

[NL] Dutch Government implements additional measures on the safety of journalists

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On 27 November 2024, the Dutch Minister for Education, Culture and Science, in a letter to parliament, announced a significant policy measure for the protection of journalists in the Netherlands. In particular, the minister announced that *PersVeilig*, a joint initiative of the Dutch Association of Journalists, the Dutch Association of Editors in Chief, the Police and the Public Prosecution Service, which aims to strengthen the position of journalists against violence and aggression, will receive significant structural government funding from 2025. This follows a previous 2022 government measure on the safety of journalists, where government funding of *PersVeilig* had been temporary, on an annual basis (IRIS 2022-8/15).

PersVeilig was established in 2019, and is a reporting point and helpdesk for incidents of violence and aggression against journalists. *PersVeilig* also provides training courses where journalists learn how to improve their safety, for example on the street or during demonstrations. *PersVeilig* also offers legal support to journalists through the Press Freedom Desk section. Notably, in the letter to parliament, the minister noted that an evaluation had shown that *PersVeilig*'s activities had “contributed to strengthening the position of journalists against aggression and violence”, while the international press freedom organisation Free Press Unlimited called *PersVeilig* “an excellent practical example that deserves to be followed internationally”. Indeed, the European Commission, in its Recommendation on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union, cited *PersVeilig* as an example to be followed by other EU member states (IRIS 2021-9/5).

Further, the letter to parliament detailed how, in the period 2020-2023, a total of 722 reports were received by *PersVeilig*. The majority of these concerned “threats” (58%), followed by “physical violence” (19%) and “stalking/harassment/intimidation” (10%). Almost two-thirds of the reports were made by freelance journalists. The number of reports to *PersVeilig* is also increasing. In 2023, 218 reports were received, which was 10% more than the year before; research from 2021 showed that 8 out of 10 journalists in the Netherlands have had to deal with some form of violence or aggression.

Crucially, under the new government measure, the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science will provide structural funding of EUR 500 000 per year to *PersVeilig*

to make journalism more resilient. Further, and in order to better support journalists, *PersVeilig* will also receive a one-off subsidy of EUR 300 000 from the ministry in 2025 for the Press Freedom Desk, where *PersVeilig* offers legal support to journalists. The minister stated that “[i]ndependent, strong media are indispensable in a well-functioning democracy. Every incident in which a journalist is intimidated or threatened is one too many. And every incident has an impact. Journalists must be able to do their work safely and in complete freedom.”

Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, Extra investeringen in persveiligheid, 27 november 2024

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-onderwijs-cultuur-en-wetenschap/nieuws/2024/11/27/extra-investeringen-in-persveiligheid>

Ministry for Education, Culture and Science, Additional investments in press safety, 27 November 2024

