

Anti-SLAPP Trainings

Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) are a growing threat to freedom of expression across the European Union, designed to scare journalists and human rights defenders into silence and restrict public debate.

Pioneering Anti-SLAPP training in 11 EU member states during 2022-23

MEMO 98 is taking part in the project funded by the European Commission 'Pioneering Anti-SLAPP Training for Freedom of Expression' (PATFox) to provide training to legal professionals from autumn 2022. PATFox will design Europe's first Anti-SLAPP curriculum for training across member states. Materials will be made freely available to all on project website antislapp.eu



Strategic Lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are a [growing threat to freedom of expression across the European Union](#), designed to scare journalists and human rights defenders into silence and restrict public debate. A new pan-European consortium, Pioneering Anti-SLAPP Training for Freedom of Expression (PATFox) will respond to this need by designing Europe's first anti-SLAPP curriculum and providing training to legal professionals in 11 EU member states.

Naomi Colvin, Project Director at Berlin-based NGO [Blueprint for Free Speech](#), which is a partner in the project said: "SLAPPs are an assault on free expression and a form of harassment designed to silence journalists, human rights defenders and citizens exercising their democratic rights. The data suggests that the use of legal threats to silence speech in Europe has grown exponentially over the past few years."

PATFox is a pioneering project - we think the first in the world - to design a cross-country curriculum specifically to train legal professionals in how to recognise SLAPPs and use the tools available to stop them in their tracks. We will be working across eleven EU member states to deliver innovative legal training that meets one of Europe's most important free speech challenges."

PATFox will operate in some of the countries with Europe's worst SLAPP problems. Croatia's journalism union reports [over 900 ongoing legal cases](#) against journalists, a significant proportion of which are likely to be SLAPPs. In Poland, PATFox partner [Oko.press](#) has been [monitoring](#) the "massive" use of legal pressure against activists by the authorities. In Slovenia, one investigative news outlet has been [hit with 39 lawsuits](#). At the time of her death, Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was facing over 40 defamation suits linked to her work - a case which has become absolutely emblematic of the problem of SLAPPs and a major motivator for anti-SLAPP advocacy across the European Union.

Carla Camilleri, Assistant Director of Maltese NGO [Aditus Foundation](#), said: "Although SLAPPs are a pan European problem, Malta was found to have the highest number of SLAPPs per capita and therefore, as a Malta-based NGO, we feel that it is essential to increase the capacity of local legal professionals that would be likely to face or defend against such suits. Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination put the spotlight on the issue of abusive litigation used against those attempting to uncover corruption and expose the truth. Her assassination also led to the reform of defamation laws locally and also to the anti-SLAPP proposed directive at a European level, and therefore, it is crucial to bring such knowledge and training through PATfox to the local scene."

Alessia Schiavon, Head of the Legal Department at the International Foundation Baltasar Garzón (FIBGAR), said: "Legal empowerment is a crucial part of the transformation that is needed to address SLAPPs. Legal professionals play a critical role in upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms, but, when it comes to SLAPPs, most of the time they are not equipped with the required knowledge and skills to successfully defend their clients in court."

The PATFox project responds to a call for training of legal professionals, judicial officials and potential SLAPP defendants included in the [draft Recommendation published by the European Commission](#) last month as part of its own anti-SLAPP initiative. Maltese legal scholar Professor Justin Borg-Barthet, based at University of Aberdeen - widely recognised as one of Europe's leading experts on SLAPPs - will coordinate the provision of core curriculum materials alongside legal trainers in each PATFox partner country. They will draw on international human rights principles, EU law and local case law.

Additional related modules on protecting personal data (cybersecurity), financial forensics and whistleblowing to support the SLAPP training will also be made available, providing a holistic answer for legal professionals.

ACTIVITIES:

[1] **A workshop (7 June) at RightsCon**, the largest international digital rights conference in the world, titled, "Calling time on lawfare: designing a European anti-SLAPP curriculum."

[2] **A briefing on 20 June (13:00 via Zoom) on Legislation and Advocacy - The European Commission on SLAPP** with:

- >Video from the Rightscon event will briefly introduce the content of the proposal;
- >Linda Ravo (Liberties.eu) will present the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE).
- >Suelette Dreyfus & Naomi Colvin (Blueprint for Free Speech) will introduce PATFox.

The European Commission's
proposals on SLAPPs -
A briefing on legislation and
advocacy

20.06.2022 @ 13.00 CEST

MEETING ID: 857 5343 8606
PASSWORD: 998631

Connect with us www.antislapp.eu

Project curriculum materials will be published online, on the project website: antislapp.eu
Legal professionals in the 11 project countries are invited to register their interest in attending training by emailing the project coordinator at contact@antislapp.eu or a Slovak coordinator Ivan Godársky at ivang@memo98.sk



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