



Annual Plan Free Press Unlimited 2026

**FREE
PRESS
UNLIMITED**

People deserve to know

Colophon

Text

Free Press Unlimited

DTP and design

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Foreword

As we present this annual plan, Free Press Unlimited (FPU) finds itself navigating one of the most profound shifts in the global landscape for press freedom and development cooperation, in recent history. The suspension of U.S. government-funded subsidies for international development aid, including independent media as of January 25, 2025, has created immediate financial challenges not just for FPU, but for the media sector at large and especially in regions where press freedom is under heavy pressure.

Yet crises often reveal clarity. This moment has accelerated a strategic transformation we had already begun - one that makes FPU more focused, agile, and aligned with the fundamental mission that has guided us since our inception.

Our unchanging vision

In times of upheaval, our vision remains our compass: **People deserve to know.** Because everyone has the right to independent, reliable, and timely information - information they need to control their living conditions and make the right decisions. This vision is not negotiable, whatever the political or financial headwinds we face.

A strategic response to global realities

The current crisis did not emerge in isolation. We have been witnessing a global trend toward the erosion of democracies, with direct consequences, reflected in budget cuts for development aid and democracy projects. Support for independent media and press freedom has come under attack from a broader anti-rights movement that has gained ground rapidly over recent years.

Rather than simply react to these challenges, we are fundamentally reimagining FPU on the basis of our mission, focusing on the following ambitions in 2026:

- Continue establishing FPU as an influential international press freedom organisation
- Continue achieving financial sustainability and independence.

Becoming smaller to become stronger

We are deliberately transforming into a smaller, more focused, and flexible organisation. This is not a retreat but a strategic repositioning. We are concentrating our efforts where FPU's added value is clearest and most impactful. Our focus homes in on three core themes:

- **Safety of Journalists**
- **Media in Conflict**
- **Information Integrity and Innovation**

Financial independence and sustainability

The volatility of institutional donors has taught us a critical lesson: we must increase our unrestricted funding to become significantly less dependent on institutional grants. We have already experienced an encouraging year, significantly exceeding our 2024 donation target of 400,000 euros. This gives us confidence that where governments withdraw, more individuals are willing to donate for causes they believe matter - and press freedom is clearly one of those causes.

Donations must become the foundation we rely on in the coming years, supplemented by strategic project funding where FPU's expertise is most valued.



On the right way

We are particularly encouraged to see that our strategic direction appears to align with priorities of both the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Union. This alignment is a validation that our focus on access to independent information, journalist safety, and press freedom in general, addresses critical needs recognised by key institutional partners. It provides confidence that, even in a constrained funding environment, FPU's mission and approach remain highly relevant and valued.

Moving forward together

The repositioning we are undertaking is not easy; it has involved difficult decisions and required colleagues to part ways with the organisation. Yet this process is essential for FPU's survival and future effectiveness.

The work ahead remains an uphill battle. We will experience firsthand what it means to face pressure, something we have previously witnessed primarily with our partners. But if we remain true to our mission, maintain solidarity with each other and our partners, and execute this strategy with discipline and creativity, FPU will emerge stronger and more capable of serving those who depend on us.

So, despite the challenges of this transition, we look ahead with optimism. The foundation has already been laid in 2025: a clearer structure, and a stronger thematic focus. By summer 2026, we expect to have completed this transition and to emerge as a lean, focused organisation that can continue to lead in press freedom while building long-term resilience and sustainability.

In a world where disinformation proliferates and press freedom faces unprecedented threats, the need for FPU's work has never been greater. People deserve to know, and we will ensure they remain informed.



Ruth Kronenburg
Executive Director
Free Press Unlimited

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Mission and vision

Our vision

Free Press Unlimited (FPU) envisions a world where everyone has the right to access independent, reliable, and timely information. Our vision is in line with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

In an era of increasing threats to press freedom, which covers anything from disinformation to authoritarian control, Free Press Unlimited remains committed to ensuring that individuals everywhere are able to make informed decisions for themselves and their communities. We believe that press freedom is a cornerstone of democracy and that reliable information is essential for a just society. In 2026,

we will continue to focus our work on empowering independent media as agents of change in their communities, thereby contributing to the global movement towards more transparent, resilient, and inclusive societies, and to advocate for more press freedom.

People deserve to know

Our mission

Free Press Unlimited’s mission is to make independent news and information accessible to all people, especially those living in regions with limited press freedom. To achieve this, Free Press Unlimited partners with over 300 independent journalists, media organisations, and advocacy groups worldwide. We work with partners to strengthen the capacity of independent media, safeguarding their safety and resilience so that they can provide vital information to the public and hold those in power accountable.

Core themes



Free Press Unlimited's work in 2026 will continue to build on its core themes, which reflect the organisation's core mission, namely, to ensure access to reliable information and strengthen press freedom worldwide. These themes - **Safety of Journalists, Media in Conflict and Information Integrity & Innovation** - are interconnected areas through which FPU contributes to safeguarding our overarching objective: access to independent information. They provide a strategic framework that guides our programmes, partnerships, fundraising and advocacy efforts, ensuring coherence and impact across the organisation.

Theme 1: Safety of Journalists

Across the world, journalists continue to face unprecedented levels of violence, intimidation, and repression. These dangers are exacerbated in (armed) conflict settings, where independent information is both most needed and most difficult to produce.

