

Stand Up for Journalism

Stronger Minds, Stronger Media:

Why protecting journalists' mental health is essential for journalism's future



EMMA THOMASSON (THE SELF-INVESTIGATION)

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS
OCTOBER 2025

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the publisher and author.

The content of this publication is copyrighted and the right to use the content rests with the authors and the publisher.

Author: Emma Thomasson (The Self-Investigation)

Editors: Yuk Lan Wong & Rebecca Bonello Ghio (EFJ), Mar Cabra (The Self-Investigation)

Graphics: Alexia Bonello Ghio, Mirco Azzopardi

Publisher: European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

© European Federation of Journalists 2025
International Press Centre, Residence Palace
155 Rue de la Loi, 1040 Brussels, Belgium



**The Self-
Investigation**



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union (DG EMPL). Neither the European Union nor DG EMPL can be held responsible for them.

About the Author

Emma Thomasson is an adviser, facilitator and executive coach based in Berlin. She is an expert in newsroom leadership, innovation and workplace mental health after a long career running teams and news coverage at global agency Reuters. She works as a consultant and coach for media organisations and NGOs, including The Self-Investigation. She also helped run the pioneering peer support network at Reuters, is a volunteer with the German Helpline for journalists and a board member of the European Centre for Journalism and Trauma. The Reuters peer support network and German Helpline are discussed in detail in this report.

About the Organisations

[The European Federation of Journalists \(EFJ\)](#) is the largest organisation of journalists in Europe, representing over 296,000 journalists in 74 journalists' organisations across 44 countries. It fights for social and professional rights of journalists working in all sectors of the media across Europe through strong trade unions and associations.

[The Self-Investigation \(TSI\)](#) is a non-profit registered in the Netherlands on a mission to build a healthier work culture in the media globally. Founded in 2020 by journalists for journalists, it provides training, coaching and creates resources so no journalist ever has to walk away from the profession because of their mental health. It has supported more than 12,500 media professionals across 70+ countries and worked for prominent news organisations such as The Guardian, AFP, YLE, and others.

About the Project

The EFJ's [Stand Up for Journalism](#) project aims to improve the capacity of national journalists' unions and associations in addressing challenges brought by the digital transformation in the media; and the compounding impacts of Covid-19 pandemic as well as the recent economic, social and political crisis brought by the Russian-Ukraine war.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to those EFJ members who took time to complete the survey. The report has also been informed by discussions among participants at the [EFJ workshop on well-being and burnout in journalism](#) held in June, 2025.

The author would particularly like to thank the following people for sharing their time and expertise:

Ute Korinth, board member with the German Association of Journalists (DJV), Vânia Maia, board member of Portugal's Union of Journalists, Sindicato dos Jornalistas, Sanna Heikkinen and Riitta Jäälinoja-Jussila from Finnish broadcaster, YLE, Stephanie Burnett, the digital verification editor and leader of the Reuters Fact Check team, Miklos Mosolygo, Hungarian journalist from Népszava daily, Alice Facchini, Italian freelance journalist, and Mark Deuze, professor of journalism and media culture at University of Amsterdam.

We would like to express appreciation for the support for this report provided by the European Union.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION

1

Introduction	1
Methodology	2

KEY INSIGHTS

2

How has mental health become an invisible crisis in the media?	3
What are the top triggers for mental health problems?	5
Financial worries	6
24-7	7
Poor management	7
The threat of harassment from the public and in office	8

GOOD PRACTICE – HOW CAN WE SUPPORT JOURNALISTS?

3

Helpline: peer support helps to overcome stigma in Germany	10
Portugal: union-led actions help people feel less alone	11
Finland: national broadcaster YLE invests in wellbeing despite cuts	12
Reuters: How to help fact checkers minimise online harassment and vicarious trauma	14

TABLE OF CONTENTS



3

GOOD PRACTICE – HOW CAN WE SUPPORT JOURNALISTS?

Italy: How a survey made freelancers feel heard and create community 15

Montenegro: A package of support made possible by external funding 15

Serbia: Journalist association promotes support via social media campaign 16

4

RECOMMENDATIONS

Training for managers and journalists 17

Campaigning for a healthy workplace through legislation 18

Awareness raising- Promoting healthy working culture and good leadership 18

Building a support system - network, support & therapy 19

The need for data and research 20

5

CONCLUSIONS

Top take-aways 21

Make the case in your organisation 22

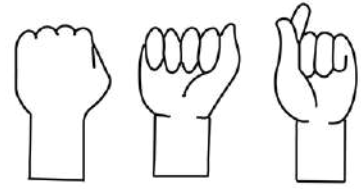
For organisations 22

6

RESOURCES

Resources 23

INTRODUCTION



Journalists are under unprecedented pressure. They face financial insecurity, mounting workloads and increasing levels of harassment, not to mention the toll of reporting stories in a world in turmoil. The working climate in newsrooms is sometimes toxic, managers are overwhelmed too, and artificial intelligence is causing new upheaval and uncertainty. All of these factors are impacting the mental health of media professionals. Journalists are struggling and quitting - which risks becoming a press freedom crisis.

These are the key messages from journalists and journalists' representatives from across Europe who participated in the [Stand Up for Journalism](#) project, which was implemented by the [European Federation of Journalists \(EFJ\)](#), the largest representative of the profession in Europe. EFJ worked with [The Self-Investigation \(TSI\)](#), a European non-profit promoting a healthier work culture in the media industry globally. The research involved a survey of EFJ members in the first half of 2025 to evaluate mental health, focus groups and interviews with journalists, media organisations and trade unions.

This report seeks to synthesise insights from this research along with other surveys, highlighting good practice examples and recommendations to help journalists, media organisations and unions to better support the mental health of journalists.

"Journalists are workers who are highly exposed to stress, burnout, online harassment, digital overload and long working hours. Work-life imbalance has a direct impact on the health of journalists,"

Ricardo Gutierrez, EFJ General Secretary

Employers have a legal obligation to protect their employees' safety and health, including work-related stress. There is also a business imperative to act: 60% of lost working days can be attributed to psychosocial risks.

