

Joint Letter

Invest in Free Media: Europe's Democratic Foundation

The more than 100 [undersigned organisations](#) have come together to call for robust and strategic EU investment in free and independent media in response to the proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034. As debates intensify over future budget priorities, the signatories stress that **Europe's democratic resilience depends on sustained and strategic support for the public interest information ecosystem.**

Our call to action

We urge the European Parliament, the European Commission, and Member States to **guarantee substantial and long-term EU funding and investment for the public interest information ecosystem.** Independent journalism and public-interest media are essential for **Europe's democracy, economy, and resilience against hybrid threats.** Building on the proposed mechanisms we call for:

- **AgoraEU programme:** to translate the overall budget increase into a **proportional rise in support for independent journalism and public interest media.** Funding for journalism, media pluralism, protection of journalists, fact-checking, and media literacy should at least double within the programme's allocation, ensuring that independent and public-interest media can play their full role in strengthening democratic resilience.
- **Global Europe:** should allocate a clear and consistent share of its resources to media development and freedom of expression abroad, ensuring that **EU external action contributes directly to pluralism, local media capacity, safety of journalists, and trustworthy information ecosystems in partner countries.**
- **European Competitiveness Fund:** should be designed to catalyse private and institutional investment in the media and information ecosystem, in line with the President of the European Commission's call to leverage private equity for the media. This includes **mechanisms that de-risk investment and foster innovation, sustainability, and digital transformation while safeguarding editorial independence.**

Together, these instruments should ensure that the next **Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034)** delivers **strategic, long-term, and coordinated investment** in the public-interest information ecosystem, **treating journalism as an essential pillar of Europe's democratic, economic and digital infrastructure.**

Media as Democratic Infrastructure

Public-interest information isn't a luxury; it's the infrastructure through which societies access knowledge and make decisions. Europe's resilience depends not just on producing journalism, but on ensuring that citizens actually encounter and engage with it. It is pivotal for Europe's future to safeguard democracy, protect societies from manipulation and disinformation, and enable growth, competitiveness, and innovation, as affirmed by the [European Parliament resolution](#) on the MFF¹.

The EU cannot achieve these goals without substantial public investments in independent journalism, the news media sector and the public interest information ecosystem **through new and improved mechanisms that consider the challenges and opportunities posed by the current digital information and geopolitical environment**, reflecting the changes in information consumption and the global information ecosystem².

We welcome the President of the European Commission's statement, in her [2025 State of the Union Address](#), recognising that more needs to be done *"to protect our media and independent press"* and her recognition that the EU must *"invest to address some of the root causes of [the dismantlement and neutralisation of independent media]"*.

The European Union has already undertaken significant media reforms, including the European Media Freedom Act and the upcoming European Democracy Shield; however, **all measures require full political backing, effective implementation and enforcement, and sustainable financial investment**.

The cost is minimal. The return is immense.

[In a recent statement](#), 11 leading economists, including Nobel laureates Joseph Stiglitz and Daron Acemoglu, demonstrated that **the economic benefits of supporting journalism are measurable and significant**. As noted in their statement: *"The economic return of the Panama Papers investigation, for example, has led, nine years later, to national tax agencies having been able to recover a total of USD 1.86 billion. For France alone, the Panama Papers and similar investigations have enabled the government to reclaim over EUR 450 million."*

Even with the proposed doubling of the overall MEDIA+ budget, Europe still lacks clarity on how resources will be distributed between its audiovisual and news strands. Given the scale of the challenges facing independent and public-interest media, a fair and transparent allocation is essential. We therefore call for an **equitable division of resources within the MEDIA+ strand**,

¹ In those lines, the [European Parliament's resolution on the next Multiannual Financial Framework](#), noted that "a free, independent and pluralistic media is a fundamental component of Europe's resilience, safeguarding not only the free flow of information but also a democratic mindset, critical thinking and informed decision-making"

² According to the [European media industry outlook \(2025\)](#), the decline in traditional revenue for media has not been offset by growth in digital revenues, and the 'platformisation' of the news sector has further exacerbated the challenges of monetising news content. (p. 165)

one that reflects journalism's central role in Europe's democratic and digital infrastructure.

Furthermore, almost exclusively programmatic funding, fragmented micro-grants and short project cycles cannot meet the scale or urgency of the challenge. As the [OECD's Principles for Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment](#) highlight, flexible, long-term, and locally grounded support is essential to sustain pluralism and trust in information systems.

Europe's support for independent media cannot rely on public subsidies alone. The economic foundations of journalism have collapsed: while public-interest media bear the costs of producing verified information, much of the value is extracted by private digital service providers. Europe must therefore move beyond short-term project funding toward structural and targeted investment solutions that position the media as a critical actor within the democratic and digital infrastructure.