Recent crises illustrate this depressing reality:

- **Gaza:** The conflict has led to an extraordinary number of journalist casualties, targeted attacks (even after the ceasefire in October 2025) on media infrastructure, and a near-total collapse of safe working conditions. Local journalists are often the only source of credible information for both local communities and the international public.
- **Sudan:** Since the outbreak of war, journalists have been threatened, detained, displaced, and systematically silenced. Many have fled and are now reporting from exile, while those who remain face severe shortages of equipment, electricity, and connectivity.
- **Ukraine:** Journalists covering the full-scale war work close to frontlines, exposing themselves to bombardments, digital attacks, disinformation campaigns, and psychological trauma.

These examples are a reflection of a global trend: journalists are increasingly targeted as a deliberate strategy to control information. In many contexts, repression extends beyond borders, forcing media outlets and journalists into exile while they still attempt to serve their audiences at home. As the safety of journalists declines, so does the availability of reliable information, directly affecting people's ability to make decisions critical to their survival.

The deterioration of the media ecosystem is compounded by a parallel crisis in viability: shrinking revenues, funding cuts, and structural financial instability have left many newsrooms, especially independent and local ones, ill-equipped to withstand mounting pressures. When outlets lack the resources to protect staff, maintain operations, or invest in quality reporting, threats and attacks become even more consequential. Together, insecurity and financial fragility create a dangerous feedback loop that weakens independent journalism and erodes access to trustworthy information.

Strategic Objectives 2026

In 2026, the Safety of Journalists programme will focus on ensuring that:

- Journalists in conflict and crisis settings can continue reporting safely and responsibly.
- Media organisations remain operational, even under heavy pressure or in exile.
- Local populations have access to life-saving, fact-based information.
- Rapid support mechanisms are available when journalists face acute threats.
- Groups at risk - women journalists, freelancers, young reporters - receive tailored support to reduce the disproportionately high risks they face.
- International and local coordination on safety improves, strengthening collective responses.

Expected outcomes

By 2026, Free Press Unlimited and its partners aim to strengthen the safety and resilience of journalists working in conflict, crisis, and highly repressive environments. Drawing on the Safety for Voices programme the following outcomes are expected:

Journalists in acute danger receive rapid, life-saving assistance

Through emergency support mechanisms, like our Reporters Respond fund, journalists under direct threat will continue to receive urgent assistance, such as emergency grants, relocation support, medical care, and replacement of confiscated or destroyed equipment. This enables journalists to continue their work when possible, or to reach safety when necessary.

Countries where journalists receive assistance include:

- **Sudan and Gaza**, where journalists face widespread violence, targeted attacks, and mass displacement.
- **Syria and Yemen**, where the conflict environment has resulted in persistent risks for reporting.
- **Ukraine**, where ongoing hostilities and targeted repression require continuous emergency protection.

Enhanced safety of journalists

Journalists and media workers operating in conflict zones or under repressive regimes, including those in exile, have increased access to practical safety guidance, risk assessments, and training in physical, digital, legal and psychosocial protection. In Sudan, for example, 20 community correspondents will be newly equipped with secure communication tools and safety training.



Relatives, colleagues and loved ones of Palestinian journalists Sari Mansour and Hasona Saliem, who were killed while working, mourn during funeral ceremony in Deir al-Balah, Gaza on November 19, 2023 (© Ali Jadallah, Getty Images, 2023)



Stronger local and regional safety networks, especially where journalists work underground or in exile.

The programme emphasises cooperation with trusted regional partners, including those supporting journalists working, either in exile (such as displaced Sudanese and Myanmar journalists), underground in territories controlled by armed groups, or remotely from neighbouring countries for safety reasons.

This further strengthens the resilience of media ecosystems where local reporting is severely restricted.

Strengthened preventive safety measures in crisis regions

Preventive support will expand access to risk awareness, digital protection tools, psycho-social referrals, and practical safety guidance. Examples include prevention efforts targeting journalists in:

- **Sudan**, where safe communication and digital protection are essential to avoid surveillance and reprisals.
- **Sahelian countries** affected by conflict spillover and disinformation-driven violence.
- **Horn of Africa**, where journalists operate under severe restrictions and security threats.

As journalists and newsrooms adopt new tools, most notably AI, to gather, verify and produce information, they are also exposed to new forms of digital threats. These include targeted hacking, surveillance, online harassment, and manipulation of AI-generated content. The rapidly shifting technological landscape makes robust digital security and prevention measures more essential than ever. In response, FPU is strengthening its own digital security support capacity. We are expanding our rapid-response mechanisms, and equipping our team with the skills and tools needed to assist journalists and partners with complex digital risk assessments, secure communication practices, and proactive prevention strategies. Digital safety self-learning through training tools such as Totem will remain accessible in these contexts.

Improved documentation of violations to support advocacy, including systematic tracking of attacks. Projects in 2026 highlight ongoing efforts to document threats, attacks, detentions, and harassment as a foundation for effective advocacy. For example, in Sudan, documentation of disappearances, targeted raids, and attacks on newsrooms will continue to inform national and international protection efforts.

This evidence base strengthens coordinated pressure on authorities and helps safety actors respond more effectively in conflict settings.

Increased access to legal defence and psychological support, also for those facing detention or SLAPPs.