"Protecting journalists' mental health is not optional — it's a duty of care media organisations must uphold, especially as threats to reporters intensify around the world, including in Europe. That's why every editor and senior manager needs proper training on this issue."

Mar Cabra, Co-Founder of The Self-Investigation

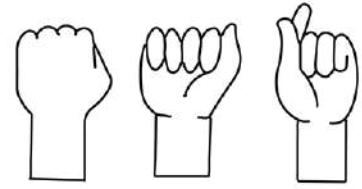
Methodology

This report is based on both quantitative and qualitative research carried out mostly in the first half of 2025.

The EFJ conducted an online survey of its members to evaluate specific mental health needs by country. The survey was answered by representatives from 21 organisations that represent more than 95,000 journalists, almost a third of the EFJ's membership. The organisations that responded came from the following countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

The survey was complemented by a focus group held during an [EFJ workshop](#) in June 2025 attended by 35 union representatives and experts from 13 countries, as well as seven in-depth interviews with journalists, unions, academics and media organisations. Those insights were synthesised with existing research to provide an overview of good practice examples in mental health support, and recommendations.

KEY INSIGHTS



How has mental health become an invisible crisis in the media?

We are facing an epidemic of stress in society: more than half of all workers in the EU report that work-related stress is common in their workplace, with four in five managers expressing concern about work-related stress, according to [EndStress](#), a campaign of Eurocadres, the trade union of professionals and managers.

But that epidemic is even more severe in the media sector, where threats to the business of journalism mean that reporters are under pressure to work longer, faster and harder while jobs become more precarious. Meanwhile, public trust in the media is waning and online and offline attacks on journalists are becoming more common.

Studies suggest that media professionals tend to score high on depression, stress, burnout, and suicidality. In one shocking [case](#), Alain Dremière, the 44-year-old editor-in-chief of the digital news section of

Belgium's public broadcaster, died by suicide in 2023.

"What draws people to the media—and what makes professionally producing media so attractive—also explains why so many get sick on the job," writes Mark Deuze, professor of journalism and media culture at University of Amsterdam, in his [study](#) on mental health in the media.

"The media industry's more predatory characteristics—persistently heavy workloads ... problematic organizational practices, and a lack of reciprocity between what workers bring to the job and what the industry gives in return—are not a bug, but a feature of a system bolstered by the passion of its professionals."

Mark Deuze, Media Professor at University of Amsterdam

The EFJ surveyed its members as part of this project to collect information about the mental health of journalists across the region. The 28 responses showed that the majority of union representative see the topic as a very serious or even an existential issue. However, the media industry is not doing enough to respond, according to the survey. Many media organisations do not think this is a priority, the

survey showed, especially given the other challenges facing the industry.

"Financially struggling news organisations do not see mental health as an urgent issue. Journalists are overwhelmed by demanding schedules and financial instability and often they place their well-being at the lowest of their priorities,"

Vânia Maia, freelance journalist and Board Member of Portugal's Union of Journalists (SJ)

Miklos Mosolygo, a Hungarian editor and reporter at Népszava daily, agrees: "My older colleagues are not open about these problems and currently, in this political climate, it is not considered critical to deal with. People are just happy to have a job and they're not voicing their mental health issues - although there are many."

Freelancers are particularly at risk, with 60% of self-employed journalists saying they have already suffered from burnout in their journalism career, according to a 2024 Europe-wide [survey](#) conducted by Taktak.

The mental well-being of **German** journalists is significantly lower than the average for the population, according to a 2024 [survey](#), which showed that 44% of journalists are either currently suffering from mental illness or have experienced it in the course of their lives. Almost two thirds of the journalists surveyed had considered leaving the journalism

profession in the past 12 months.

In **Serbia**, the incidence of mental health issues among journalists double that of the general population. According to a 2023 [study](#), 63% of journalists require psychological or psychiatric help, but do not seek it due to lack of money or time.

"Depression is much more than sadness. Two years before the diagnosis I was in a toxic relationship, in poor housing conditions, in a situation where I can't live off my job. That's when I got into extra work, which involved not only me suffering a mobbing, but also watching other women around me become victims of abuse at work,"

Jovana Gligorijević, deputy editor of "Vreme"

In **North Macedonia**, 55% of journalists said that they feel stress from their work very often or often. Over half of them think of leaving the profession, according to research by the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers.

Italian journalists are suffering too: 87% say they experience stress, 73% anxiety and 68% feel a sense of inadequacy, according to a 2023 [survey](#). More than half suffer from insomnia. One in three speak explicitly of "depression."

However, it is worth noting that most journalists are resilient. A [study](#) of journalists covering the 2015 refugee

crisis showed that most of them exhibit few signs of PTSD and depression, notwithstanding their long hours covering an emotionally wrenching story.

Many media workers experience meaningfulness in their work on a daily basis, which helps them adapt, overcome and recover from stressful situations, according to a [survey](#) from **Finland**.

“It is important to also focus on positive stories and inspire and not overpsychologise. We shouldn’t depress members but inspire them. This is a great profession, it is great to be a journalist,” said Nina Porra, head of training at the Union of Journalists in Finland.

“We gain much more joy and fulfillment from this profession than other people working in other day jobs. I’m not sure that we can find the right balance but I think it’s worth the effort,”

Miklos Moslygo, Hungarian editor at Népszava daily

Nevertheless, the stigma around talking about mental health or asking for help is still strong, especially in some countries. According to the #InThisTogether [campaign](#), launched in October 2024 by the European Commission, 50% of workers feel that disclosing a mental health condition would have a negative impact on their career.

“As a patriarchal and highly traditional country, where emotions are best kept hidden, breaking the stigma surrounding mental health—especially among men in the media sector—is challenging,”

Drazen Djuraskovic, Project Manager from the Trade Union of Media of Montenegro

“Older journalists pretend to be strong. They say: ‘we survived war, we don’t need psychological support - people who need support are weak.’ Their view is that younger journalists are weak, sensitive, moaning to psychologists,” said Monika Kutri, journalist safety officer at the Croatian Journalists’ Association.

