

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

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

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

DATE	TIME	VENUE
15 October 2026	09:00–17:00	Rogner Hotel Tirana, Antigonea Room, Tirana, Albania

This stakeholder dialogue is part of the wider regional programme taking place in Tirana on 14–16 October 2026.

Background and Rationale

Human rights defenders 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 15 October multi-stakeholder programme in Tirana brings these perspectives together. It will connect analysis of current protection needs in Albania and the wider region with experience from European and international protection actors and then move the discussion towards what could realistically be strengthened, adapted or developed in the region. This forms part of a three-day gathering taking place in Tirana from 14–16 October 2026, dedicated to participating organisations for internal exchange, mapping, strategic discussion and follow-up planning, while 15 October is designed as the broader multi-stakeholder day involving external institutions, partners and stakeholders.

DAY 1 · 14 OCTOBER 2026

Evening Reception and Networking

01

19:00–21:00 · Art Explora — Vila 31, Rruga Ismail Qemali 17, Tirana

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 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

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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