By 2026, journalists in regions such as Latin America and Southern Africa will have access to legal support and guidance specifically to counter SLAPPs and other forms of judicial harassment. This support will enable them to continue reporting independently, even when facing lawsuits intended to intimidate or silence them.

Rapid support through Reporters Respond

Reporters Respond, FPU's emergency and legal support fund, active since 2011, remains a central pillar in this programme. It provides:

- rapid support through Reporters Respond assistance;
- emergency relocation;
- legal defence for prosecutions and arbitrary detentions;
- replacement of confiscated or destroyed equipment;
- psychosocial support;
- temporary subsistence support or family assistance;
- preventive safety measures (digital tools, PPE, insurance, protective gear).

In urgent cases, assistance can be delivered within 24 hours, allowing journalists to safely continue or quickly resume their work. This mechanism is particularly vital in places where crises escalate suddenly, as seen in Gaza, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Ukraine.



Building of TV Al-Sirat targeted and destroyed by an Israeli raid, seen as Hezbollah party organises a tour for international media inside the Southern Suburb of Beirut (© Abd Rabbo, ANP, 2024)

Theme 2: Media in Conflict

In 2026, conflict-affected communities continue to face information gaps, targeted threats to journalists, and widespread misinformation. Independent media remain essential for protecting human rights, ensuring accountability, and fostering social cohesion. However, journalists and media organisations operating in precarious and hostile environments require both preventive support to reduce risks and protective interventions when immediate threats arise.

This programme builds on the Safety for Voices programme, while incorporating lessons from current and future projects. These experiences emphasise the need for both rapid content distribution in crisis contexts and capacity-building for long-term resilience.

Strategic Objectives for 2026

The programme's goals are organised around two complementary strategies: **prevention** and **protection**. This way, we can focus on equipping journalists and media organisations with the skills, protocols, and tools

to mitigate risks before crises arise, while providing immediate support and interventions when threats materialise. This dual approach ensures that media professionals can continue their work safely, maintain organisational resilience, and respond effectively to threats when they occur. Specific objectives in this programme are:

- **Protect journalists under threat:** Provide timely physical, digital, legal or psychosocial support to journalists facing acute risks, including exiled reporters and those in highly volatile contexts such as Sudan.
- **Strengthen media organisations' resilience:** Help media outlets in conflict-affected settings establish safety protocols, secure operations, and continuity systems. Examples include collaborative editorial structures.
- **Enhance digital safety and secure information flows:** Equip journalists and newsrooms with the tools and skills needed to counter surveillance, cyberattacks, and online harassment, building on earlier-identified needs, for example in Sudan and other high-risk environments.



- **Increase preventive awareness and preparedness:** Support proactive risk planning, conflict-sensitive reporting, and preparedness for legal, physical, or online threats.
- **Safeguard access to independent information for affected communities:** Ensure communities in conflict zones continue to receive reliable, life-saving information through crisis-resilient content production and distribution mechanisms.
- **Strengthen advocacy for media safety in conflict settings:** Support local and international advocacy promoting independent media as a critical actor in crises, building on structures like the Sudan Media Forum's engagement work.

Expected outcomes

By 2026, Free Press Unlimited and partners will have strengthened the safety, resilience, and continuity of media organisations operating in conflict-affected or high-risk environments or in exile. Expected outcomes include:

Strengthened digital security and capacity building

Media professionals and outlets are trained in secure digital communication, safe storage and transfer of sensitive information, and use of protective technologies. Uptake of these tools is integrated into everyday workflows, reducing risks from online harassment, surveillance, and cyberattacks. For instance, journalists receive training in conflict-sensitive reporting and digital security.

Resilient media organisations

Media organisations implement internal safety protocols, protection measures for staff, and systems for secure content management. Networks of trusted media partners share knowledge and best practices, fostering collective resilience. In Sudan for example, Sudan Media Forum (SMF) members and Radio Dabanga (in exile) collaborate on editorial coordination, peer learning, and co-produced content to maintain operations under extreme pressure.

Sustained continuation of journalistic work under threat

Media outlets, supported through these programmes, can maintain independent reporting even in the face of increasing violence, censorship, or intimidation. This ensures that communities can continue to access reliable and independent news, as demonstrated by the ongoing work in other regions such as Mena, Sahel, Eastern Europe and Myanmar.

Theme 3: Information integrity and innovation

Information integrity refers to the reliability, accuracy, and trustworthiness of information as it is created, distributed, and consumed. It means ensuring that journalism remains independent and ethical, resistant to manipulation, disinformation, and external control. Strengthening information integrity helps citizens access verified, diverse perspectives; a foundation for well-informed participation.

Globally, access to reliable, independent information can no longer be taken for granted. Disinformation, propaganda, and algorithmic bias distort public debate, while authoritarian leaders tighten control over the media space. In many countries under authoritarian leadership, independent journalists face intimidation, censorship, and violence. In addition, online manipulation and political interference compromise journalistic independence, and political and corporate media capture and disinformation networks corrode trust in institutions.

These dynamics are particularly visible in regions where political instability, digital fragmentation, and shrinking civic space intersect. For example:

- In West Africa, disinformation campaigns have risen nearly fourfold since 2022, fueling coups, legitimising military juntas, and intensifying anti-democratic narratives. Russian-backed networks, state actors, and militant groups all play significant roles in manipulating the information landscape and undermining trust in independent media.

