



MJRC

MEDIA & JOURNALISM
RESEARCH CENTER

2024

Annual Report



**Media and Journalism
Research Center**



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A Word From the Director



As we close out 2024, I'm proud to say that the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) continues to stand as a beacon of independent, evidence-based research on the global media landscape. In a year marked by technological upheaval and deepening political polarization, MJRC has remained steadfast in its mission: to illuminate the forces shaping journalism and to support the conditions that make free and independent media possible.

At the core of our success is a research strategy grounded in comparative analysis and focused on countries where media scholarship is scarce. In 2024, this strategy took us deeper into Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central and Eastern Europe, resulting in a remarkable expansion of our geographic reach and intellectual scope. From analyzing the ownership structures behind 100 AI companies to dissecting the financial lifelines of independent media in Romania, Argentina, and Yemen, our work has tackled some of the most urgent questions facing journalism today.

MJRC's flagship research projects—including the Media Influence Matrix, Global Media Finances Map, State Media Monitor, AI Market Project, and Media Capture Monitoring Report—have grown in visibility and impact, providing data-rich insights used by regulators, international organizations, and civil society actors. In 2024 alone, we contracted 121 researchers and produced new country reports, policy recommendations, and high-level assessments of media systems across five continents.

This research is made possible by our deliberate financial independence. In 2024, over 80% of our budget was generated through grants from private philanthropic organizations and NGOs, with the remaining 20% coming from commercial consultancies. We continue to refuse direct government funding, maintaining an ethical line that we believe protects the integrity and credibility of our work.

We also continue to invest in talent development and global collaboration. Our Young Researchers Program is nurturing a new generation of media scholars—diverse in origin, critical in thinking, and committed to public-interest journalism. Their contributions, from mapping EU media funding to analyzing AI's newsroom integration, have already enriched our collective work.

In the year ahead, we will take our vision further. In mid-2025, we will unveil a new institutional strategy, informed by our growing body of research and by the rapid ascent of AI technologies in media systems. This strategy will guide MJRC through a time of profound change in the information ecosystem-where the risks of capture and misinformation are rising just as quickly as the opportunities for innovation and reform.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our partners, the commitment of our global network of experts, and the hard work of the small but mighty MJRC team. Thank you for being part of this journey. We look forward to what we can accomplish together in the coming year.

Marius Dragomir

Our Research

Media Influence Matrix

The Media Influence Matrix Project, spearheaded by MJRC Director Marius Dragomir since its launch in 2017, delves into how evolving policies, funding structures, and technological advancements shape the landscape of journalism. Since its inception, the project has produced 42 in-depth reports spanning 22 countries, offering a panoramic view of global media systems.

In 2023, we broadened our horizons in Latin America, forging collaborations with local stakeholders to publish comprehensive studies in Colombia, Argentina, and Mexico. Ongoing partnerships with international organisations such as Observacom, University of Santiago de Compostela, and ICEP have continued to fuel the project's momentum and analytical depth.

Throughout 2024, we broke new ground in several critical regions. In May, we published a pioneering report mapping media ownership and financial flows in Yemen. By July, we had released a deep-dive into the funding mechanisms underpinning Mexican journalism. November saw the release of a detailed assessment of media regulation, state policy, and governance in Russia, while in December, we unveiled two further publications: one charting current developments in media policy and regulation in Brazil, and another offering a nuanced exploration of the Mexican media landscape, spotlighting the country's ongoing struggles for press freedom, economic resilience, and the ethical integration of emerging technologies.

Global Media Finances Map

The Global Media Finances Map, developed by our center, is an initiative designed to explore the intricate relationship between the financial clout of news media companies and the volume and quality of journalistic output. By gathering an unprecedented depth of data, the project offers a 360-degree view of media operations across diverse environments—be they global, national, regional, or local. The project made its official debut in March 2024 with the release of the Romania chapter, which sheds light on the inner workings of the country's media ecosystem.

In 2024, the Media & Journalism Research Centre (MJRC) added four new studies to its portfolio, each providing a fresh lens on Romania's media landscape:

March 2024:

- A comparative analysis of the financial and audience performance of entertainment broadcasters versus all-news channels, offering a snapshot of diverging business models and viewer preferences.
- A detailed examination of the funding streams sustaining Romania's print and online news sectors, revealing patterns of dependence and resilience.
- An industry-wide assessment of revenue trends and newsroom employment, charting the economic forces reshaping journalistic labor.