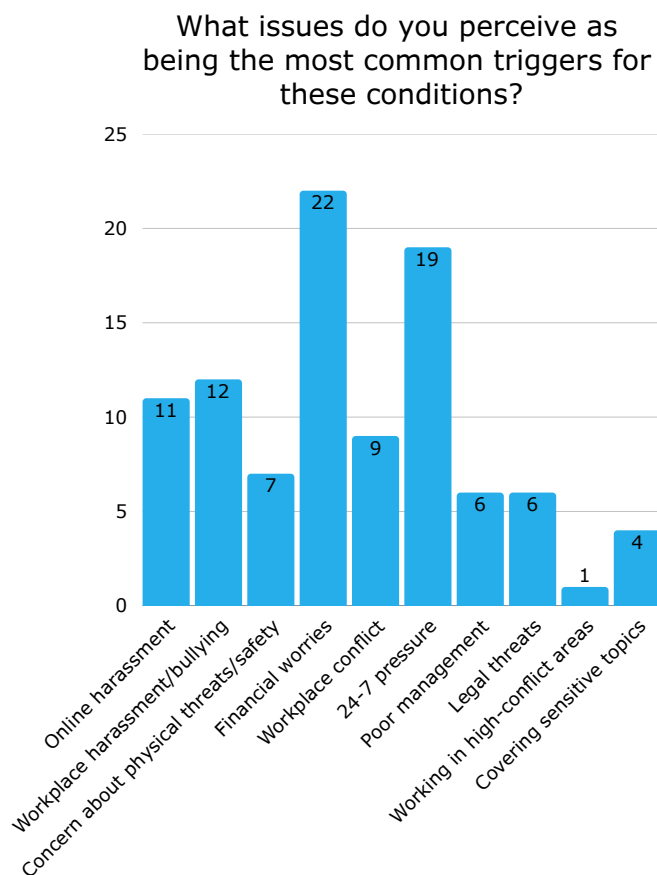
But the fact that younger journalists are more open to talking about these issues is starting to shift the stigma. The Italian survey of journalists showed that a striking 81% had spoken about their mental wellbeing to colleagues or bosses, although only 5% received support.

What are the top triggers for mental health problems?

The main causes of suffering among journalists are financial worries and 24-7 pressure, according to EFJ members. Other major issues are online harassment, workplace conflict, bullying and poor management.

Surveys from different parts of Europe show that journalists highlight different triggers for stress and burnout: Serbian journalists are most concerned about low pay, poor working conditions, external pressures and threats, financial insecurity and reporting on traumatic events and issues. Meanwhile, German journalists tend to focus on workplace issues such as the expectations of managers, heavy workload and the atmosphere in the newsroom.

Finland's national broadcaster YLE says workplace conflict is often a big source of stress, along with personal problems.



"Conflicts between colleagues are very, very difficult, especially if it's with your manager. Then there are quite a lot of just private life struggles that affect the working life, and if there's something at work as well, the combination is just too much," said YLE's work capability specialist Sanna Heikkinen.

Financial worries

The increasing precariousness of the profession makes journalists, particularly freelancers, more susceptible to mental problems. Lower-income journalists report higher levels of exhaustion, [according to a survey in Portugal](#), and job insecurity – particularly the threat of unemployment – is a major contributor to mental strain.

A study of freelancers across Europe showed 62% of them are forced to supplement their income with other types of work to make ends meet.

"It's much easier to bear the pressure when you have economic stability behind you... when you decide to be a journalist you have to take for granted for 5-10 years that you don't have enough money to survive."

Alice Facchini, Italian freelance journalist

24-7 culture

Precariousness makes it harder for journalists to resist pressure to work long hours. And the sense of mission that drives journalists to do their important work can also contribute to their suffering, because it means they are not good at setting boundaries. Digital devices also make it difficult for journalists to switch off as anybody – from managers to sources – can contact them at any time of the day and night. The right to disconnect is rarely respected within the media industry.

Journalists often feel that to be good at their jobs, they have to be constantly available and sacrifice other things that are important to them. Here are some misconceptions about what makes a good journalist according to a leaflet on journalism and mental health produced by Greek outlet Solomon:

"If you can't stand the pressure, you're not fit for this job. ... A 'good' journalist... is invincible/always stays cool/is tough/manages his emotions/ doesn't have the right to become emotionally involved with the subject he's covering/ never gets sick/ doesn't need a vacation or days off/ must be a productive machine and work non-stop/ will do whatever it takes to get the story."

Almost three-quarters of journalists in Portugal say that the demands of the job make it difficult to maintain a work-life balance, while nearly half

report high levels of exhaustion, and 42% of respondents reported being pressured to engage in journalistic practices that conflicted with their personal values. In Italy, more than half of journalists suffer from insomnia and many say they are addicted to the internet and social media.

"Journalists are still expected to be kind of superheroes, always available, always ready no matter the cost and sometimes you're regarded as less of a journalist if you are not available,"

Vânia Maia, freelance journalist and Board Member of the Portuguese Union of Journalists

Ute Korinth, a board member with the German association of journalists (DJV), says she narrowly avoided a burnout herself: "Everything is interesting and exciting and we want to do everything well so we place high demands on ourselves and always keep going. We think we must be strong, and we have additional stress from the demonisation of journalists, war, and dealing with traumatised people."

Poor management

Meanwhile, many journalists who are promoted into leadership are not trained to be managers. They also rarely receive enough support for their own mental health from media companies. Squeezed by demands from above and below, they don't have enough time to listen to the

needs of their reporters and are stressed themselves with demands to cover the news with diminishing resources.

"There is a perception that leaders are always stable, not susceptible to stress, have a good mood, must manage all processes, and provide support to colleagues. Such are supermen and superwomen. But they are also people and also have their own problems and needs," **Lina Kushch, First Secretary of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine**

Many young journalists cite pressure from managers as a cause of their struggles, according to Amandine Degand, a lecturer at Institut des Hautes Études des Communications Sociales in Belgium, where she oversees journalism education programs and studies the integration of early-career journalists.

