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IJ4EU Impact Award 2026 winners announced

Three cross-border investigations have won the 2026 IJ4EU Impact Awards, recognising reporting on doctors practising after being banned elsewhere and the global consequences of PFAS pollution and lobbying.

[IJ4EU Impact Award 2026 winners](#) announced Investigative journalism: press freedom Cross-border journalism PFAS European Union. Three cross-border investigations have won the 2026 [IJ4EU](#) Impact Awards, which recognise public-interest journalism with demonstrable impact across Europe and beyond.

The awards were announced on 17 September at the annual [UNCOVERED Conference](#) in Budapest, hosted by [Goethe-Institut Hungary](#). Each winning team received €5,000.

The equal winners, announced in alphabetical order, were Bad Practice, a consortium of 50 media outlets led by [OCCRP](#), [VG](#) and [The Times](#); Factories on the Run: Inside the Global Trade that Moves PFAS Downstream, by Gianluca Liva, Marta Frigerio, Anna Violato, Filippo Tommasoli, Thomas Goorden and Varrun Sukhraj; and The Forever Lobbying Project, coordinated by [Le Monde](#) with European media partners.

The jury also gave special recognition to Killing for the Photo, by Barbara Matejčić in collaboration with Natalija Jovanović and Ruben Brugnera.

Bad Practice involved reporters in 44 countries and identified more than 100 cases in which doctors who had been stripped of their licences — including for sexual abuse or reckless malpractice — resumed practising in another country. The investigation found failures in systems meant to alert authorities to sanctioned doctors. It prompted responses from

health ministries and medical associations, while the [European Commission](#) agreed to review the alert system examined by the reporting.

Factories on the Run traced machinery from the former Miteni PFAS factory in Vicenza, Italy, to a new operation in western India. The factory had contaminated drinking water in the Veneto region; former company executives were later sentenced to a combined 141 years in prison. The reporting found that the plant had been dismantled, shipped to India and rebuilt, with production restarting in 2023 using the same toxic chemistry. The findings triggered protests, a petition and calls by Indian lawmakers for the facility's closure.

The Forever Lobbying Project brought together 46 journalists and 18 experts from 29 media partners in 16 countries. The project investigated industry efforts to weaken or delay proposed EU restrictions on PFAS, the persistent synthetic chemicals known as “forever chemicals”. Journalists obtained 14,000 previously unpublished documents through freedom-of-information requests and estimated that cleaning up PFAS contamination could cost Europe more than €2 trillion over the next two decades.

The special-recognition investigation, published by the [Balkan Investigative Reporting Network](#) in Serbia and the Croatian weekly [Novosti](#), revisited photographs of a Bosnian Serb paramilitary executing a civilian in Brčko in 1992. It examined whether photojournalists at the scene were only witnesses or may have played a role in the killing. The investigation also led to the correction of a caption that had wrongly described the murdered civilian as an armed sniper for three decades.

“The stories themselves cross borders because the problems they investigate cross borders,” said Leila Bičakčić, chair of the independent jury. “Money crosses borders. Pollution crosses borders. Companies cross borders. People cross borders. Political influence crosses borders. Accountability therefore has to cross borders as well.”

The Impact Award, now in its sixth year, is open to cross-border watchdog journalism teams regardless of whether they have received funding from IJ4EU. The programme is run by the [European Centre for Press and Media Freedom](#) with the [International Press Institute](#) and the [European Journalism Centre](#) and is co-financed by the European Commission and other supporters.

