share their perspective on the main issues and gaps in support. WPF is also an opportunity to plan staff capacity building on the topic. Training material exists for MS and EU staff on [EU International Partnerships Academy](#).

Tip: Other International Days offer opportunities to advocate around freedom of expression and media pluralism: 28 September – International Day on Universal Access to Information, 2 November: International Day to End Impunity of Crimes Against Journalism.

Annex I - World Press Freedom Day 2026 – Summary of the UNESCO Concept Note, Lusaka, 4–5 May

1. Strategic context and rationale: the WPF 2026 concept note situates press freedom within a deteriorating global information environment marked by conflict, digital disruption, shrinking civic space, and economic fragility of independent media. UNESCO data indicate a 10% global decline in freedom of expression since 2012, alongside 61 active armed conflicts, a 48% increase in media restrictions, and persistent impunity for crimes against journalists (85% of killings unpunished)

The note makes a strong case that press freedom is no longer a sectoral issue, but a cross-cutting enabler of peace, development, democratic governance, and security. Where independent journalism weakens, societies become more vulnerable to disinformation, polarisation, manipulation, and violence, particularly in contexts of conflict and fragile statehood.

This framing aligns closely with EU policy priorities under the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, the European Democracy Action Plan, and the EU's integrated approach to peace, security, and development.

2. WPF 2026 theme and political significance: the theme “Shaping a Future at Peace: Promoting Press Freedom for Human Rights, Development, and Security” positions freedom of expression explicitly as a public good and a condition for peace rather than solely a civil liberty. Hosting WPF 2026 in Lusaka, Zambia, reinforces:

- the legacy of the Windhoek Declaration (1991);
- UNESCO's Priority Africa;
- the relevance of African democratic trajectories to global debates on media freedom, peacebuilding, and development.

The back-to-back organisation with RightsCon 2026 is strategically important, enabling convergence between press freedom and digital rights communities, a priority also reflected in EU digital governance and democracy policies.

3. Core policy pillars: WPF 2026 is structured around three interlinked pillars

- Press freedom, peace, security and economic development
- Journalism as a condition for trust, social cohesion, conflict prevention, and recovery
- Protection of journalists (including women journalists) as integral to societal resilience
- Digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and information integrity
- Impact of platforms, algorithms, and ai on freedom of expression and media independence
- Need for human-rights-based digital governance, media and information literacy, and accountability frameworks
- Media viability, pluralism and inclusion
- Economic sustainability of independent and local media
- Addressing platform dominance, inclusion of marginalised voices, gender equality, and youth engagement

These pillars closely mirror EU internal and external policy debates on AI governance, information integrity, journalist safety, and media sustainability.

4. Expected outcomes and policy deliverables: WPF 2026 aims to move beyond diagnosis toward practical, coordinated follow-up, including:

- Reaffirmation of commitments under the Windhoek+30 Declaration on Information as a public good;
- Shared policy orientations on digital governance, AI, and journalist safety, aligned with international human rights standards;
- Launch of cross-sector initiatives in synergy with RightsCon;
- Practical guidance on media viability, especially for local and public-interest media;
- A “Lusaka Call to Action on the Future of Journalism”.

5. Key takeaway

WPF 2026 positions press freedom not only as a human right to be defended, but as a strategic investment in peace, democratic resilience, and sustainable development. For the EU and its Member States, it provides a timely framework to demonstrate leadership, policy coherence, and tangible support for independent journalism as a global public good.