"When they graduate my students are very motivated and happy to be journalists. But 2-3 years later, they are stressed and disillusioned, suffering from burnout and sick leave. They face criticism if they leave at 5 pm and their dreams and identity are crushed. They often have bad managers who don't listen, and yell at them, saying 'be grateful, tens of people are applying for your job,'" **Amandine Degand, IHECS lecturer**

Degand notes that some organisations engage in "wellbeing washing" – offering one-off workshops or meditation sessions to show they care,

but without changing the culture. "This is not an individual problem. It is not about learning how to breathe but fixing working conditions: doing less and publishing less," she said.

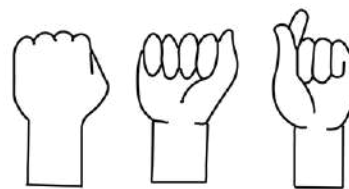
The threat of harassment from the public and in office

On top of everything else, journalists around the world are facing a mounting torrent of hateful abuse from the public, and also harassment in the office.

More than half of Belgian journalists surveyed encountered verbal abuse online or offline or other forms of intimidation, according to a 2023 [survey](#). It also highlighted acts and perceptions of discrimination and sexual harassment in the newsroom, but showed that most journalists choose to remain silent rather than report such behaviour. Almost a quarter of Norwegian journalists had experienced unwanted sexual attention at work in the previous six months, according to a 2017 [survey](#), but few had reported it. And in Germany, 58% of journalists report that they have been the target of humiliating or hateful comments in the online environment at least once, according to the 2024 survey.

Women are more likely to report higher levels of exhaustion than men, according to the survey in Portugal, which also shows a strong correlation between exhaustion and experiences of moral and sexual harassment, as well as conflicts with hierarchical superiors.

GOOD PRACTICE – HOW CAN WE SUPPORT JOURNALISTS?



The EFJ member survey showed that a lack of funding is the main obstacle for unions and associations to promote mental health for journalists, followed by the issue not being seen as a priority and a lack of awareness. But some media companies and organisations are leading the way, showing what is possible when this issue is seen as important and funded accordingly, and when legislation mandates action. Here are some inspirational examples:

1 **Helpline:** peer support helps to overcome stigma in Germany



Netzwerk Recherche, the German Association of Investigative Journalists, launched the first independent peer support [hotline](#) for journalists grappling with mental health problems in 2023. Specially trained journalists provide help for freelance or employed colleagues on the phone. They offer support in German and English.

“We see that occupational stress is the biggest issue,” Malte Werner, Helpline Project Manager, told the [Global](#)

[Investigative Journalism Network](#).

“Personal stress is also a major topic.” Werner added that anxiety and fear are also common subjects. “It can be fear of losing a job, or fear of being assaulted during protests,” he said.

Key facts:

- The Helpline is independent, anonymous, and free. It is set up by journalists for journalists.
- It's for any media production professional, both staff and freelance, from reporters to camera operators, editors, and sound technicians.
- The helpline receives about one call per week on average.
- It is staffed by 11 volunteer “peer supporters” - journalists [trained](#) in psychological first aid, who receive a nominal fee for the time they are on call.
- Supporters, including *Der Spiegel*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, and the German journalists' union DJV, among others, raised enough money for a six-month trial of the Helpline. It received a two-year grant from the German government, along with funding for research the topic with the

Institute for Arts and Media Management in Hamburg. The funding is set to run out in 2026 so the Helpline is seeking new grants.

The peers follow a code of conduct and basic guidelines laid out in a handbook created by a consultant psychologist who is experienced at supporting journalists. The therapist also provides support to the peers if they need it.

The service is not a substitute for therapy – peers are encouraged to signpost journalists who are showing signs of acute distress to professional support.

Supporters, including Der Spiegel, Süddeutsche Zeitung, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, and the German journalists' union DJV, among others, raised enough money for a six-month trial of the Helpline, which then received a two-year grant from the German government, along with funding for research the topic with a university. The funding is set to run out in 2026 so the Helpline is seeking new grants.

Learning points:

Stigma is still strong: the Helpline expected to be flooded with calls given the problems in the industry, but it took time to build awareness and trust. Making the service anonymous doesn't necessarily fix the problem. Some people might even trust the

service more if they know who they are speaking to.

Advocacy is essential: people hesitate to call. Helpline peers also hold round tables with media executives to raise awareness for the topic, speak at journalism conferences and give workshops on selfcare and peer support in newsrooms.

Demand for workshops: this started off as a form of advocacy but has increasingly become an alternative way to provide support in a group setting.

The money question: it can be costly to set up and run a professional helpline with paid staff or volunteers. A less expensive model would be to arrange times for peer support via email, the model just launched by the [Canadian Association of Journalists](#), but then it is harder to preserve anonymity.



Portugal: union-led actions help people feel less alone



Portugal's Union of Journalists sponsored a [national survey](#) on the living and working conditions of journalists in 2023 and has organised workshops to help journalists prevent and recover from burnout. The results of the survey were so striking that the

health insurance service for journalists decided to reinstate psychiatric consultations for journalists as part of the cover.

The workshops were not directly on mental health topics but covered issues such as tech and writing and podcast skills: “We started the conversation in a light way on topics that weren't exactly about mental health but that gave us some margin to address those problems,” said Vânia Maia, a freelance journalist and board member of Portugal’s Union of Journalists.

“There is still stigma around the issue. It was easier to talk about PTSD than ordinary stress, because it fits the romanticised narrative of the her journalist who faces conflict. This is more readily accepted than acknowledging the toll of the 24/7 pressure in a newsroom.” **Vânia Maia, freelance journalist and board member of Portugal’s Union of Journalists**

The union also led an awareness campaign on mental health, including a podcast on national public radio that featured journalists speaking about their personal experience.

“The podcast was very important to make people talk and see that they are not alone,” said Maia. “It was really good to reach a bigger audience and ... people could somehow empathise with journalists which is something that nowadays is really important.”

Next steps: The union has just secured funding for workshops on mental health care in newsrooms, which will help them work towards building a peer support network. They have also secured funding for consultations with mental health professionals. They plan to train both journalists and managers, raising awareness and providing practical tools to safeguard journalists’ mental health.



