

THREE-DAY REGIONAL WORKSHOP AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

Strengthening Regional Temporary Relocation Pathways for Human Rights Defenders in EU Candidate Countries and Neighbouring EU Member States

DATE 14–16 October 2026	1	2	3
LOCATION Tirana, Albania	DAY 1 · 14 OCT	DAY 2 · 15 OCT	DAY 3 · 16 OCT
	VENUE Europe House 09:00–16:30 Internal Workshop for Implementing Organisations	VENUE Rogner Hotel Tirana – Antigonea Room 09:00–17:00 Putting EU Candidate Countries on the Map – Building a Regional Ecosystem for HRD Support	VENUE Art Explora 09:00–12:30 Moving Forward: Consolidation, Strategy and Next Steps

The programme combines internal working sessions for participating organisations with a broader multi-stakeholder dialogue on 15 October and a final strategy session on 16 October.

Background and Rationale

Human rights defenders (HRDs) across Europe and its neighbouring regions increasingly require flexible forms of protection, including emergency support, temporary relocation, short-term hosting, and rest-and-respite opportunities. Across EU Candidate Countries and neighbouring contexts, civil society organisations and other actors already provide different forms of such support. Much of this work, however, remains informal or fragmented and is not always connected to established European protection mechanisms, referral networks, funding opportunities, or longer-term institutional partnerships.

This creates an opportunity to look more systematically at the role that EU Candidate Countries and neighbouring EU Member States can play within the wider European protection ecosystem for human rights defenders. The initiative aims to understand what capacities already exist, what gaps remain, and how regional actors can connect more effectively with established relocation, shelter, fellowship, municipal

hosting and rest-and-respite initiatives. It also opens a discussion on how municipalities, civil society organisations, universities, cultural institutions, diplomatic actors and public institutions could contribute to more diverse and geographically accessible protection pathways.

The three-day programme in Tirana is structured to move from internal mapping and relationship-building to wider dialogue and then to practical follow-up. On 14 October, participating organisations will map existing resources, protection practices, gaps and opportunities for cooperation. On 15 October, external institutions and European and international protection actors will join the discussion to connect regional needs with existing responses and explore approaches that could be adapted or strengthened in the region. On 16 October, participating organisations will reconvene to consolidate lessons, identify realistic opportunities for cooperation and agree priorities for next steps.

DAY 1 · 14 OCTOBER 2026

Internal Workshop for Implementing Organisations

01

09:00–16:30 · Europe House — 8RCF+399, Papa Gjon Pali II Street AL, 1000

Focus: A small internal workshop exclusively for implementing organisations working in the region or exploring engagement there. The day will build trust, map existing resources and experience, and explore practical cooperation on protection and temporary relocation for HRDs.

Facilitator: **Armando Bode**

Methodological approach: A facilitated conversation among peers, beginning with the convenors' vision and an icebreaker and trust-building session to establish the basis for open exchange. Introductions will prepare participants for the substantive mapping and cooperation discussions.

09:00–09:30 ARRIVAL & WELCOME COFFEE

09:30–09:50 Convenors' Introduction & Vision

Purpose: Explain why the convenors have brought this group together and the vision behind the gathering.

- Introduce the convenors and their interest in regional protection and temporary relocation pathways.
- Set out the ambition for the three days and how this internal exchange will shape the discussions on 15 and 16 October.
- Clarify the purpose of the small group and invite participants to help shape its shared priorities.

09:50–10:10 Icebreaker & Trust Building

Purpose: Help participants get to know one another beyond organisational roles and establish what they need for an open and useful exchange.

Format: In pairs, participants share what brought them to this work and an example of supportive collaboration. In plenary, participants identify the conditions needed for open exchange and agree how to handle information shared during the workshop.

10:10–11:50 Introductions of Participating Organisations

Format: Brief introductions, with equal time for each organisation. Invite each organisation to cover the same prompts so participants can recognise shared interests and complementary experience.

- Who we are, where we work, and our current or prospective engagement in the region.

- Our protection, shelter or temporary relocation work and the resources and knowledge we bring.
- What we hope to learn, what support we need, and our interest in cooperation.

