



**Building  
Trust in  
Journalism  
- Hungary**

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# Building Trust in Journalism - Hungary

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The 'Building Trust in Journalism in CEE' project is developed by the Ethical Journalism Network in partnership with the Evens Foundation and the Fritt Ord Foundation. This report is funded by the Fritt Ord Foundation.

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June 2020, Hungary

**Evens  
Foundation**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy report provides an overview of the challenges and opportunities that the media are facing in Hungary. Based on a number of key stakeholder interviews that took place in Hungary, it finds that the Hungarian government's strategy of 'media capture' has created a landscape where freedom of the press is under attack and the possibility for the emergence of alternative voices and narratives is diminishing. Since 2010, there has been an ongoing attack on media financing including a concerted effort to control advertising markets, commercial revenue streams and all forms of public money to support the media. The media market is dominated by the public media, a propaganda machine for the government, and pro-government media that is supported by oligarchs and patrons of the current governing party. Independent media platforms live in fear of financial crisis and even buyout by pro-government media moguls and tycoons. This environment sees ethical media principles challenged and some defining aspects of professional journalistic practice, such as sourcing and accuracy, compromised. This is perpetuating the already endemic lack of trust in the media amongst a highly fragmented Hungarian public.

### **This report draws the following conclusions:**

The financial crisis in the Hungarian media, which was generated and perpetuated by powerful governmental elites, is being used as a means of controlling the media and freedom of press in the country.

The public media has become a blatant propaganda tool for the government, which is further propped up by pro-government media platforms, which have been bought and financed by associates affiliated to the current ruling Fidesz party.

Independent media are not only facing financial constraints and the pressure to comply and avoid certain topics but are also constrained by having to respond to the dominant narrative of the regime and its affiliates. As a result, there are very few genuine platforms for discussion and debate.

In a search for alternative revenue streams, a culture of paying for content is developing. However, this tends to see media outlets swapping one source of funding for another rather than developing diverse and multiple ways of generating sustainable income.

There is a lack of agreed professional standards by which the media are operating with little work being done on self-regulation or promoting journalists' associations and unions. This financially competitive arena

has exasperated an underlying lack of collegiality which is undermining any chances for collaboration and cooperation.

While there is no censorship in the classic sense, a lack of access to information, public bodies, ministries and government sources for non-pro-government media mars the possibility for balanced, impartial content to be created or for political processes and elections to be covered in a fair and equitable way.

Hate speech is common in the pro-government and public media, as is disinformation. The focus of both are highly political with anti-European Union and anti-NGO rhetoric most dominant.

Hungary is following a global trend where trust in public institutions is at a low level and the media has become victim of this trend. Bias and lack of independence in the media is sustaining the environment of declining expectations from the media.

There are very few specific journalism degrees available from Hungarian universities with specialisations mainly offered as a part of other degrees such as communications studies. The number of journalists working in academic institutions are scarce. Media degrees are highly theoretical and internships programmes are limited.

## METHODOLOGY

The independent evaluation of the Hungarian media landscape presented in this document is based on fieldwork conducted by the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) between September 2019 and March 2020. It has been produced as a part of a project developed in partnership with the Fritt Ord Foundation (SFO) and the Evens Foundation (EF).<sup>1</sup> The 'Building Trust in Journalism' project aims to explore the condition and identify the needs of the media community in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia in order to better define the challenges of contemporary journalism.

The report is based on a combination of desk research and key stakeholder interviews with media practitioners and experts from across the Hungarian media landscape. Fifteen interviews were conducted with journalists, editors, academics and civil society organisations in Hungary. The focus was on assessing the key challenges facing the media in Hungary with a view to presenting a set of recommendations for ways of dealing with these issues. The EJN tried to include a broad spectrum of views and opinions from the media sector. However, members of the anti-government and independent press were the key informants. Repeated attempts to contact the public and pro-government media were met with no response.

This paper also draws upon the work of other media scholars and organisations who have examined the media landscape in Hungary. These include the work of Agnes Urban, Attila Batorfly and the Centre for Media, Data and Society at Central European University in Budapest. The EJN also consulted with media development and media freedom organisations working in Central Eastern Europe such as Free Press Unlimited and Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF). This paper also refers the EJN's previous work in assessing ethical and professional media practice in countries where conditions are challenging. A number of papers on hate speech, migration reporting, and media governance as well as on-going work with the RSF Journalism Trust Initiative inform the analysis in this report.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the report draws on key academic paradigms used to study the media. These include political economy, sociology of news production as well as the media culture paradigm. Questions ranged from enquiry into business models, modes of governance, newsroom structures and hierarchies to factors which are impacting on practice and content.