Finland: national



broadcaster YLE invests in wellbeing despite cuts

In Finland, occupational safety and health legislation was strengthened in 2023 to include obligations for employers to manage [psychosocial](#) work stress such as unfair treatment, threats of violence, or excessive workloads. The legislation takes a preventative approach and demands that managers conduct rigorous risk assessments, including mental health risks.

According to Finnish law, “employers must strive to prevent harmful workloads rather than just managing their consequences. Employers have a duty of care to be proactive in eliminating or minimising the risk and harmful effect of work-related strain.”

Finnish national broadcaster YLE is currently helping its managers work through these risk assessments for more than 250 teams and is investing in training on the issue despite heavy cuts to its budget and job cuts announced in 2024.

“We have improved a lot by doing this and putting things in order so there is a safer or more healthy environment to work in, and more standard procedures,” said YLE’s work capability specialist Sanna Heikkinen. Heikkinen said the fact the risk assessment process is mandated by law forces busy newsroom managers to pause and reflect. “In the news world they can't find the time to stop and think about the work environment from a different perspective,” she said.

YLE managers have two check-ins a year with all their team members focused on personal development and also a chance to talk about well-being.

The Finnish legislation stresses that managers have a “duty of care” to check in with their teams more regularly if they think somebody is struggling. “If you see that they are tired or they're stressed or there's something that brings up the worry then you as a manager have to have a discussion with the employee,” Heikkinen said, adding that YLE has a tool that reminds supervisors to do an extra meeting when people have been off sick a lot.

The legislation also obliges employers to train managers to spot the warning signs of work-related strain, such as:

- an increase in health-related issues and sickness absences
- longer and longer working days
- a drop in an employee’s performance or the quality of their work
- changes in an employee’s behaviour
- withdrawal from social interactions
- an increase in conflicts within the work community, and
- an increase in safety-related incidents.

At YLE, new managers receive four days of training, which includes sessions on how to protect mental health for themselves and their employees. “That is a very trustworthy environment where they speak very openly about difficult things and the struggles that they have had or whatever is bothering them,” Heikkinen said. YLE also hosts weekly online learning sessions on different topics for team leaders or managers every Friday.

The company particularly values training by journalists for journalists, such as that provided by The Self Investigation. Riitta Jäälinoja-Jussila, executive producer of YLE Academy emphasised the benefit of combining the expertise from the media and mental health and applying it to address the problem.

YLE also organises a peer support group for people who are recovering from burnout. The group meets once a month. It includes dedicated people of trust that employees and managers can contact if they are struggling or want to complain about the workplace.



4 Reuters: How to help fact checkers minimise online harassment and vicarious trauma

Managers at Reuters Fact Check, the team in the global news agency which examines online misinformation, take a preventative approach to reduce the risk of online harassment and exposure to distressing content for its employees.

Digital security: when a new person joins the team, Reuters encourages them to set up separate accounts on social media just for news gathering. This allows them to use maximum privacy settings and minimise the availability of personal information online.

Managers checking in: team leaders are encouraged to meet with each member of staff at least once a month, but every two weeks is encouraged. The goal is to check on their well-being, especially if they are

handling a lot of graphic or distressing material.

Unplug outside of work: managers encourage team members to switch off from the news and their work when they don't have a shift. "Generally journalists struggle with fully unplugging. I specifically say: 'Unplug properly. If we absolutely need you because something huge just happened I will WhatsApp you to come back in'," said Stephanie Burnett, the digital verification editor and leader of the Reuters Fact Check team.

Wellbeing sessions with professional therapists: Reuters provides psychological support to its employees who are struggling with the distressing nature of their work. While journalists can speak to a therapist, managers seek to decrease stigma by talking about their use of the service too. "Especially for men, it is really worth sharing to destigmatise therapy. One male editor also talked about his experience and I thought that was really important so that others see a male person in a more senior role saying 'hey I find these sessions really useful,'" Burnett said.

Peer support: Reuters has a global network of colleagues trained to support their peers and provide a bridge to professionals.

5 Italy: How a survey made freelancers feel heard and create community



Freelance journalist Alice Facchini teamed up with the Italian union of journalists (FNSI) to launch a [project](#) to support journalists' mental health, "*Come Ti Senti. Giornalisti mai più senza rete*". They launched a platform with resources, a survey and the possibility to send anonymous testimony. Facchini published a book on the results of more than 30 interviews and travelled around Italy to present the project and create a strong network of stakeholders.

The survey showed the deep desire of many journalists to talk about this difficult issue, with many people writing long answers about their experiences.

"They wanted to talk about it and wanted to have a voice because the problem is that journalism gives voice to many workers but not to journalists,"

Alice Facchini, freelance journalist

6 Montenegro: A package of support made possible by external funding



The Trade Union of Media of Montenegro (TUMM) established a [psychological support service](#) in 2022 with the support of the Fojo Media Institute. Initially, TUMM staff received training, after which a psychologist was engaged to help develop a fully functional service. Since its launch, several workshops were organised, covering topics such as stress management, burnout, building trust in newsrooms, and providing initial psychological support.

During the workshops, "contact points" were identified in several newsrooms — individuals responsible for raising awareness about mental health within their respective media outlets. Two awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of psychological well-being were carried out, the second one supported by the OSCE. TUMM also produced the first guidebook aimed at improving understanding of mental health in the media sector.

A regular peer support group meets once a month, and members also have access to individual therapy sessions with the psychologist. Except

for one person in the office and the psychologist, no one knows who is using individual therapy, as staff members often contact them directly.

Next steps: As part of the development of a mechanism for protecting journalists' safety, the union plans to establish a helpline dedicated to addressing all types of issues faced by media employees, including those related to psychological support. The only challenge is sustainability, as donors rarely fund such activities. Currently, the union is receiving funding from the OSCE.

"Although the issue has become more visible and there is a growing need for awareness, support remains almost non-existent. It is entirely dependent on trade unions and associations and relies heavily on project-based funding."

Dragana Djokic, psychologist and coordinator of the service

difficulties resulting from their professional engagements. The support is provided in cooperation with the International Aid Network (I.A.N.).