- Elsewhere, including Kenya and parts of Europe, coordinated spread of falsehoods target elections, civic activism, and marginalised communities, often blending online manipulation with offline intimidation and legal harassment.

Strategic objectives for 2026

In 2026, FPU will strengthen its role as a trusted actor promoting information integrity and innovation. The goal is to ensure that independent media can **detect**, **counter**, and **prevent** mis-, dis-, and mal-information, while citizens, especially in repressive and digitally complex environments, retain access to reliable information.

FPU will focus on:

- **Building resilient cross-border media networks**, enabling independent outlets to collaborate on verification, joint investigations, and rapid response to misinformation.
- **Using innovative tools and AI** to verify, localise, and safely disseminate content across multiple languages and platforms.
- **Strengthening local reporting capacity**, including training in investigative journalism, verification, and safety measures.
- **Enhancing audience trust**, through transparency, media literacy, and active engagement across digital and traditional channels.
- **Embedding prevention and protection measures**, supporting journalists and media organisations to anticipate risks and operate safely under threat.

Expected outcomes

A position paper on Information Integrity & Innovation

An FPU position paper will be developed in Q2 of 2026. This position paper will define FPU's approach to Information Integrity. It will clarify further why this programme is central to our mission, how it connects to democracy and media freedom, and what concrete steps FPU should take to boost its expertise and visibility

in this field. It will examine how mis-, dis-, and mal-information, often spread as propaganda, undermine democracy and public trust, and emphasise the role of investigative journalism as a cornerstone of information integrity. It will discuss the double-edged nature of technology and AI, which can both strengthen and threaten truthful reporting, and reflect on the influence of Big Tech and platform dependency in shaping public discourse and eroding democratic accountability.

Initiation of cross-border journalism to counter mis and disinformation

In the meantime we want to contribute through our projects, for instance in West Africa. We are implementing a locally rooted, cross-border journalism initiative to directly counter the growing disinformation crisis in West Africa and specifically the Sahel. Together with trusted partners, there will be activities around fact checking, awareness creation but foremost keeping independent media that produce trustworthy information alive - and producing factful news. This approach addresses the four key challenges faced by West African media, namely disinformation, identity gaps, security risks, and economic vulnerability, while fostering resilience, audience trust, and cross-border cooperation.

Collaborative Investigative Journalism Initiative

FPU also participates in the Collaborative Investigative Journalism Initiative CIJ3 - a European consortium led by Tactical Tech - in Germany. CIJI is carried out in partnership, by Tactical Tech (TT), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Fundacja Reporterow (FR), OBC Transeuropa (OBCT) and Delfi, and aims to be a network-based initiative that promotes ethical standards, offers training and capacity building opportunities and a forum for collaboration and peer-support in Europe. FPU contributes especially to AI related topics. We seek to re-think the use of AI by media and media development organisations through developing a common set of values, rules and instruments that take into account the long-term implications of AI use for journalism and society, and that can later be used in developing training programmes for journalists and instigating public discussion about responsible use of AI. Journalism grants are also part of this programme.



TRT Arabi Reporter, Reba Khalid al-Ajami reports from Gaza amid ongoing Israeli attacks in Rafah (© ANP, 2025)

Access to independent information as overarching principle

While each of the core programmes has its own focus, they are deeply interconnected and reinforce one another. Information integrity cannot be achieved without the safety of journalists, and independent media in conflict zones play a vital role in safeguarding truthful reporting in the midst of chaos and misinformation. Underpinning all three themes is FPU's overarching principle of access to independent information, the foundation upon which press freedom and democratic accountability rest. Together, these themes form the backbone of Free Press Unlimited's strategy to protect press freedom, strengthen reliable information ecosystems, and build a more resilient global media landscape. Their combined impact supports FPU's long-term ambition to be a trusted, innovative leader in defending independent journalism worldwide.

Strengthening resilience in Eastern Europe through media innovation

In 2026, through our Czech office, [Free Press in Eastern Europe \(FPEE\)](#), we will support societal resilience and drive innovation for Belarusians through targeted media and information communication strategies, serving as tools for exiled media outlets. We will also continue to create cross-border and cross-sectoral collaborations in Central and Eastern Europe through the [SCIENCE+ network](#), which spans Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and beyond. Our work involves organising events, carrying out research, and running a content fund, all focused on a whole-of-society approach to fostering informational integrity. This initiative also involves developing an AI-powered tool to help journalists identify cross-border trends in information manipulation and find ethical, effective ways to counter them.

All these efforts facilitate co-production and content exchange, as well as new approaches to media viability among 20 newsrooms across 13 countries in Eastern Europe, the Baltics, and Central Asia. Ultimately, this empowers their audiences to make more informed decisions about their future.