This paper does not claim to be a comprehensive study of the media in Hungary. It is primarily based on the interviews that took place in between September 2019 and March 2020, with additional input from Hungarian stakeholders and experts in a peer review process. The EJN does not claim to be an expert on the Hungarian media. It aims to provide an external perception of the challenges that the Hungarian media are facing, based on its own journalistic experience and academic vigour.

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1 The EJN would like to thank the Centre for Media, Data and Society at the Central European University for its support and direction in the production of this report.

2 All reports and further information can be found on the EJN's website at <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org>. (Accessed June 6 2020)

## INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian media landscape is defined by its most recent history which has seen healthy pluralism destroyed by both direct and indirect control of the media by government. While the post-communist era in the 1990s saw private media flourish, these were all owned by foreign investors and companies who rapidly sold up in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Viktor Orbán, president of the ultra-conservative Fidesz party at the time, saw this as an opportunity to encourage government proxies and allies to buy these private media platforms. These pro-government media platforms combine with a public media which is controlled by the state to dominate the public narrative and debate. Control is further amplified through the state's media regulator and on-going influence on public and commercial advertising spend across the country.

There are a number of prominent anti-government media platforms which continue to produce important coverage and content for the Hungarian public. In the main, the intimidation that they receive is financial although smear campaigns to discredit journalists are on-going. The possibility for truly independent media is therefore limited as journalists find their practice becomes compromised by the government's tactics of control and manipulation. Disinformation and hate speech from public and pro-government media overshadow attempts by the independent media to create an environment for impartial fair reporting.

As the landscape continues to engender polarisation, audience trust in the media is at an all-time low.<sup>3</sup> Fragmentation in Hungarian society is evident with urbanites in Budapest having greater access to the internet and therefore online media platforms which are more likely to be independent. The rural areas, where audiences remain difficult to reach as a result of technological and cultural obstacles, continue to consume media controlled by the government. Media literacy is lacking which serves the government's interests even further.

A long-term strategy for media reform in Hungary needs to be considered as shorter term approaches become less coherent in its current context. A change of government will by no means alter the status quo. Legislation, financial regulation, journalistic principles and consumption habits will all need to be addressed systematically for the overall environment for the media to improve.

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3 Bogнар, Eva. 2019. 'Digital News Report, Hungary'. Reuters Institute of Journalism. Available from <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2019/hungary-2019> (Accessed March 20 2020)





# PART 1

## THE PITFALLS OF MEDIA CAPTURE

There have been a number of studies written about the Hungarian media market which encapsulate the essence of Hungary's challenging situation.<sup>4</sup> In the main, they focus on the condition of 'media capture' which has come to define the current status. Media capture is a form of media power whereby government and private sectors collude to control information and media systems in a country.<sup>5</sup> In the Hungarian case, this has manifested itself in a number of different ways since 2010 and now sees the government in control of the majority of the media market.

For some, the situation began with the financial crisis in 2008 when western investors in the media industry pulled out of Hungary. This allowed Viktor Orbán and his supporters, oligarchs in the private sector to begin purchasing media platforms and outlets. This was then accompanied by a change in media legislation in 2010 when Fidesz came into power and the creation of a new regulatory authority, the Media Council, appointed directly by a Fidesz -majority Parliament, to enforce the new legislation. A constitutional amendment and a number of laws, known as the 'media package', were promulgated which not only gave the government greater power over the public media and regulatory system but also gave them greater control over the independent media sector. This took the form of the introduction of nebulous content regulation mechanisms and extremely high fines as penalties. A report by the Venice Commission, Council of Europe, in 2015 which examined the details of the media legislation highlighted a number of issues which needed to be addressed in the legislation as a matter of priority. These included issues around content regulation, naming of sources and uses of financial sanctions as a means of restricting freedom of the media.<sup>6</sup>

**'Ten years ago, Hungary had pluralism but it since has been destroyed.'**  
– Former journalist and CSO activist

**'Laws do not support a free plural media... Even a new government could not work with these laws.'** – Academic and activist

**'The regulator fines us for showing too much crime but does nothing about unbalanced reporting in other media.'**  
– Editor-in-chief, broadcast mainstream independent media platform

Laws continued to be amended and passed which further exasperated the situation. Taxes on advertising revenues taken by non-pro-government private media were accompanied by restrictions on public advertising money, which was offered mainly to government-friendly media, and eventually even the commercial advertising market was appropriated by means of threat and intimidation by the government. This included advertising sales house as well as commercial advertisers.