The union promotes psychological support among its members and journalists. Psychological support is also promoted on the social networks of NUNS and they created a campaign to guide as many journalists as possible to seek psychological support.

"The aim of the campaign was to show that journalists are not alone and that they do not have to deal with online harassment, burnout and everyday stressful situations alone," said NUN General-Secretary, Tamara Filipovic Stevanovic

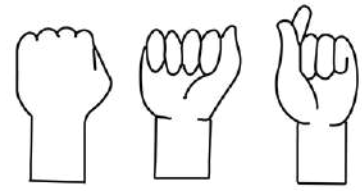
7 Serbia: Journalist



association promotes
support via social media
campaign

The Independent Journalists Association of Serbia (NUNS) provides [psychological support](#) for all journalists who need it due to

RECOMMENDATIONS



The following recommendations are a synthesis of the findings of the EFJ survey as well as focus group discussions and interviews with journalists and media organisations.

The survey showed that these are priorities for improving workplace wellbeing:

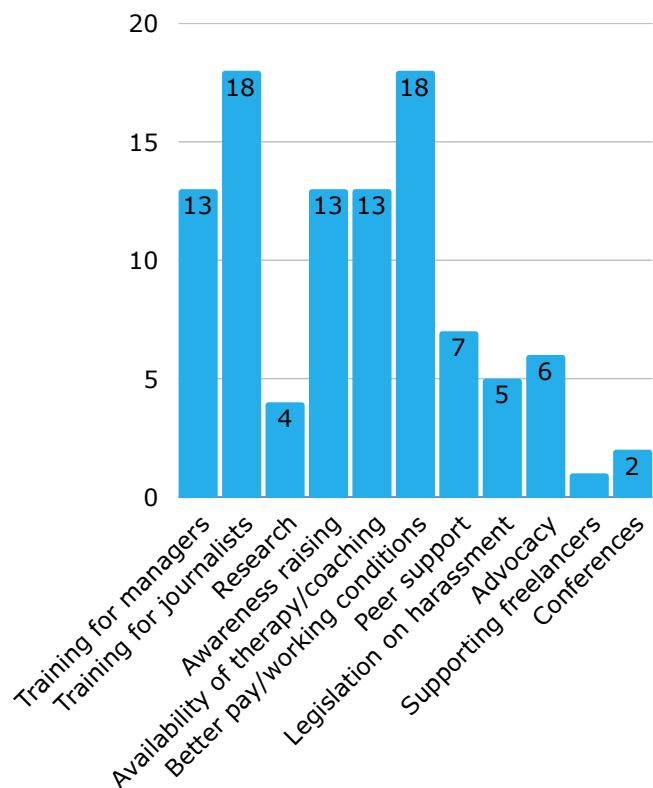
1. Better pay/working conditions
2. Training for journalists and managers
3. Awareness raising/advocacy
4. Therapy/coaching
5. Peer support

Training for managers and journalists

This should be a top priority for unions, media organisations and funders.

However, if training on awareness about mental health and self-care is only offered to journalists, it risks individualising the problem, rather than recognising that this is a systemic issue that has its roots in the problematic work culture in the sector. To really shift this culture and address

What areas do you see as most important for potential improvement to advance the topic in your country?



the stigma around the issue, training should start with managers and team leaders and be embedded in a broader strategic approach to change working practices across an organisation, which should include a communication plan. This is aligned with [mental health at work guidelines](#) by the World Health Organisation.

Even learning quite simple tools can have powerful effects, such as active listening, a technique which can help both managers and journalists who want to support their colleagues. To get more men on board, German journalist, Ute Korinth, makes her resilience workshops very practical. "There are no incense sticks. When we do a meditation exercise, I get the men to look at their smart watch and see that their pulse has calmed down."

There is also a need for more training for therapists who understand journalism, or have even been journalists themselves. One idea could be for postgraduate students in psychology or therapy to provide pro bono help to journalists. However, there are already support organisations and consultants specialised in training media houses and journalists.

Campaigning for a healthy workplace through legislation

The EFJ and its member organisations are pushing at the European and national level to ensure the application of existing rules that demand that employers implement measures to prevent and minimise psychosocial risks at work. They are also supporting a campaign "End Stress" launched by Eurocadre to create

European rules to address the growing epidemic of work-related stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression at work.

Other regulations that could help journalist wellbeing include rules that promote transparency around pay, a right to disconnect and policies around parental leave. In Belgium, the [Wellbeing at Work Codex](#) mandates that all companies provide access to a certified Prevention Advisor for Psychosocial Wellbeing (a 'person of trust'), who serves as a confidential point of contact for employees experiencing issues like harassment, stress, or conflict.

Awareness-raising: Promoting healthy working culture & good leadership

Despite the impact of the mental health crisis in journalism, it is still not treated as a priority by many media organisations, unions or journalists themselves.

The ongoing stigma means that it is not talked about enough. When it is on the agenda, it is often women leading the discussion while men's voices and involvement are lacking, which undermines efforts to change workplace culture.

That is why language is important. It

can be helpful to avoid the term “mental” health or “psychosocial” risks if you want to get more journalists and managers involved in workshops, surveys and discussions on the topic. Even the word, “resilience” has become loaded in some contexts. Instead, it is better to talk about promoting a healthy working culture, managing stress / preventing burnout or good leadership. So, in Portugal, the survey that collected data on mental health was titled “living and working conditions of journalists” and in Italy, the project title was “How are you feeling?”

In countries such as Germany, Romania, Montenegro and Portugal, journalist unions and informal groups hold regular meet-ups and workshops. While not always focused on mental health, they provide a safe space for colleagues to share challenges and solutions together.

It can be helpful to get the younger generation of journalists to push for a change in attitudes towards mental health in the newsroom.

“Gen Z journalists don't have this macho attitude to each other and it turns out to be much more collaborative to work with them. They have this general awareness of themselves and that helps to create this much more inviting atmosphere at the workplace.” **Miklos Mosolygo, editor at Népszava daily**

It is also essential to get men, particularly in senior positions, to talk about the issue. “Especially for men, it is really worth sharing to destigmatise therapy. One male editor talked about his experience (with a therapist) and I thought that was really important so that others see a male person in a more senior role saying ‘hey I find these sessions really useful,’” said Stephanie Burnett, the digital verification editor and leader of the Reuters Fact Check team.