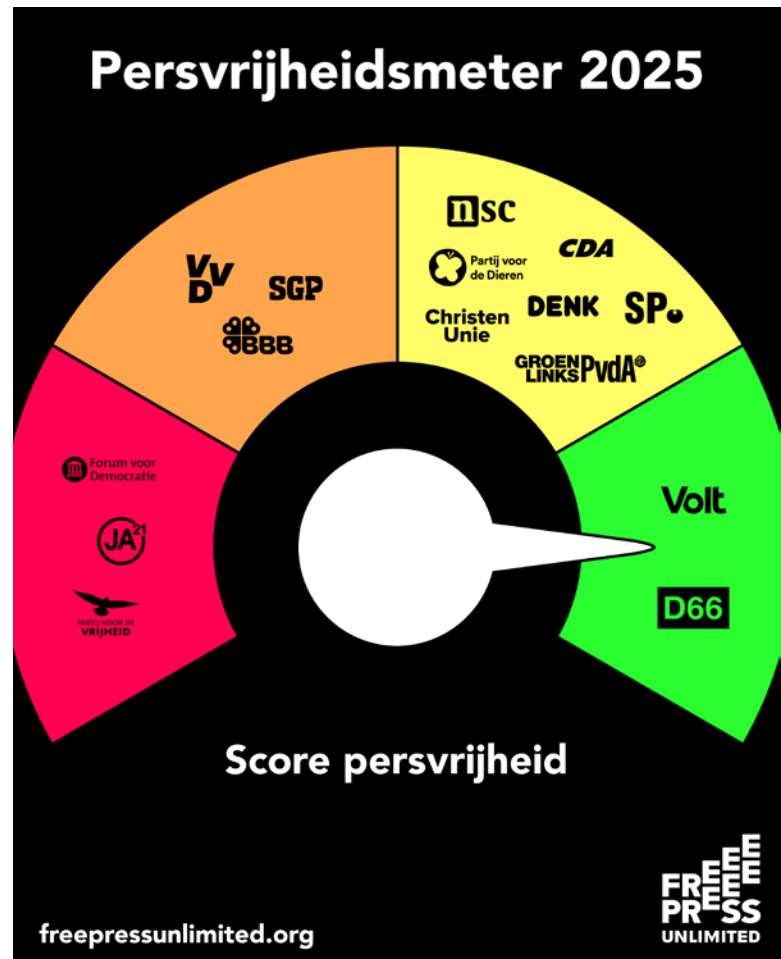
Policy & advocacy

The international environment for promoting press freedom continued to deteriorate over the past year. Global democratic backsliding, ongoing international conflicts, and the West's, at least partial, withdrawal from active democracy promotion all contributed to this decline. Within this increasingly challenging context, Free Press Unlimited's Policy & Advocacy team will continue to exert its influence on international policy frameworks that shape media freedom and the safety of journalists, with a particular focus on European and multilateral arenas. Building on the momentum of 2025, our advocacy will prioritise promoting accountability for attacks on journalists, advancing protective legal frameworks such as anti-SLAPP legislation, and reinforcing support for sustainable, independent media ecosystems.

Dutch Elections and Political Engagement 2026

National elections were held in the Netherlands on 29 October 2025. We will closely monitor the results and the formation of a new government continuing into 2026. Building on the relationships we have established with outgoing Members of Parliament and their parliamentary assistants, we will continue to strengthen and expand our network among newly elected Parliamentarians. We will also use the findings of the Political Press Freedom Meter, developed around the Dutch elections, to inform our advocacy during the coalition formation process and to support our strategic engagement with political parties.

Our primary objective is to ensure that press freedom remains high on both the national and international political and policy agenda. To this end, we will continue proactive engagement with key parliamentary committees, including the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and Education, Culture and Science (which covers domestic media freedom issues). We will also continue to collaborate with like-minded organisations and coalitions, including the Breed Mensenrechten Overleg (BMO), to advance human rights as a cornerstone of Dutch foreign policy.





National Legislative developments and legal protection

In the coming year, Free Press Unlimited will give particular attention to legislative developments that directly affect press freedom in the Netherlands, including the transposition of the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive and the draft anti-terrorism law currently under discussion in Parliament. We will continue to coordinate its activities with key actors, such as the Dutch Association for Journalists (NVJ) and NDP Nieuwsmedia, to address the impact of both legislative processes on press freedom and journalism in the Netherlands. With regard to SLAPPs, in collaboration with investigative collective Spit, we are also actively working towards improved protection for freelance investigative journalists. These efforts include raising awareness of the legal risks associated with international journalism collaborations, as well as preventive measures aligned with the legal support provided through Reporters Respond.

Research on online violence against journalists

In 2025, we also laid the groundwork for our research on online violence against journalists. Together with national and international partners, we are collecting and analysing data to better understand the scope and dynamics of this growing threat. Building further on this in 2026, our first objective is to map and assess the scale of online violence targeting journalists. Our second is to examine the extent to which journalists report such incidents, and how online platforms respond. To this end, we will develop a dedicated survey for journalists who have experienced online violence. Ultimately, this research will strengthen our advocacy efforts. Emerging international legislation, such as the Digital Services Act, presents promising opportunities to hold online platforms accountable when they fail to meet their responsibilities in addressing online violence.

Global Legal Advocacy and Coalition Engagement

Furthermore, in cooperation with Media Defence and other legal actors, including the High-Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom, we will continue to advocate for stronger responses to the global legal crackdown on journalists. Our advocacy will include engagement around specific cases - such as imprisoned journalists or those targeted under foreign agent laws and other abusive legislation. We will also remain an active member of the Consultative Network of the Media Freedom Coalition in 2026, and, as in previous years, will continue to present emblematic cases for diplomatic action to coalition member states, through embassy networks and other established mechanisms.