August 2024:

- A decade-long financial autopsy of Romania's media market, exposing deep structural imbalances. The study laid bare the ongoing plight of independent outlets, which continue to face an uphill battle for survival amid disproportionate state subsidies favoring politically connected national media conglomerates.

AI Market Project

The Global Media Finances Map, developed by our center, is an initiative designed to explore the intricate relationship between the financial clout of news media companies and the volume and quality of journalistic output. By gathering an unprecedented depth of data, the project offers a 360-degree view of media operations across diverse environments—be they global, national, regional, or local. The project made its official debut in March 2024 with the release of the Romania chapter, which sheds light on the inner workings of the country's media ecosystem.

In June 2024, we published a regional study examining how newsrooms in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia are adopting AI. The findings underscore the transformative potential of AI in enhancing operational efficiency and managing data, particularly for small and independent media outlets navigating limited resources. This research was conducted in partnership with the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC), the Thomson Foundation, and the Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) in Belgrade.

In November 2024, we took a significant step forward by releasing a report that delves into the financial performance and ownership structures of 100 AI companies whose tools are already being deployed in newsrooms across the globe. This report marks the first phase of a broader initiative aimed at fostering transparency and enabling informed, responsible adoption of AI technologies in journalism. The study investigates the companies' ownership chains, financial health, and declared use cases, offering a key resource for stakeholders seeking to understand who is shaping the future of journalism through AI.

Mapping EU Funding in the Media

The Mapping of EU Spending on Media Project was launched by the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) in 2023 to shed light on a long-overlooked question: What tangible impact does EU funding have on the European news media ecosystem? Combining first-hand interviews with EU grant recipients and data-driven research tracing the flow of funds, the project takes a deep dive into the financial architecture underpinning media and journalism initiatives across Europe.

In 2024, we published the project's flagship report, offering a detailed analysis of how EU funding was allocated to media- and journalism-related activities between 2018 and 2024. The study tracks not only the volume of financial support but also the themes and topics covered, average grant sizes, geographical distribution among recipient countries, and the EU institutions responsible for disbursement. It also highlights the types of activities most frequently funded and the target regions where this support is concentrated.

Building on this foundation, a series of follow-up studies is currently underway. These forthcoming analyses will go beyond the numbers to assess the real-world impact of EU funding on the journalism sector—examining how such financial backing shapes editorial independence, organizational sustainability, and the broader media landscape across member states.

State Media Monitor

The State Media Monitor, an initiative of the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC), offers a pioneering framework for classifying state and public media based on three critical dimensions that influence their independence: funding mechanisms, ownership and governance structures, and editorial independence. As the world's most extensive database on state-affiliated media, the Monitor is continually updated by a global network of independent experts.

Widely cited by media outlets—both domestic and international—it has also become a trusted reference for media regulators crafting new policy frameworks and for technology companies seeking to make informed decisions about labeling state media on digital platforms.

In 2024, the project made significant strides in geographic coverage. It expanded into three additional West African nations—Cape Verde, Mali, and Sierra Leone—bringing the total number of monitored countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to 41. It also extended its reach into the Caribbean, adding the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, and Saint Kitts and Nevis to its growing list.

In November 2024, we released the latest edition of our annual State Media Monitor report. With the inclusion of 13 new countries, the 2024 report offers the most comprehensive picture to date of government influence over state and public media worldwide, further reinforcing the Monitor's role as a major resource for scholars, policymakers, and digital platforms alike.

Media Capture Monitoring Report

In 2024, we joined forces with the International Press Institute (IPI) to launch the Media Capture Monitoring Report (MCMR)—an annual assessment that tracks the state of media capture across EU member states. This initiative evaluates the extent to which national legislation aligns with the recently adopted European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), a landmark policy aimed at curbing media capture and safeguarding press freedom.

As part of this first edition, we released seven in-depth country reports—focusing on Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Greece, and Bulgaria. These reports scrutinize the independence of media regulators and public service broadcasters, expose the manipulation of state resources to sway media content, and analyze the erosion of media pluralism through political interference—the four key dimensions of capture identified by MJRC's research team.

Each report provides not only a diagnosis of systemic vulnerabilities but also a clear set of policy recommendations, offering national stakeholders and EU institutions concrete pathways to counter undue influence and restore editorial independence.

Media Freedom in Lebanon

The Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) is part of a consortium—alongside Maharat Foundation and Legal Agenda, two leading Lebanon-based NGOs—that was awarded an EU grant in the first quarter of 2023 to implement the project “Support to Media Reform in Lebanon to Enhance Freedom of Expression.” The initiative seeks to create policy-level entry points for meaningful media reform in Lebanon, grounded in European standards yet carefully adapted to local realities.