The topic has increasingly been on the agenda of journalism conferences happening in Europe, such as the European Investigative Journalism Conference, B future festival and the World News Media Conference. The Self-Investigation runs the only online dedicated global event on the issue, [The Mental Health in Journalism Summit](#), which the EFJ supports as a partner.

Building a support system - network, support & therapy

Many journalists already provide informal support to each other on a regular basis. Formalising that support by setting up mentoring or peer support networks, within organisations or across countries, can be a way of providing recognition, reward and support for those informal efforts.

That is especially important because this kind of informal support is provided disproportionately by women and is another example of unpaid care work. We need to put a value on this work by finding ways to compensate for it and not expect people to do this for free.

Such networks can vary from a simple message group where colleagues can ask for advice, through a regular meet-up or call on different topics, to a professionally-supported network or Helpline like that in Germany. Solidarity networks can be organised for groups such as freelancers, or LGBTQ journalists.

It can help to start small, keep it simple (and cost-effective): the most important thing is to create a safe space where journalists feel they can share their issues without judgement. Peers don't always have to have the "right" answer to be helpful – often just listening is enough.

Unions and media organisations can be active in supporting such networks by helping to find funds, partners, speakers and infrastructure, or facilitating training for peer support.

The need for data and research

Most of the unions surveyed by the EFJ see the need for more research into this topic, especially in countries where journalists have not been

surveyed yet. It is essential to do a Europe-wide survey, using the same methodology for all countries. There is also need for more data on the factors that lead to mental health problems, such as punishing and precarious working conditions, financial problems, as well as violence, threats and harassment. Unions also see the need for research into which interventions are most helpful in preventing or responding to the problem.

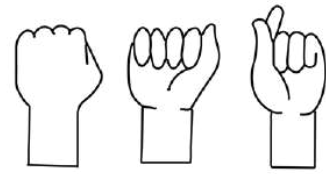
Participants in the EFJ workshop suggested that unions should work together with academics to create multidisciplinary research projects.

Even in countries where research has happened already, unions are keen for surveys to be repeated on a regular basis to monitor changes, for better or worse.

"We should have follow-up research every two years to compare the situation and learn what we should do as next steps to help journalists and other media workers,"

**Tamara Filipovic Stevanovic,
Secretary General of the
Independent Journalists
Association of Serbia (NUNS)**

CONCLUSIONS



Top take-aways

- 1** Don't call it "mental" health or "psychosocial" if you want to attract a wide audience! Replace it with "healthy working culture" and "good leadership skills"
- 2** Fix the system not the workers (but include support to relieve individual suffering) - address the cause of the problem in a systemic way
- 3** Keep it simple! There is a lot a newsroom/union can do without it costing money: from informal employee networks to regular check-ins with managers.
- 4** If you do training, start with managers first! They are essential to shift workplace culture
- 5** The power of knowing you are not alone - build networks!
- 6** Challenge unspoken norms about "superhuman" journalistic culture - managers need to role model healthy working practices
- 7** Tackle toxic management culture - leaders need more training, the best leaders care about their people
- 8** Don't overpsychologise! We need to remind ourselves what is good about journalism

Make the case in your organisation:

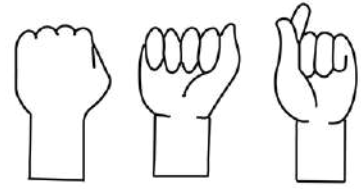
- **Start with allies:** begin with people who already care about the issue.
- **Bring the evidence:** use research to show it affects all staff, not just the young.
- **Show the cost:** turnover, sickness, and burnout hurt the bottom line.
- **Point to peers:** highlight competitors or leaders already taking action.
- **Answer “why”:** a healthy workforce means stronger, better journalism.
- **Use cautionary tales:** stories of burnout, resignations, or worse, make the risk real.
- **Build coalitions:** combine senior sponsors with grassroots advocates (e.g. reverse mentoring).

For organisations:

- **Diagnose first:** know your specific challenges.
- **Get leadership buy-in:** real change needs senior commitment.
- **Train your managers:** they’re at the front line of mental health issues.
- **Commit long-term:** one-off efforts don’t work.
- **Keep talking:** communication and visibility are essential.



RESOURCES



Organisations Supporting Mental Health in Media in Europe

[Headlines Network](#) fosters open conversations and provides resources aimed at improving mental health within the media and communications industries, including initiatives like their podcast series *Behind the Headlines*, practical training sessions, and practical guides.

[MediaStrong](#) campaigns for better health and well-being in newsrooms, providing training and resources to help them become healthier places to work, including the MediaStrong Newsroom Wellbeing Charter and their annual symposium in London.

[Netzwerk Recherche](#) (German Association of Investigative Journalists) launched an independent peer support helpline for journalists grappling with mental health problems, in German and in English.

[Safely Held Spaces](#) offers a training programme for journalists and those working in newsrooms to become more trauma-informed.

[The Global Center for Journalism and Trauma](#) was established in 2025 to carry forward the decades-long movement within journalism for ethical reporting on survivors of violence, and for evidence-informed psychological support of news professionals.

[The Self-Investigation \(TSI\)](#) provides consultancy, training, coaching and online courses — including [“How to Be a Healthy Journalist in an Always-On Culture”](#) (available in English and Spanish). It also convenes the annual [Mental Health in Journalism Summit](#), held online around World Mental Health Day (October 10). The event brings together global speakers, and recordings remain accessible afterward.

Practical Guides

Burnout prevention:

→ [Burnout in Journalism](#) (Headlines Network)

A detailed guide for journalists and newsrooms to recognise burnout, mitigate against it and support those affected. It includes resources for before, during and after the experience of burnout.

→ [Navigating burnout as a journalist](#) (American Press Institute)

A “starter pack” for journalists to begin addressing burnout, both as individuals and as managers, with visualizations about stress first aid and emotional granularity.