Donor relations

The media funding landscape is undergoing a fast-paced transformation, driven by political shifts, reduced Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds - government resources for international development that support human rights, media freedom, and independent journalism - and changes in donor priorities. The US government's withdrawal of funding in January 2025 has created both a financial and political vacuum that cannot be replaced, while public interest media faces growing pressure amid a global information environment dominated by disinformation. In this context, collaboration and strategic engagement with donors and like-minded actors have never been more important.

Strategic approach

Free Press Unlimited aims to strengthen its donor relations through closer collaboration with partners, internally with Policy & Advocacy, and across international networks. This includes:

- **Coalition-building and advocacy:** Working with like-minded organisations to amplify collective voices, align messaging, and conduct coordinated, more direct lobbying at both government and multilateral levels to safeguard funding for independent media in close cooperation with Policy & Advocacy.
- **Networks and partnerships:** Maintaining active engagement in formal and informal networks, such as TED, FFPA, and GFMD, to strategically mobilise resources and anticipate shifts in the funding landscape.
- **Strategic donor management:** Strengthening existing partnerships with bilateral and multilateral institutions at both HQ and field level, while exploring new forms of collaboration to diversify Free Press Unlimited's donor portfolio.
- **Enhanced foresight and analysis:** Developing sophisticated tools to assess donor trends, anticipate institutional funding gaps, and respond quickly to a fast-moving landscape. This enables more targeted strategies to secure long-term financial sustainability and ensure FPU remains agile and impactful.

By proactively adapting to these challenges and opportunities, FPU seeks to protect and propagate funding for independent media, thereby safeguarding its continued role in preserving information integrity and press freedom worldwide.

As autocracies expand, press freedom and journalist safety face unprecedented threats worldwide. Protecting sensitive data and safeguarding partners is more critical than ever to ensure that the vital work of press freedom organisations can continue.

To reinforce its operations and information security, FPU is implementing Odoo, a new project management platform. With its integrated systems, Odoo is expected to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency, enabling FPU to focus more on its mission rather than on administrative tasks.

Following development and initial testing in 2025, FPU will gradually migrate its projects to Odoo from 2026. Once fully operational, the platform is set to improve data management and team collaboration, and to enable faster, more informed decision-making. This will help FPU to maximise impact while maintaining the highest standards of digital security.



Relatives, colleagues and loved ones of Palestinian journalists Sari Mansour and Hasona Saliem, who were killed while working, mourn during funeral ceremony in Deir al-Balah, Gaza on November 19, 2023 (© Ali Jadallah, Getty Images, 2023)

Communications

In 2026, Free Press Unlimited will align all communication channels with the new organisational structure and thematic focus. The priority will be to use communications not merely to explain the organisation and our practice, but more purposefully to achieve strategic objectives. This means designing our website, social media, and other channels to better support fundraising, engagement, and advocacy goals. While the new structure and long-term programmes will be clearly reflected in our messaging, the emphasis will be on communicating with impact, reaching audiences effectively, strengthening support for independent media, and driving concrete outcomes for the organisation.

Press relations

In the coming year, we will focus on strengthening Free Press Unlimited's voice as a leading advocate for press freedom worldwide in the media. We will concentrate on impactful stories that highlight the power of independent journalism and the resilience of our partners. By deepening our relationships with journalists and increasing the visibility of our work, we aim to stimulate greater awareness, solidarity and support for a free and safe media environment.

Social media: more collaboration

In the coming year we will build on the growing audience on our social media channels. We will do so by seeking more collaboration posts on Instagram, and by working together with other organisations and align on messaging and post scheduling on LinkedIn. In this way, we not only leverage the exposure of the other organisation (this is mutual), but we also underpin our message to our following with buy-in from other important players in the field. We will also build on Bluesky as an advocacy tool, since more and more politicians are found on the platform.

Our core messaging on our organic platforms will be anchored around the safety of journalists, with a focus on conflict zones and current affairs. Formulating statements and raising concerns is an important strategy on all our channels to keep our following engaged and to attract new followers.

Paid digital marketing: a broader audience

With our 'Always On' campaign we will continue to raise awareness about our organisation and mission. The aim is to broaden our audience and entice them to visit our website. Our conversion points for 2026 will be donation and newsletter subscriptions. The latter in order to engage our new audience for a longer term and bond them to our organisation on a more structural (potential donation) level.

Humanitarian work

While Free Press Unlimited is not primarily a humanitarian organisation, the humanitarian dimension is an important part of our work, particularly in supporting journalists in crisis and conflict settings. In 2026, we will convey this aspect more consciously into our communications, highlighting our contribution to the safety and wellbeing of media professionals without positioning the organisation as a humanitarian actor. The emphasis will be on striking a balance: informing donors and stakeholders of our impact in humanitarian contexts, while keeping the focus on our core mission of press freedom, access to reliable information, and support for independent media.

Globally, we are witnessing the erosion of democracy, and the pressure on press freedom is increasing. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that all individuals recognise that independent journalism cannot be taken for granted and that they, together with our existing 1,200 donors, can contribute to protecting it. With institutional funding currently declining, our ambition is to build a broader and more engaged community of donors.

Donors

In 2026, we will therefore focus strongly on consolidating our relationship with existing donors. We will actively invest energy in retaining existing (middle, and major) private funders through a tailor-made donor program and donor journey.

We also want to attract new private funders and continue to build a community of people who not only donate but also help spread our message. To achieve this, we will use various channels to attract new donors and launch a campaign to convert one-time private funders into regular contributors.