**'Companies don't advertise with independent media for fear of the government.'** – Editor, online mainstream media platform

In 2016, the sudden closure of left-leaning newspaper *Nepszabadsag* – only days after it had published a number of allegations of corruption by senior government official – for apparent financial reasons was considered by many to be a political plot by Fidesz and Orbán to stifle independent voices and clampdown on press freedom. The newspaper was owned by the publishing company, Mediaworks, which was bought only a few weeks later by a businesswoman considered to be allied to Viktor Orbán and Fidesz.<sup>7</sup> Businesspeople close to the government continued to purchase more media titles and radio platforms.

**'Between 2010 – 2014 a clever system of financing with public money was established which meant that new independent players came and went quickly.'**  
– Academic and activist

4 Dragomir, Marius. 2019. 'Media Capture in Europe'. Centre for Media Data and Society. Available from <https://www.mdif.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MDIF-Report-Media-Capture-in-Europe.pdf>. (Accessed March 20 2020)

5 CIMA. 2017. In the Service of Power: Media Capture and the threat to Democracy. Available from <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/media-capture-in-the-service-of-power> (Accessed March 20 2020)

6 Venice Commission. 2015. 'Opinion on Media Legislation in Hungary'. Council of Europe. Available from [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2015\)015-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2015)015-e) (Accessed March 20 2020)

7 Balint, Fabok, Andras, Petho and Andras Szabo. 2016. 'Inside the Killing of Nepszabadsag'. Direkt 36. Available from <https://www.direkt36.hu/en/ilyen-volt-a-nepszabadsag-halala-belulrol> (Accessed March 20 2020)



***'2014-18 was the darkest period for us.'***

– Journalist, mainstream media platform

The more recent creation of the KESMA (Central European Press and Media Foundation) in 2018, again with a leadership dominated by pro-government and former Fidesz employees, has allowed for Orbán's further consolidation of the media extending to regional media and press titles. The government continues to sink public advertising money into KESMA-owned platforms in return for pro-government content and propaganda. For some stakeholders this was seen as the final nail in the coffin for independent media in Hungary as key titles either continue to close due to 'financial constraints' or are bought out by KESMA and Orbán-friendly allies. Hungary's rating has continually declined in the Reporters' Sans Frontières (RSF) Press Freedom Index, dropping 14 places in 2019 after the creation of KESMA.

The past year also saw the creation of a pro-government consortium of around 500 privately-owned newspapers, cable TV channels, radio stations and news websites, and almost all of the regional daily newspapers. By declaring this consortium to be of "strategic national importance in the public interest" the government has in practice prevented competing media outlets or media sector representatives from opposing it.<sup>8</sup>

All of the stakeholders interviewed expressed a clear frustration with the situation. Public media and pro-government media were considered to work together to dictate the narrative. This narrative is pro-Fidesz and Orbán and puts nationalist rhetoric at its heart.

***'Public and pro-government media are a mono-lithic unit – they work together... Fidesz use their affiliated media as a tool for political communications to spread their message.'*** – Academic

TV2, one of the two national broadcasting channels, was considered to be propagandistic and completely at the mercy of the government as was the rest of the public media entity. Private media continues to be bought out by allies of Fidesz and public advertising and commercial revenues remain directed at government-friendly platforms.

***'The public media is totally false. It's not even biased, it's out and out government lies. Pro-government media don't even need to pretend to be transparent, they are so well financed.'*** – Activist and former journalist

As a result, stakeholders bemoaned the lack of any true platforms for discussion and debate. Public media and pro-government platforms are known for spreading anti-migrant stories and falsehoods. These have more recently focused on the Roma people and NGOs, with an emphasis on demonising George Soros and his work. Anti-climate change debates are also perpetuated, with climate change positioned as a leftist plot, although there has been a notable shift more recently as public opinion and fears about the impact of climate change have become more apparent. Anti-European Union rhetoric is also dominant.

***'Disinformation is the political communication of the government. State media and pro-government media are spreading disinformation about Soros and migrants for example.'*** – Academic and activist

For stakeholders, these dominant narratives have forced the few remaining independent platforms to respond to this coverage, reinforcing the narratives even further. There was a sense that, while it is the alternative media's responsibility to address hate speech and racist rhetoric in pro-government media, this underpins an already polarised media and public landscape. Combined with the lack of financial resources at many alternative media outlets, this sees a dearth of reporting on certain topics of importance such as Hungarian-Russian relations. These include the expansion of a Russian-led nuclear plant in Hungary, nuclear proliferation, and US-Hungarian relations for example. Reporting on the Putin-Orbán alliance was also cited as problematic.