→ [Mental Health, Self-care and Resilience in Journalism](#) (Bonn Institute)

A look at job-related stress and mental health issues in journalism. Explore tools and strategies for stress prevention and mitigation, and access practical resources for self-care and constructive journalism. (Also available in German).

For managers:

→ The [Mental Health Leadership Toolkit for Fact-Checkers](#), a series of five guides around core topics for mental health in the newsroom, developed TSI with support from the International Fact-Checking Network.

→ [How news leaders can foster psychological safety](#) (American Press Institute)

This article by Samantha Ragland, Vice President of Journalism Programs at the American Press Institute, includes a [downloadable worksheet](#) to assess where you fall across the five dynamics of effective teams.

→ [Leading Resilience: A Guide for Editors and News Managers on Working with Freelancers Exposed to Trauma](#)

A collaboration between ACOS Alliance and Dart Centre Asia Pacific, this guide helps editors and managers understand and support their teams.

Trauma:

→ [Trauma Aware Journalism](#)

A compilation of videos, study guides and tip sheets on how to minimize harm when speaking to people affected by trauma from the Global Center for Journalism & Trauma; the [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#) (CBC/Radio-Canada); and the [Canadian Journalism Forum on Violence and Trauma](#).

→ [Vicarious Trauma: A guide for journalists and newsrooms to recognise vicarious trauma and mitigate against it \(Headlines Network\)](#)

A look at vicarious trauma's impacts on journalists, along with signs, symptoms and practical suggestions for both newsroom leaders and individuals.

→ [Vicarious trauma: mitigating graphic content in newsrooms](#) and [Safer fact-checking: Developing best practices for managing mental health \(Meedan\)](#)

Practical tips on mitigating vicarious trauma and managing mental health when viewing challenging content. This includes resources from the [Ekta](#) news coalition in India.

→ [Journalism and Trauma \(RSF\)](#)

A five-part series from Reporters Without Borders (RSF) exploring the impact of psychological trauma, including working with trauma survivors, personal repercussions, and strategies for care.

→ [Journalism and Vicarious Trauma: A Guide for Journalists, Editors and News Organisations](#)

A multi-layered guide for people at different stages of their newsroom careers, from those just starting off to senior leaders and human resource managers. It also includes tips for students and educators.

Moral injury & online harassment:

→ [How moral injury is impacting the news industry and what you can do about it](#) (American Press Institute)

A closer look at how newsroom managers can help teams who might be struggling with moral injury, and what to look out for.

→ [A Guide to Protecting Newsrooms and Journalists Against Online Violence](#) (IWMF)

This guide details policies, best practices and case studies newsrooms can implement to better protect staff members and freelancers who are targeted by online abuse. It has templates to use on topics such as doing a risk assessment or creating an escalation policy.

Report Literature

- Deuze, M. (2025). *What Makes You Happy Also Makes You Sick: Mental Health and Well-Being in Media Work*. International Journal of Communication, 19, 501-521. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/23583>
- Feinstein, A. & Storm, H. (2017). *The Emotional Toll On Journalists Covering The Refugee Crisis*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/Storm%20and%20Feinstein%20-%20Emotional%20Toll.pdf>

- Taktak (2025). *Survey of European journalists*. <https://taktak.media/survey/>
- (Belgium) Libert, M., Le Cam, F., Lethimonnier, C., Vanhaelewyn, B., Van Leuven, S., & Raeymaeckers, K. (2023). *Portrait des journalistes belges en 2023*. Gent, Academia Press. https://lapij.ulb.ac.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Journalistiek_BW_FR_digitaal_metCover.pdf
- (Finland) Rantanen, J., Koivula, M., Hiltunen, P., Niemi, L., Saari, T., Tammelin, M., Parviainen, T., & Villi, M. (2020) *Mediatyöntekijöiden Kokemuksia Työstä Digitaalisessa Toimintaympäristössä. [Voices under strain: Mental health, harassment, and the professional risks faced by journalists]*. Tampere University. <https://trepo.tuni.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/120374/978-952-03-1549-8.pdf>
- (Germany) Hanitzsch, T., Brugger, L., Fettal, S., Fuchs, A.-K., Grotz, A., Huckemann, L., Jung, L., Jurin, N., Lobner, M., Müller, F., Raum, L., Rosinger, V., & Sandgathe, K. (2025). *Burning (Out) for Journalism: Aktuelle Befunde zur psychosozialen Gesundheit im deutschen Journalismus*. LMU München. <https://doi.org/10.5282/ubm/epub.123416>
- (Italy) Investigative Reporting Project, Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana (2024). *Cometisenti: Giornalisti Mai Più Senza Rete*. <https://www.cometisenti.info/>
- (North Macedonia) SCNM. (2024). *Професионален статус и работнички права на новинарите и медиумските работници [Professional status and labor rights of journalists and media workers]*. <https://ssnm.org.mk/publikatsii/profesionalen-status-i-rabotnichki-prava-na-novinarite-i-mediumskite-rabotnici>
- (Norway) Idås, T., Orgeret, K. S., & Backholm, K. (2020). *#MeToo, Sexual Harassment and Coping Strategies in Norwegian Newsrooms*. Media and Communication. 2020, Volume 8, Issue 1, Pages 57–67. DOI: 10.17645/mac.v8i1.2529 Accessible at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/1405bd0dbf22d5b0c8f2207b7166ca0a/>
- (Portugal) Varela, R., Della Santa, R., Rolo, D., Areosa, J., Antunes, J. A., Silveira, H. & Santiago, B. (2023). *Inquérito nacional as condições de vida e de trabalho dos jornalistas em Portugal*. Observatório para as condições de vida e trabalho. Accessible at: <https://jornalistas.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Inquerito-Nacional-as-Condicoes-de-Vida-e-de-Trabalho-dos-Jornalistas-em-Portugal-03-11-2023-c.pdf>
- (Serbia) Gligorijević, J., Džamonja Ignjatović, T., Čečen, B., Matić, V., & Janković, M. (2023). *Analiza mentalnog zdravlja novinara*. OSCE Mission to Serbia. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/8/545764.pdf>