The project aims to empower key national actors—including members of parliament, government ministries, judges, legal professionals, academics, and media practitioners—to drive reforms that advance freedom of expression in a sustainable and context-sensitive way.

To support this effort, MJRC assembled a team of experts who, over the course of 2023, developed six in-depth policy papers exploring relevant EU standards and best practices that could inform media policy in Lebanon. These studies, published in 2024, include:

- “How to Modernize Media Laws to Cope With Digital Change” – Krisztina Rozgonyi
- “Decriminalization of Defamation in the Context of Free Speech: A European Perspective” – Andrei Richter
- “Public Interest Journalism Startups in Europe: Trends, Players, Challenges and Incentives” – **Attila Mong**
- “How Associations of Journalists Protect Press Freedom in Europe” – **Judith Pies**
- “Protection of Journalists and Journalistic Sources in Europe” – **Judith Pies**
- “A Balancing Act: EU Media Regulation, Co-Regulation and Self-Regulation in the Digital Age” – **Minna Aslama Horowitz**

In 2024, these studies were compiled into a volume titled "Freedom of Expression in Europe"—a resource designed not only to inform Lebanese policymakers and reform advocates, but also to serve as a broader reference on contemporary European trends in media regulation, including legal modernization, defamation decriminalization, protections for journalists and sources, and the emergence of public interest journalism startups.

Countries in Focus

The MJRC's research strategy rests on two core pillars: comparative analysis and a dedicated focus on countries where media research remains scarce or underdeveloped. The geographical reach of our work is shaped not only by strategic priorities but also by the availability of local researchers and resources, particularly as we strive to extend our footprint across the Global South.

In 2024, the center continued to deepen its presence in Latin America, publishing studies in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, while laying the groundwork for forthcoming research in Brazil and Chile. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, our work advanced on multiple fronts: we released a new report on Yemen and expanded our ongoing research and advocacy collaboration in Lebanon.

That same year, we also launched new partnerships with researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa, marking the beginning of a broader initiative that will result in new publications across the region in 2025.

Meanwhile, our European research portfolio saw significant growth. Through a wide range of initiatives—including the Media Capture Monitoring Report, Media Influence Matrix, State Media Monitor, and the Global Media Finances Map—we have considerably broadened our mapping and analysis efforts, now covering the vast majority of countries across the continent.

MJRC Fellowship Program

The MJRC Fellowship Program is built around a collaborative research model, in which fellows pursue an original project developed in close coordination with the center's team. Fellows benefit from intellectual mentorship, programmatic support, and access to our robust publication platforms—including the MJRC publication series and academic outlets curated by our institutional partners. The center also maintains an active affiliation with the University of Santiago de Compostela, fostering strong academic synergies.

Currently, MJRC hosts 10 fellows engaged in cutting-edge research spanning a wide spectrum of topics. These include:

- the role of critical journalism in holding autocratic regimes to account under repressive conditions;
- the impact of social media on political polarization;
- the use of network analytics and natural language processing to map polarization and media structures;
- real-time audience reactions to disinformation, as an alternative to post-facto corrections;
- the convergence of media and activism in the MENA region amid renewed authoritarianism;
- patterns of media capture in Sri Lanka; and
- the evolving legal challenges of propaganda and hate speech, particularly in online and audiovisual spaces.

In 2024, we welcomed Adriana Mutu as an MJRC Fellow. Adriana is a University Professor in the Departments of Humanities and Market Research at ESIC Business & Marketing School in Barcelona, where she also serves as Head of Academic Quality. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Autonomous University of Barcelona and an M.A. in Journalism and Communication Sciences from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania. Her academic trajectory includes research appointments at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Helsinki.

A founding member of MEDEA (Mediterranean Europe and Africa), Adriana also serves as an expert advisor to the Council of Europe and the European Commission. She joined MJRC to work on her independent project, “Audiovisual Media Regulation in the Platform Era: A Comparative Cross-Country Analysis of Media Regulatory Regimes in Southern Europe.” She has also contributed to MJRC’s “Support to Media Freedom in Lebanon” initiative, for which she authored two commissioned papers slated for publication in 2025.

Our fellows are routinely involved in the center’s broader research agenda. For example, we drew on the legal expertise of Andrei Richter to contribute to the Lebanon media reform project, reflecting our commitment to integrating fellow-driven insights into our institutional workstreams.