***'We don't have pro-Russian media as such but the government itself is pro-Russian.'*** – Academic and activist

Stakeholders were very concerned that this type of control of the media market and freedom of press was permitted in an EU country. There have been on-going attempts to lobby the European Commission and European Parliament by stakeholders to intervene by withholding EU funding to the Hungarian government, but this has had little impact.

***'This kind of media concentration is very unique in Europe and yet there is no debate at a European level. The whole media system is financed by indirectly European money!'*** – Media academic

8 RSF. 2019. Reporters without Borders. Available from <https://rsf.org/en/hungary> (Accessed March 20 2020)

In an effort to find alternative forms of revenue, many media platforms in Hungary have turned to crowd-funding their content and offering membership services to readers. Independent platforms and investigative journalism outfits in particular, such as *444* and *Direkt36*, have been supported by the public and a culture for paying for content is growing in Hungary. This is however also seen as an issue as media platforms rely on crowd-funded and reader contributions as one of their main sources of revenue rather than an additional one.

On March 21st 2020, a bill was presented in the Hungarian parliament calling for a prolonged state of emergency as a result of the public health crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Amongst other things, it calls for prison sentences for 'anyone who publicises false or distorted facts that interfere with the 'successful protection' of the public – or that alarm or agitate the public.'<sup>9</sup> There has been some suggestion from independent media in Hungary that the government is withholding information about the crisis and one person has already been held for propagating alleged misinformation regarding lockdown in Budapest. The bill was passed on 30th March 2020 and gives the government a permanent legal redress to clampdown further on media freedoms.

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9 Index on Censorship. *Disease Control? Mapping attacks on media freedom during the coronavirus crisis*. Available from <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2020/03/disease-control> (Accessed March 22 2020)



# PART 2

## THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE ARE UNDER FIRE

According to stakeholders, this systematic take-over of the media has created an environment where the majority of the media are either not willing or, in some cases, unable to produce fair and ethical journalistic content. The government has depicted the media as the main opposition to Fidesz and as a result much of the independent media have been forced into a politicized position.

***'Index became a political party in the eyes of the government.'*** – Editor, online mainstream media platform

***'Narratives are not unified in the non pro-government media, but you immediately get put in an offensive role because of the strength of the government narrative.'*** – Media academic

Some of the independent media are reluctant to take on this role and try to cover corruption from all sides, while others see their duty as acting politically against the government in light of the weakness of existing political opponents. There was some concern that this oppositional positioning was further perpetuated by experts describing independent media as 'opposition media' and that this supports the framing of the government.

***'Impartiality has become tricky. The environment is against journalists.'***  
– Editor-in-chief, broadcast mainstream media platform

However, conditions for practicing journalism are problematic. Access to government officials, authorities and ministries is limited to the public media and pro-government platforms. The government's annual all media press conference excludes some independent media outlets. Covering Parliamentary processes has also been compromised.

***'From 2008 - 2010, state authorities and ministries stopped answering questions unlike before when we were in a democracy.'***  
– Editor, online mainstream media platform

***'They reconstructed the physical space in Parliament to allow lesser access to independent media.'*** – Editor, online mainstream media platform

Access to information is a problem and seen as another form of control by the government with a number of proposals allowing the government to constrain the public's right to the government data and information. Independent media complained of inadequate responses from government authorities to requests for data and journalists continually having to rely on informal relationships with civil servants which sees them over-reliant on unnamed sources. This also sees journalists repeatedly relying on the same sources and lack of diversity prevails. Some stakeholders suggested that even these informal channels were becoming less efficient with government intimidation seeing many officials too scared to talk to journalists even anonymously. Smaller media are the worse hit as they have little time or resources to continue their investigations, enquire more deeply and research for longer periods of time. In the interest of breaking stories and news, they often rely on content from the Hungarian News Agency, another Fidesz-controlled body.

***'Smaller media have to make choices about what to cover. We have to pick which stories to pursue.'*** – Journalist, international media organisation

***'Normal channels of journalism practice don't work, for example with sources, and when it comes to freedom of information, they ask for money.'*** – Journalist, international media organisation

Some of the larger mainstream independent platforms also complained that this situation makes them less able to criticise the government and related authorities as this might limit their access even further. They were clear that this situation, while not censorship in the classic sense, impaired their ability to perform the watchdog role of journalism. Where some journalists and platforms have been successful in reporting on corrupt political processes, smear campaigns have become commonplace, as a form of demeaning their work and reputations. There are no journalists in jail for their work, but defamation is used as a silencing weapon. Verbal attacks in the media are prolific and stakeholders pointed to strong and effective communication against what are often termed 'so-called journalists' by those in power.

