

Are you a foreign agent?

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This workshop explored how so-called “foreign agent” laws are used to stigmatise independent media and civil society under the pretext of transparency. It examined how these laws and related rhetoric can shrink civic space, particularly for journalists, NGOs, and rights and liberties defenders who receive foreign funding or work across borders. The session combined explanation, audience interaction, and practical examples to show how such laws function in practice and what harms they can cause. It was designed for media professionals, civil society actors, and others concerned with press freedom and democratic accountability. The methodology included short presentations, audience questions, an interactive Kahoot game, and group discussion.

Speakers

Flutura Kusari, Legal Advisor, ECPMF

Elena Rodina, MFRR Coordinator, ECPMF

Organisations

The **European Centre for Press and Media Freedom** (ECPMF) is a non-profit organisation that was founded in Leipzig, Germany, 2015. It operates on the basis of the European Charter on Freedom of the Press and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The **vision** of the Centre is a society where media freedom enables open discourse and everyone can seek, receive and impart information.

ECPMF's **mission** is to promote, preserve and defend media freedom. We do this by monitoring violations, providing practical support and engaging diverse stakeholders across Europe.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- “Foreign agent” laws are often framed as transparency measures but are frequently used to discredit and intimidate independent voices.
- These laws can affect not only large organisations, but also individuals, freelancers, educators, and media professionals who engage in ordinary civic or professional activity.
- Similar rhetoric can be used even where a formal law does not yet exist, so early warning signs matter.
- European and international mechanisms, including legal and advocacy tools, can help resist discriminatory legislation.
- Solidarity, public awareness, and coordinated response are important in preventing such laws from becoming normalised.

Check the presentation 

Foreign influence advocacy toolkit 