MJRC Young Researchers Program

The MJRC Young Media Researchers Program is a dynamic training and mentorship initiative designed to identify, nurture, and elevate emerging talent in the field of media research. Launched in early 2023, the program equips young scholars with the tools, knowledge, and critical perspective needed to navigate today’s complex media ecosystems—and to make meaningful, evidence-based contributions to the field.

Open to students from a wide array of academic disciplines—including media studies, journalism, communication, sociology, psychology, and data science—the program thrives on interdisciplinary exchange. This diversity contributes to a rich and multidimensional learning environment, encouraging participants to approach media research from fresh and varied perspectives.

In 2024, we welcomed eight early-career researchers, each of whom dedicated the year to projects aligned with MJRC’s strategic focus areas. Five participants successfully published original research through the center’s programs and platforms:

- In June 2024, Nikolas Schäfer, in collaboration with Marius Dragomir, co-authored a report on the allocation of EU funding for media and journalism-related activities, contributing to the ongoing Mapping of EU Spending on Media Project, launched by MJRC in 2023.
- In August 2024, Adrian Anton's investigation into revenue streams in the Romanian media sector was published as part of the Global Media Finances Map project.
- In November 2024, Leonardo Ingannamorte released an in-depth analysis of key actors and institutions shaping Russian media regulation and policy, under the umbrella of the Media Influence Matrix project. That same month, Sydney Martin published a study of the financial performance and ownership structures of 100 AI companies whose tools are actively used in journalism worldwide.
- In December 2024, Tatiana Chelli produced a paper on how private sector entities support independent media in Argentina, adding a vital perspective to debates on sustainable media financing.

Meanwhile, Oscar Mendoza Hernandez and Valeriia Dimitrieva contributed to the “Decoding the Power Play: Media and Elections in 2024” project, focusing on media dynamics in Mexico and Austria during election periods.

Lastly, David Gheorghe contributed to the ongoing update of MJRC's country study on Romanian media and journalism, part of the Media Influence Matrix series.

MJRC Funding Program

In 2020, the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) launched a new initiative: providing direct funding to independent media outlets and journalistic projects operating in environments marked by high levels of media capture. This work is grounded in a research-led sub-granting mechanism, through which philanthropic organizations contribute funds that MJRC then disburses as targeted grants to vulnerable, at-risk media organizations.

The overarching goal of the program is to bolster financial sustainability or, at the very least, to enhance the resilience of independent media outlets facing sustained political and economic pressure—often from governments or business entities aligned with political power.

MJRC was entrusted with the administration of these funds due to its deep expertise in media systems in captured environments, cultivated over 25 years of on-the-ground research and a robust international network of media analysts. This knowledge is embodied in a proprietary database of independent media outlets, which serves as the foundation for developing tailored funding strategies for each country context.

Our commitment remains clear: to channel resources where they are most urgently needed. To date, MJRC has facilitated the allocation of over US\$ 1.5 million, entirely from philanthropic sources, to 15 independent media outlets in countries where the space for journalism is rapidly shrinking under the weight of government pressure and oligarchic interference. Our “Strengthening Journalism in Captured Environments” portfolio expanded in 2023, adding a third country to the two currently covered.

In 2024, drawing from the lessons learned through this initiative, MJRC published a series of reflections and strategic insights on our Medium blog. These reflections aim to inform and inspire similar media support mechanisms, offering practical guidance for those seeking to sustain journalism under siege.

Who Uses Our Research?

Throughout 2024, the work of the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) has garnered significant recognition across a range of publications, reports, media articles, and international conferences. Below is a curated selection of highlights. For a comprehensive list of references and media citations, visit the Citation Station on our website.

- Our research into how the European Commission allocates funding to media initiatives was cited by the Hungarian Center for Sustainable Media, reinforcing our role as a key reference point in discussions on EU media financing.
- In February 2024, a major study on the public financing of news media in the European Union was released by Technopolis Group, in collaboration with Henningsen Consulting and commissioned by the European Commission. The report prominently references MJRC’s work on state media funding mechanisms.

