Freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism are key pillars of a democratic society and must be upheld. The EU assistance for media freedom and media development originates from the enlargement strategy, and is based on wide consultations, such as the Speak-up! and EU – Western Balkans Media Conferences. The European Commission (EC) has developed a long-term strategic approach for EU assistance to media freedom in the region – the Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries. The Guidelines have double purpose: direct the thematic focus of our EU assistance, but simultaneously constitute a result framework to measure its success. The EU is currently reviewing and updating the guidelines.

The EU is supporting freedom of expression and independent journalism in the Western Balkans with ongoing bilateral and regional programmes worth almost €38 million.

**Programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support to Media Freedom and Pluralism in the Western Balkans (2022-2025)</td>
<td>2022-2025</td>
<td>The project, implemented by GIZ, Detsche Welle Akademie and Internews, aims to improve the economic sustainability of independent media outlets in the Western Balkans, improve their capacities for quality reporting and facilitate regional exchanges and networking between media outlets and other media market actors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Trust in Media (2019-2022)</td>
<td>2019-2022</td>
<td>The project, implemented in partnership with UNESCO, supports media accountability, media internal governance and media literacy. This second phase of the project focuses primarily on media literacy curricula in schools, enhancing professional and ethical standards and self-regulation as well as the work of press councils, to address challenges related to disinformation in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUFREX 2 – Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media (2019-2022)</td>
<td>2019-2022</td>
<td>The project, implemented in partnership with Council of Europe in the context of the EU-COE Horizontal Facility, supports the judiciary in applying the European Court of Human Rights case-law system and media regulatory authorities in their area of responsibility as well as trains journalists and other media actors on duties and responsibilities and fosters networking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional Training Programme to improve Quality and Professionalism in Journalism (2018-2022)

It supports a regional network led by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) to consolidate journalism education and promote exchanges between EU and Western Balkans’ academia and schools. This includes the continuation of the Regional EU Award for Investigative Journalism in the WB and Türkiye.

4 Direct grants to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) (2020-2026)

For targeted support to media outlets and civic actors: it is a flexible re-granting scheme for pro-democracy support in fast changing environments.

Grants to support regional networks of media and journalist associations awarded periodically through out the year (2020-2023):

- €1.9 million
  - Regional Training Programme to improve Quality and Professionalism in Journalism (2018-2022)
  - 4 Direct grants to the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) (2020-2026)

- €11 million earmarked for Western Balkans

- €1 million
  - www.Safejournalists.net to build the capacity of journalist professional organisations and support a regional early warning platform reporting cases of attacks and threats against journalists.

- €1 million
  - Resilience: Civil society action to reaffirm media freedom and counter disinformation and hateful propaganda to support networks of media NGOs to strengthen resilience against disinformation, fake news, and hate speech.

- €1 million
  - Reporting Diversity Network 2.0 a regional network of CSOs aiming to influence the quality of media messages in relation to ethnicity, religion and gender, and promote tolerance and diversity.
The project, implemented by BIRN Albania, aims at producing data driven in-depth stories on topics that are particularly important to citizens such as health, labour and consumers’ rights, food and drug safety, environmental protection at both national and local level.

A grant contract with the Albanian NGO and website Faktoje.al aiming at producing qualitative media reporting and at fact-checking the media and policymakers public narrative. Funded by the European External Action Service (EEAS).

A grant contract with BIRN Albania. It aims to collect and analyse data on disinformation materials and foreign narratives, including mapping of the main actors and channels, but also aims to provide pedagogic insights into main topics and several useful guidelines. Funded by the European External Action Service (EEAS).

An upcoming grant contract, starting by the end of 2022, through which the EU Delegation to Albania will raise awareness among the general public and media professionals need to fight disinformation and it will promote the importance of media literacy. Funded by the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The aim of the project, implemented by Kosovo 2.0, in partnership with the Institute for Advanced Studies - GAP, is to increase public understanding on the issues that directly affect citizens’ lives through linking media production and think-tank research and analysis to produce accessible, innovative and professional media.

The objective of the action implemented by BIRN, in partnership with other partners, is to bring together the wider community of journalists and media professionals, media outlets, civil society and the public to increase awareness, recognition and support for professional journalism.
Suggestions for the headers of the factsheet.

**Ongoing assistance (2021-2023)**
Consists of 4 small grants under the regional European Endowment for Democracy funding with no bilateral project currently.

**MONTENEGRO**

**€ 130,000**

**NORTH MACEDONIA**

**€ 400,000**

**SERBIA**

**€ 3.42 million**

**Europeanisation of Kosovo’s Environmental Agenda (until July 2022)**
The objectives of the project, implemented by BIRN, in partnership with other partners, are: to enhance CSO’s and media’s capacities to promote environmental policies; to strengthen the dialogue on energy efficiency between them (CSOs and media) and the public institutions; and to raise the awareness of the public at large on the importance in renewable sources, environmental protection and their impact on the health.

**€ 566,200**

**Direct grant to the Council of Media Ethics (until Dec. 2022)**
The project aims at strengthening the capacity of the Council of Media Ethics, enhancement and promotion of media self-regulation among media workers, CSOs, citizens, as well as integrity and professionalism in the newsrooms.

**€ 100,000**

**Technical Assistance for Alignment of national media legislation with EU media acquis and media standards (until Aug. 2023)**
The overall objective of the project is to enable a legal environment that will promote freedom of expression, competitiveness and sustainability of the media market, through the harmonisation of the media legislation with the Audio-visual Media Services Directive (EU) 2018/1808 and international standards.

**€ 300,000**

**Support to the media sector in Serbia to overcome the economic challenges of COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2023)**
Implemented by the European Endowment for Democracy, this is the core Media Support Programme in Serbia, which has already assisted well over 30 independent media and media organisations and contributed strongly to keeping media diversity alive. It has proved instrumental for the survival of independent media in Serbia during the COVID-19 crisis. It focuses on supporting media pluralism in Serbia, also on a local level, and it provides vital support for media’s staying in business and developing their business further.

**€ 2.4 million**

**Strengthening Freedom of Expression and Quality Journalism in the Digital Environment in Serbia (2020-2023)**
Implemented by OSCE, it focuses on providing direct support to the implementation of the media strategy in Serbia, notably in terms of increasing the safety of journalists through enhanced capacities of the police, prosecution and journalists and media associations, as well as empowering journalists’ associations and media to respond to the needs of citizens in a digital society.

**€ 320,000**

**Direct support for the Press Council of Serbia (2022-2026)**
It focuses on supporting the Press Council in carrying out its media self-regulation functions, by monitoring the observance of the Journalist’s Code of Ethics, solving complaints made by individuals and institutions related to media content.

**€ 699,438**

All figures in the bilateral assistance are approximated.