Timing: 20 organisations × 5 minutes = 100 minutes. Use a visible timer and move directly between organisations; hold questions for the subsequent discussions.

11:50–12:05

COFFEE BREAK

12:05–13:45

Session I — Mapping Resources and Regional Practices

Purpose: Build a shared picture of what participating organisations already do or are exploring, and identify capacities, knowledge and gaps across the region.

THEMES

- Existing formal and informal protection, shelter and hosting practices in candidate countries and neighbouring EU Member States.
- Resources and knowledge: hosting capacity, support services, local networks, funding and operational experience.
- Lessons from practice: what works, what does not, and challenges in referrals, security, ethics and sustainability.
- Interest in cooperation: what organisations could contribute and what they need to develop their work.

Format: Participants will jointly map their capacities, experience and support needs, using practical examples to identify gaps and lessons from existing protection, shelter and relocation practices. The discussion will conclude by identifying shared priorities for the afternoon.

GUIDING QUESTION

Where could our existing resources and knowledge help address one another's needs?

Indicative output: A shared map of capacities, experience, gaps and interest in cooperation.

13:45–14:45

LUNCH

14:45–16:30

Session II — From Shared Needs to Practical Cooperation and Regional Pathways

Purpose: Build on the morning's relationships and mapping to explore how participating organisations could support one another in practice and strengthen regional and cross-border cooperation.

WORKING QUESTIONS

- Which of the shared priorities could be addressed through cooperation?
- What could we offer one another through referrals, knowledge exchange or coordinated hosting?

- What would we need to clarify before working together, including capacity, responsibilities and communication?
- Which organisations would like to explore a joint initiative or continue a specific conversation?
- What cooperation is realistic across the Western Balkans and neighbouring EU Member States?
- What connections could be explored across Eastern Partnership contexts, Türkiye and transregional protection pathways?
- How can we build on existing initiatives and avoid duplication?

Format: Small-group work on possible cooperation, followed by a plenary discussion of regional connections, interested organisations and questions to carry into Days 2 and 3. The session will conclude with agreement on the findings to share in the wider dialogue and issues for further internal discussion.

Indicative output: A short list of shared priorities and possible collaborations, with interested organisations identified, alongside agreed findings and questions for Days 2 and 3.

16:30

END OF DAY 1

Evening Reception & Networking — Art Explora

19:00–21:00

Vila 31, Rruga Ismail Qemali 17

DAY 2 · 15 OCTOBER 2026

Putting EU Candidate Countries on the Map – Building a Regional Ecosystem for HRD Support

02

09:00–17:00 · Rogner Hotel — Antigonea Room

Focus: Bringing external stakeholders into the discussion to examine protection needs and challenges for human rights defenders (HRDs) in the region, connect these with existing European and international protection responses, and explore how relevant relocation models and capacities could be adapted and strengthened in EU Candidate Countries and neighbouring EU Member States.

Methodological approach: Short expert inputs, moderated discussion and facilitated multi-stakeholder exchange. The day should prioritise dialogue and exchange over formal presentations, with the aim of connecting different perspectives and identifying concrete entry points for cooperation.

09:00–09:15 MORNING COFFEE & WELCOME

09:15–09:45 Opening Remarks

- **H.E. Marleen Monster**, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Albania
- **Jorida Tabaku**, Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Means of Public Information, Parliament of Albania
- **Adea Pirdeni**, State Minister for Public Administration and Anti-Corruption (tbc)
- **Cinzia Tarletti**, Head of Section for Good Governance and Rule of Law of the EU Delegation

09:45–11:00 Session I — The Regional Picture: HRDs at Risk and Protection Needs

Moderator: **Gjergji Vurmo**, Founder of Elevate Consulting

Purpose: To establish a shared understanding of the protection environment in Albania and the wider region, building on the experiences and analysis of organisations working directly with HRDs and protection actors.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What are the main protection needs and gaps in the region?
- Where are existing national and regional responses insufficient?

Format: Short inputs followed by moderated discussion.