- MJRC Director Marius Dragomir was quoted in a widely circulated article in *The Atlantic*, authored by Zack Beauchamp, which explores the strategic relationship between Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and former U.S. President Donald Trump, offering insights into the global dynamics of illiberal alliances.
- Dragomir also published a peer-reviewed paper in the *Central European Journal of Communication*, examining the impact of media capture on journalism standards, market competition, and audience access to independent content. The study sheds light on how propaganda-dominated environments constrain pluralism and distort media markets.
- At the 10th Annual Media Development Forum, hosted by the OSCE Presence in Albania, Dragomir presented on the evolving journalism landscape across Europe, drawing on MJRC's research—including the Media Influence Matrix and Global Media Finances Map—to illustrate the emergence of four distinct news ecologies across the continent.
- In 2024, MJRC also launched a new partnership with the Brussels-based Philanthropy Europe Association (Philea) to produce the Journalism Funders Forum newsletter, led by MJRC expert Robert Nemeth. Since its inception, Nemeth has conducted a series of high-profile interviews exploring issues such as AI and journalism, philanthropic models for funding quality media, and journalism's role in the green transition.
- Experts Marius Dragomir and Minna Aslama Horowitz co-authored a major analysis for the Public Media Alliance, investigating the complex relationship between public service media and disinformation ecosystems.
- MJRC took part in the 40th CIRCUM Regional Conference in Poznań, Poland, alongside our partners at the CIRCUM Regional-UVigo Chair, where we presented findings from our ongoing research on innovation in regional public media across Europe.
- Lastly, MJRC partnered with the International Press Institute (IPI) for the 2024 IPI World Congress, held from May 22–24 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The event convened global media leaders to address pressing industry challenges—from digital transformation and sustainability to press freedom and media ethics—with MJRC contributing research-based insights to key discussions.

MJRC Experts

The Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) is a legally registered entity, incorporated under Estonian law. It maintains an academic cooperation agreement with the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC) in Spain, reinforcing its commitment to scholarly rigor and institutional collaboration.

The center's day-to-day operations are overseen by a dedicated core team, led by the MJRC Director and supported by a small core team responsible for communications, publishing, IT infrastructure, and administrative coordination.

MJRC is also home to a diverse global network of experts, leading cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange. In 2024 alone, the center contracted **121 researchers** across its various research initiatives, reflecting the expanding scale and international reach of its work.

MJRC Outreach

MJRC maintains an active and growing presence across major social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram. In 2024, we saw steady audience growth, gaining approximately:

- **5,600 new followers** on LinkedIn,
- **1,600** on Facebook,
- **1,220** on Twitter, and
- **538** on Instagram.

We also launched a weekly LinkedIn newsletter, which attracted 3,000 followers in its first year, expanding our reach among media professionals and researchers. Meanwhile, our quarterly Mailchimp newsletter, initiated in 2023 with 165 subscribers, more than doubled in 2024, reaching 335 subscribers by year's end.

In terms of digital reach, MJRC's work in 2024 attracted nearly 930,000 users across our three primary digital platforms—our main institutional website and the websites of our two largest research projects.

Website Traffic Overview (Source: Google Analytics)

- **MJRC Main Website** (www.journalismresearch.org)
 - *30-day active users*: **418,381**
 - *Year-on-year growth*: **+309,909 users (+285.7%)**
- **State Media Monitor** (www.statemediamonitor.com)
 - *30-day active users*: **489,595**
 - *Year-on-year growth*: **+369,643 users (+308.2%)**
- **Global Media Finances Map** (www.globalmediaownership.com)
 - *30-day active users*: **20,657**
 - *Launched in March 2024** – traffic metrics reflect initial launch performance.

Finances

The Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) is an independent, self-financed think tank, with its operations sustained primarily through a combination of philanthropic grants and commercially generated revenue. This financial model allows us to chart our own course and maintain the editorial and analytical independence that is central to our mission.

In 2024, our total operating budget stood at just under €470,000, marking a decrease from €600,000 in 2023. This decline was anticipated and reflects the conclusion of a major sub-granting program through which MJRC had been distributing funds to independent media on behalf of private donors. With this program wrapped up, our focus shifted back to core research and institutional priorities.

Roughly 80% of our annual budget continues to be generated through projects funded by philanthropic foundations, NGOs, and international civil society partners. The remaining 20% is derived from commercial activities, notably consultancies and commissioned research undertaken by MJRC experts—an area we continue to cultivate to enhance our sustainability.

In line with our institutional values and commitment to impartiality, MJRC does not accept direct funding from governments, as such support may jeopardize the perceived or actual integrity of our research. When it comes to EU funding, our policy is one of strict limitation, accepting only what is essential and relevant to our mission.

Any operational surplus is reinvested into the **MJRC Research Fund**—a dedicated pool of resources used to finance original research projects conceived and conducted by our team. This fund ensures that MJRC can pursue forward-thinking, high-impact studies—even in the absence of external support.

Media and Journalism Research Center

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