1 Website

With a renewed and strengthened fundraising team, and in close collaboration with the communications team, we will make sure we impart a recognisable and consistent message about the importance of press freedom, while creating more opportunities for connection and engagement with our supporters. We will draw more attention to the need for donations on our website, in addition to the existing substantive articles, and make some structural adjustments that are donation-oriented.

2 Masterclasses & corporate fundraising

We will continue to engage our network of ambassadors to give masterclasses that raise awareness about the importance of press freedom in The Netherlands. Connecting with the community by offering masterclasses, in libraries for example, will remain a goal for 2026. In addition, we will use these masterclasses as a tool to build partnerships with companies in order to raise funds. Fundraising within the corporate sector will receive extra attention in 2026. We will actively seek out companies that share our mission and are willing to support us financially.

3 Foundations

We will also continue to strengthen our relationships with foundations. We will deepen cooperation with existing partners and actively seek new partners who share the same interest in democracy, human rights or press freedom.

The importance of press freedom is gaining more attention in the media and society. This growing visibility and sense of urgency make this the right moment to attract new private funders and partners and to work together toward a future in which independent journalism and press freedom is protected and strengthened.

Works council

In 2026, the Works Council (WC) will continue to play an active and constructive role in safeguarding staff wellbeing, monitoring organisational developments, and ensuring transparent, timely communication between employees, management, and the Supervisory Board. Following the recent reorganisation, the WC's focus will be on early identification of risks, strengthening internal accountability, and supporting a healthy, safe, and collaborative work culture.

Objectives

The WC will concentrate on several key areas that reflect the concerns and suggestions raised by employees:

- **Monitoring the new reorganisation**
The WC will closely follow the implementation and effects of the restructuring, paying particular attention to workload, role clarity, and the functioning of newly created or adapted positions.
- **Safeguarding employee wellbeing**
The WC will advise management on ways to strengthen mental, social, and professional wellbeing, and will monitor signs of stress, burnout risks, or structural pressure points within teams.
- **Reviewing communication practices of the MT**
The WC will assess whether internal communication is timely, transparent, and accessible, and will provide recommendations for improvement where necessary.
- **Monitoring revisions to HR policies and internal regulations**
This includes reviewing updates to the travel policy, training policy, and any role descriptions or responsibilities linked to new positions.
- **Observing organisational work culture**
The WC will actively look for patterns or signals that could potentially lead to conflicts or incidents, with the aim of reducing the number of workplace issues and promoting safe and respectful collaboration.

- **Reviewing internal accountability systems**

The WC will analyse whether staff concerns, complaints, and feedback are handled consistently and effectively across the organisation.

- **Following the implementation of Odoo**

The WC will monitor how the introduction of Odoo impacts workflows, administrative workload, and staff experience, and will pinpoint potential issues early.

Ways of working in 2026

Based on employee input, the WC will maintain an ongoing and accessible dialogue with staff to identify emerging issues at an early stage. Regular updates and open consultation moments will ensure that employees feel heard and informed.

The WC will continue to have its twice-yearly meetings with the Supervisory Board, ensuring that staff perspectives are represented at the governance level.

Finally, the WC plans to conduct an employee satisfaction survey (or an alternative evaluation instrument) to assess the impact of the reorganisation on staff morale, mental health, workload, and professional wellbeing. The results will be used to guide further advice to management and shape the WC's agenda for the remainder of 2026.

In 2026, Free Press Unlimited will continue to strengthen its organisational capacity to remain resilient in a rapidly changing environment. Our focus lies in ensuring that our teams are equipped, supported and connected so they can deliver high-quality work in line with our mission and strategic ambitions.

Organisational culture

We will continue to invest in an inclusive and collaborative working environment where staff feel safe, respected, and able to contribute meaningfully to our mission. Strengthening internal cohesion remains essential as our programmes grow in scale and complexity. To support stronger connection across the organisation, we will introduce a Community Week focused on strengthening relationships, reinforcing belonging, and creating shared moments across teams.

Strategic workforce planning

To remain effective in a rapidly changing environment, we will strengthen long-term workforce planning. This includes ensuring that key expertise in digital skills,

safety, and knowledge sharing is represented across the organisation and aligned with strategic priorities. In this way, we can anticipate challenges, support our programmes effectively, and ensure that our teams are equipped to deliver on our mission.

Employee wellbeing and engagement

The wellbeing of our staff is crucial to our ability to operate in demanding and often high-pressure contexts. In 2026, we will continue to support psychological safety, professional development and opportunities for growth, thus enabling staff to remain engaged and confident in their roles.

Recruitment and retention

We will fill vacancies efficiently in the Netherlands. Retention will be strengthened by improving onboarding and promoting internal mobility. This could include project rotation, cross-training, where employees gain skills in other roles or projects, thereby increasing flexibility and opportunities to take on new responsibilities within funded projects.



Volunteers help to clear collapsed building after one month of the strong earthquake in Naypyitaw, Myanmar
(© ANP, 2025)

Budget 2026

The budget is drawn up in accordance with the Dutch Accounting Standards for Fundraising Institutions, Richtlijn 650, revised in 2025. This means that the income represents the total budgeted grant amount value for projects and other funding. The expenses are presented in three categories and include the following:

- 1. Programme costs:** all direct programme costs budgeted for the Media support objective.
- 2. Fundraising:** an allocation of 17.98% of all non-directly attributable costs, 7% of the total income.
- 3. Management & accounting:** an allocation of 10.98% of all non-directly attributable costs, 3.9% of the total expenses.