SPEAKERS

- **Dr. Blerjana Bino**, Executive Director, SCiDEV — *Regional analysis and civic space context*
- **Klotilda Kosta**, Chair of the Board, Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) — *Regional civil society / HRD protection perspective*

- **Marko Milosavljević**, Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia — *Regional civil society / human rights defenders' perspective*
- **Frederique Hanotier**, Team Leader – Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights, European Union Office to Kosovo
- **Alina Mirzoyan**, Dignity NGO — *Perspective from neighbouring EU Member States and experience in the protection of human rights defenders*

THEMES

- Current civic space and protection realities in the region.
- Main risks and threats faced by HRDs.
- Who requires temporary relocation, shelter or rest-and-respite support, and under what circumstances?
- Existing formal and informal protection responses.
- Gaps in current protection pathways.
- Cross-border and regional dimensions of HRD protection.
- Specific challenges and opportunities in EU Candidate Countries.

11:00–11:15

COFFEE BREAK

11:15–12:45

Session II — European and International Perspectives: Existing Responses, Gaps and Emerging Opportunities

Moderator: **Megi Reçi**, Project Coordinator, IDEA International

Purpose: To bring together European and international perspectives on the protection of human rights defenders, looking beyond existing protection mechanisms to consider the broader range of tools, initiatives and approaches that can contribute to strengthening protection pathways for HRDs in the region.

The session should provide space both for established protection actors and for institutional, advocacy and emerging initiatives to reflect on what currently exists, what remains unaddressed, and where there may be opportunities to develop new approaches or strengthen existing ones.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What European and international tools, mechanisms and initiatives currently contribute to the protection of HRDs?
- What do these approaches offer, and where are their limitations?
- Which protection needs remain insufficiently addressed?
- What new approaches, initiatives or forms of cooperation could help address these gaps?
- What lessons could be relevant for EU Candidate Countries and neighbouring EU Member States?

Format: Short inputs from different perspectives, followed by a moderated exchange. Contributions should be complementary and focus on practical experience, lessons learned, existing gaps and opportunities for further action.

SPEAKERS

- **Dr. Stefan Krauss, European Parliament** — European approaches, political engagement, networks and instruments supporting HRDs.
- **Javier Roura Blanco, ProtectDefenders.eu** — European and global protection mechanisms, including emergency support and temporary relocation of HRDs at risk.
- **Marinah Rahmat, Justice & Peace Netherlands and Nicoleta Mitut, Municipality of Deventer** — The Shelter City model and experience of supporting HRDs across different local contexts.
- **Evgeny Shtorn, Araminta** — Proposal for an EU Directive on Mobility and Protection for Human Rights Defenders.
- **Guadalupe Marengo, Amnesty International** — Advocacy for safe-haven programmes outside the EU.

THEMES

- Existing European and international protection mechanisms and responses.
- Different approaches to temporary relocation, shelter, rest-and-respite and fellowship-based support.
- Broader political, institutional and advocacy tools that can contribute to HRD protection.
- What works, for whom and under what conditions?
- Operational, security and ethical considerations.
- Referral and coordination mechanisms.
- Sustainability and funding.
- What existing instruments do not currently address, and where are the most significant gaps?
- Emerging proposals, initiatives and advocacy efforts seeking to address these gaps.
- Lessons from established and emerging approaches that may be relevant to the regional context.

12:45–13:00

Transition / Key Takeaways

Blerjana Bino

Synthesis: Regional needs → existing responses → lessons and gaps.

13:00–14:00

LUNCH

Lunch offered by the European Parliament Antenna in the Western Balkans

14:00–15:15

Session III — What Could Work Here? Exploring Regional Approaches to HRD Protection

Facilitator: **Armando Bode**

Purpose: To explore what a context-sensitive regional protection ecosystem could look like, drawing on existing capacities and lessons from elsewhere while identifying approaches that

respond specifically to the realities of EU Candidate Countries and neighbouring EU Member States.

GUIDING QUESTION

What could realistically be developed, strengthened or connected in the region to respond to the protection needs identified?

Format: Facilitated working groups, followed by a brief plenary exchange. Participants will explore different components of a SWOT analysis and identify potential approaches, actors and opportunities for cooperation.

