



Freedom of expression and freedom of the media: Strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPPs) as a form of pressure on the media

FOLLOW-UP TO THE PREVIOUS REVIEW

During the Third UPR Cycle, Serbia received 27 recommendations regarding the freedom of expression and freedom of media.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE FIRST REVIEW

The number of SLAPPs has been on the rise in the past couple of years. According to the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia data, in 2021 and 2022 there have been 40 lawsuits that can be characterized as SLAPPs. The analysis of recorded cases shows that the target of SLAPPs are investigative media outlets and media that report critically about the work of public officials, businessmen, crime etc. The media are being exhausted by a large number of legal claims and the amounts requested as compensation, as well as by evidently unfounded claims. Mainly, the claimants are public officials, politicians, businessmen, and companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Take all necessary measures so that the legal framework foresees the additional necessary safeguards to deal with obviously unfounded or abusive court proceedings against public participation.

1

Provide additional training for judges in order to build their knowledge and capacities in detecting and dealing with manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings against public participation.

2

Conduct awareness raising activities that aim to explain the issue of manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings against public participation in a simple and accessible way so that such proceedings are easily recognized.

3

ABOUT ORGANISATION

The Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) is a non-partisan, non-political and non-profit association. Established in 1995, BCHR is focused on protection of human rights, education, development of democracy, strengthening of the rule of law and the civil society in Serbia. BCHR has participated in UPR processes since 2012. The Platform of Organizations for Cooperation with UN Human Rights Mechanisms is a coalition of NGOs that recognize the need for and relevance of the continuous evidence-based reporting process, monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations these mechanisms have been issuing to Serbia and interaction with Serbian Government bodies for monitoring the implementation of UN human rights recommendations.

CONTACT DETAILS

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