83% of the total budgeted income of EUR 16,361,000 for 2026, was contracted in 2025. This is higher than the 66% income for 2025, contracted in 2024.

The fundraising target is EUR 2.1 Mio. In 2025, we submitted proposals for this amount and initial responses were positive. Around EUR 675,000 is projected to be generated as unearmarked income. The budget has no deficit. The budget is built on already contracted grants plus submitted proposals and extrapolation of possible unearmarked income.

We are confident that we can generate the projected income. The portion of Dutch MFA in our total funding will grow by 10% compared to the budget of 2025 (35%) and is therefore, at 45%, higher than in recent years. The contribution of the EU is expected to decrease from 23% in 2025 to 18% in 2026, while other government contributions remain stable at around 16% (14% in 2025). This shift in dependencies is a result of the sudden withdrawal of US funding in 2025.

Ratios	2026	2025	2024
Objective expenditure / total income	97,3%	92,6%	93,5%
Objective expenditure / total expenses	89,8%	92,6%	93,6%
Fundraising costs / fundraising income	7,0%	4,5%	3,6%
Management & administration / total expenses	3,9%	2,9%	2,8%



INCOME (in €)	2026	2025	2024	variance
Various governments - Radio Tamazuj	132.000	439.000	742.000	-307.000
Various governments - Sudan	2.263.000	1.880.000	2.460.000	383.000
Various governments - Eurasia	174.000	1.867.000	2.000.000	-1.693.000
Various governments - Ethical Journalism Syria	725.000	747.000	2.155.000	-22.000
Various governments - Bangladesh	115.000	947.000	960.000	-832.000
European Union - IMS/ Near South	686.000	660.000	589.000	26.000
Dutch MFA / EU - Safety for Media Professionals	3.036.000	2.246.000	2.270.000	790.000
Anonymous donor - Good News For Democracy	3.100.000	3.847.000	3.285.000	-747.000
Dutch MFA / EU - Western Balkan	21.000	8.000	703.000	13.000
Dutch MFA / EU - Somalia	454.000	419.000	704.000	35.000
Dutch MFA - IPDC	-	9.000	-	-9.000
Dutch Embassy - Great Lakes	215.000	285.000	218.000	-70.000
Dutch Embassy / EU - Venezuela	64.000	566.000	1.026.000	-502.000
Dutch Embassy - Jordan	349.000	763.000	665.000	-414.000
Dutch Embassy - Pakistan	113.000	180.000		-67.000
Dutch Embassy /EU - [classified]	721.000	67.000	113.000	654.000
Dutch Embassy - Costa Rica	68.000	240.000	239.000	-172.000
Dutch Embassy - Congo-Kinshasa	-	20.000	292.000	-20.000
Dutch MFA - Sahel	240.000	-	-	240.000
European Union - Kenya	177.000	-	-	177.000
Dutch Embassy - Algeria	52.000	99.000	-	-47.000
Dutch Embassy - Tunisia	109.000	-	-	109.000
Department of State	-	653.000	238.000	-653.000
Anonymous donor - Nicaragua	-	326.000	467.000	-326.000
Various donors*	-	9.433.000	4.200.000	-9.433.000
Other	427.000	8.000	4.000	419.000
Income from government subsidies	13.241.000	25.709.000	23.330.000	-12.468.000

Dutch Postcode Lottery - Structural	1.000.000	900.000	900.000	100.000
Dutch Postcode Lottery - A Safer World for the Truth	-	-	570.000	-
Dutch Postcode Lottery - Mind the Children	-	-	45.000	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Income from Lottery organisations	1.000.000	900.000	1.515.000	100.000

UNESCO / UNICEF	-	155.000	-	-155.000
Various donors - Media Lifeline Ukraine	-	-	585.000	-
Ford Foundation	75.000	73.000	-	2.000
Other	-	-	135.000	-
Income from other non profit organisations	75.000	228.000	720.000	-153.000

Various contributions	95.000	-	47.000	95.000
Other (unearmarked)*	325.000	250.000	250.000	75.000
Income from companies	420.000	250.000	297.000	170.000

Contributions from various private donors	350.000	300.000	200.000	50.000
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Total income	15.086.000	27.387.000	22.485.000	-12.301.000
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EXPENSES	2026	2025	2024	variance
Programme costs	14.678.009	26.853.362	21.034.222	-12.175.353
Fundraising	1.038.622	1.165.915	802.426	-127.294
Management & administration	634.370	850.723	633.352	-216.353
Total expenses	16.351.000	28.870.000	22.470.000	-12.519.000

Result before financial gains and losses	-1.265.000	-1.483.000	15.000	218.000
Financial gains and losses	-10.000	10.000	-15.000	-20.000
Balance income and expenses	-1.275.000	-1.473.000	-	198.000
Allocation of result				
Continuity reserve	-	-	-	-
Appropriated fund NPL*	-1.275.000	-1.473.000	-	198.000
Total	-1.275.000	-1.473.000	-	198.000

* NB. The appropriated fund NPL for programme activities was formed in 2022 and is expected to be depleted by the end of 2026.

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