The EU should strengthen the regulatory environment for media freedom and viability and further address market concentration and state or oligarchic media capture, which distort competition and limit pluralism, threatening the independence and safety of journalists. The EU should also address the digital dependency on dominant platforms, ensuring fair distribution of advertising revenue, transparency of social media algorithms and monetisation services, and equitable access to audiences. **This requires a well-supported civil society that monitors the implementation of legal safeguards which promote independence, accountability, transparency and the protection of journalists.**

Media freedom is a *conditio sine qua non* for Europe's capacity to innovate, compete, and lead in a fractured world. Supporting independent media is not only about defending European democracy, but about ensuring that democratic values endure wherever they are under threat.

The absence of journalism in one place endangers democracy everywhere. Where media freedom is dismantled, authoritarian power grows unchecked — and that power inevitably threatens societies beyond its borders.

Signatories (*alphabetical order*)

1. Action for Democratic Society (ADS) / Hibrid.info
2. AFP - Agence France-Presse
3. APA - Austrian Press Agency
4. ARTICLE 19 Europe
5. Asociația Media DoR
6. Association of European Journalists (Bulgaria)
7. Association of European Journalists (France)
8. Association of European Journalists (AEJ Belgium)
9. Association of Local Newspapers (Poland)

10. Association Umbrella
11. AthensLive
12. Balkan Free Media Initiative (BFMI)
13. Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)
14. Belarusian Investigative Center (Czech Republic)
15. Belsat TV
16. BGmedia
17. CancerDisinfo
18. Center for Independent Journalism - Romania
19. Center for Investigative Journalism – Foundation (CINS)
20. Center for Sustainable Media (CSM)
21. Center Science and Innovation for Development - SCiDEV
22. CFI Développement Médias
23. Citizens Network Watchdog Poland
24. Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)
25. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
26. Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE)
27. Consiglio Nazionale Forense (Italy)
28. Context.ro (Romania)
29. CORRECTIV
30. Delfi Lithuania
31. Demagog.cz
32. Demagog.pl
33. Display Europe
34. DW Akademie
35. Economedia (Bulgaria)
36. Ellinika Hoaxes
37. Első Pesti Egyetemi Rádió FM97.0 - First University Radio of the City of Pest
38. ERSTE Foundation
39. EUobserver
40. Europe MédiaLab
41. European Broadcasting Union (EBU)
42. European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)
43. European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)
44. European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN)
45. European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
46. European Journalism Centre
47. Fact Check Cyprus at Cyprus University of Technology
48. Fondation Hirondelle
49. Forum on Information and Democracy (FID)
50. Free Press for Eastern Europe
51. Free Press Unlimited (FPU)
52. Freedom Foundation
53. Friends for Friends Foundation

54. Funky Citizens (Romania)
55. Gazzetta
56. Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD)
57. Global Media Registry (GMR)
58. Global Youth & News Media
59. Greece Fact Check
60. Hrodna.life
61. Hungarian Press Union
62. Independent Journalists Association of Vojvodina
63. Institute for Regional Media and Information (IRMI)
64. Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (IRFS)
65. International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)
66. International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM)
67. International Media Support (IMS)
68. International Press Institute (IPI)
69. Internews Europe
70. Internews Kosova- KALLXO
71. Istinomer
72. JÁDU (jadumagazin.eu)
73. Jamvi Media Group
74. Journalisme & Citoyenneté
75. Journalismfund Europe
76. Kapitál
77. Krautreporter
78. Krytyka Polityczna
79. Le Cenacle de Conques
80. Les Surligneurs
81. Lie Detectors asbl
82. Logiq Media
83. Lupa - Croatian fact-checking organization
84. Magyar Hang
85. Magyar Jeti (444.hu)
86. Media Development Investment Fund
87. Media Diversity Institute Global
88. Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans
89. Media Forward Fund gGmbH
90. Media Rights Agenda (MRA)
91. Mediacentar Sarajevo
92. Mediaforum Association
93. Médianes - Sphera Network
94. Medizin-transparent.at
95. Mertek Media Monitor
96. Metamorphosis Foundation
97. Monitorul de Botosani

98. Murschetz Media Consulting
99. NARVAMUS (<https://narvamus.ee/>)
100. Nyugat.hu
101. OKO.press
102. Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project
103. Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT)
104. Ossigeno per l'informazione
105. Pagella Politica / Facta - Italy
106. Pravda Association
107. Press Club Belarus
108. PressOne Romania
109. Provereno
110. Public Media Alliance (PMA)
111. PUBLICO.CZ
112. Publix - House for Journalism
113. RadioExpert
114. Reform.news
115. Relevant Ventures GmbH
116. Reporters sans frontières (RSF)
117. Revue Prostor
118. RNW Media
119. Save the Children International
120. Schöpflin Stiftung
121. South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)
122. South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM)
123. Stichting Veronica/V-Ventures
124. Telex.hu
125. The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation
126. The European Correspondent
127. The Institute for Security Studies and Development in North Macedonia
128. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ)
129. Thinking Minds Ghana
130. Thomson Media
131. Times of Malta
132. TisTalk Community Podcast
133. TjekDet.dk
134. Transitions
135. uh.ro
136. Uusi Hanko
137. Voxeurop
138. VSI Nasha Niva Fund
139. WHAT TO FIX
140. Wikimedia Europe (WMEU)
141. ZYX Publishing Group - Romania