WORKING QUESTIONS

- What would need to be adapted to the regional context?
- **Contributions** — What could participating organisations contribute, and what additional resources or support would be needed?
- **Pilots** — Are there specific initiatives or approaches that could be tested or developed?

POSSIBLE AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

- Temporary relocation pathways.
- Rest-and-respite arrangements.
- Municipal hosting and city-to-city cooperation.
- University and fellowship-based hosting.
- Cultural and institutional solidarity.
- Cross-border referral mechanisms.
- Cooperation with neighbouring EU Member States.
- Links between protection, advocacy and diplomatic engagement.
- Funding and sustainability.
- Potential new or complementary approaches beyond existing protection instruments.
- Opportunities and constraints linked to EU integration.

15:15–15:30

COFFEE BREAK

15:30–16:45

Session IV — From Needs and Models to Partnerships: Building a Regional Protection Ecosystem

Facilitator: **Armando Bode**

Purpose: To move from the needs, gaps and opportunities identified throughout the day towards concrete ideas for cooperation. The session will explore which actors, capacities and resources could be connected or developed to strengthen protection pathways for HRDs in the region.

Format: Facilitated multi-stakeholder working session.

WORKING QUESTIONS

- **Responsibilities** — How could interested organisations share responsibilities?
- **Partnerships** — Who could realistically contribute to addressing these gaps?

- **Pathways** — How could the cooperation, referral or hosting arrangements identified be put into practice?

INDICATIVE OUTPUTS

- Preliminary proposals for cooperation, drawing on the needs, assets and gaps already identified.
- Identification of potential institutional and civil society partners.
- Indicative contributions and responsibilities of interested organisations.
- Potential pilot initiatives or areas for further exploration.
- Key questions requiring further strategic discussion.

Proposed contributions from external partners will require confirmation through follow-up.

16:45–17:00

Closing Reflections & Outlook for Day 3

Blerjana Bino

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Which cooperation proposals should be taken forward for further internal discussion?
- Which issues require further internal reflection and strategic discussion?

The outputs and questions emerging from the day will feed into the internal strategic discussions on 16 October.

Diplomatic reception hosted by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Albania

17:30

Venue: Asim Zeneli Street

DAY 3 · 16 OCTOBER 2026

Moving Forward: Consolidation, Strategy and Next Steps

03

09:00–12:30 · Art Explora — Vila 31, Rruga Ismail Qemali 17

Focus: Internal strategy discussion and future planning.

Facilitator: Armando Bode

09:00–09:30 MORNING COFFEE AND INFORMAL EXCHANGE

09:30–11:30 Internal Strategy Session — From Discussion to Action: What Should Happen Next?

Facilitated by: **Armando Bode**

INTERNAL STRATEGIC DISCUSSION

- Main lessons from the workshop.
- Immediate opportunities for cooperation.
- Potential pilot initiatives.
- Outstanding questions to resolve before the proposed actions can proceed.
- Operational priorities and first actions moving forward, with indicative responsibilities and timeframes.

Format: Participants will agree priorities from the proposals developed on Day 2, complete initial action plans and agree follow-up coordination in one working session.

FOLLOW-UP ARRANGEMENTS

- What type of regional alliance or coordination structure is needed?
- What resources are available or could realistically be mobilised?
- How can participating organisations remain connected?
- What advocacy priorities should be developed collectively?
- Possibilities for future meetings, exchanges or joint proposals.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

- Agreement on follow-up coordination.
- Identification of working groups or focal points.
- Draft roadmap for future collaboration, identifying agreed actions, responsibilities and indicative timeframes.
- Initial timeline for next steps and a date to review progress.

11:30–12:30 Plenary Restitution / Final Reflections

Facilitated by: **Armando Bode**

12:30 CLOSING REMARKS AND END OF WORKSHOP · LUNCH

The regional workshop “Strengthening Regional Temporary Relocation Pathways for Human Rights Defenders in EU Candidate Countries and Neighbouring EU Member States” is organised and implemented by ProtectDefenders.eu, Justice and Peace Netherlands, Araminta Advisers and the Center Science and Innovation for Development (SCiDEV).

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