***'It is a smarter system than Erdogan. They let you live but they are trying to build a bigger media power and crowd us out. Their main goal is to discredit us.'***

– Editor, mainstream media platform

The environment has had an impact on collegiality amongst the journalism community. The trade union lost any status and credibility after the fall of communism and the journalism association is now viewed as archaic and unrepresentative. A number of attempts to create coalitions, including a once-successful press council body, are considered ineffective. Members of the independent media identified the ongoing competition between media as a reason for the lack of any self-regulatory or unifying body for the media. There was also a suggestion that financial threats had also impacted on some media platforms' decisions to avoid criticism of the current operating conditions.

***'RTL, 444 and Index would not sign any complaints to the EU as they would have lost money from Budapest.'*** – CSO activist

***'We can't protect ourselves from attacks because the community is so fractured.'***

– Independent journalist

Hungary is also unique in that there are no national or local fact-checking organisations. Stakeholders claimed that this was a result of intimidation by the government who would accuse them of politicisation and being anti-government. As a result, fake news and disinformation continues to circulate with little opportunity for independent verification.

There have been a number of honourable attempts, in the form of investigative journalism and outlets, to call those in power to account and expose corruption. *Direkt36* in particular continue to produce ground-breaking journalism on a local and regional level which challenges the status quo and the authority of the Fidesz party on a regular basis. While these investigations are wide and distinctive, there are only a small number of media platforms which can carry these investigations and, once again, financing large scale exposés of corruption is challenging. Some of the stakeholders, whilst commending the work of investigative journalists in Hungary, were also concerned that investigative journalism had a low reach. There was also a suggestion by some that there were no consequences to investigative journalism with one stakeholder saying, 'the government will never get prosecuted'.

Gender representation in the Hungarian media is also problematic with most senior positions, in particular in the public and pro-government media, taken by men. Stakeholders noted that female journalists tended to

cover topics which were traditionally considered to be women's issues and there were few women used as experts and sources. Patriarchal language dominates as the government continues to use the media to perpetuate traditional ideas of women and the family. Minority and LGBTQI representation in newsrooms are also low and as a result there is a lack of sensitivity in reporting on diversity and related issues.





# PART 3

## BUILDING TRUST IN JOURNALISM

This environment is exasperating an already polarized Hungarian public. Budapest is the epicentre of Hungarian life, the capital and key urban centre, and rural areas are less resourced with, in some cases, limited access to the internet. While Hungarian audiences are heavy consumers of media across all platforms, television and radio are dominant at a national level. Online media platforms are also widely consumed, more than print for example, but the concentration is in the urban capital of Budapest.

Independent media stakeholders were clear that they wanted to expand their readership further outside the capital. However, they were aware that they were competing with public and pro-government media who dominate the broadcast sector and are using affiliated platforms for political gains.

*'We want to reach readers; they want to reach voters.'* – Editor-in-chief, broadcast independent media platform

Trust in public institutions is low in Hungary compared to other OECD countries.<sup>10</sup> A report published by the Reuters Institute for Journalism in 2019 showed that audience's trust in news was also extremely low and that social media was increasingly becoming a main source of news.<sup>11</sup> Stakeholders expressed concerns that media across the board were contributing to the deepening fragmentation in Hungarian society as even independent media cannot operate from outside the highly challenging context.

Media literacy programmes are few and far between in Hungary. It was suggested that it was not in the government's interest to support such programmes in schools or even at a higher education level. Media and journalism programmes at a tertiary level were not considered strong by stakeholders. There are no degree programmes that focus on journalism skills and professionalism and stakeholders bemoaned the lack of practitioner experience within education establishments. Media programmes tend to concentrate on theoretical study and very few internships programmes are available. International study programmes used to be highly regarded and were motivational, encouraging young people to study media and enter the profession. These have become less available and stakeholders suggested that this was impacting on the lack of fresh faces and new ideas in the media sphere.

<sup>10</sup> OECD. 2015. Government at a Glance: Hungary. Available from <https://www.oecd.org/gov/Hungary.pdf> (Accessed March 20 2020)

<sup>11</sup> Bogнар, Eva. 2019. 'Digital News Report, Hungary'. Reuters Institute of Journalism. Available from <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2019/hungary-2019> (Accessed March 20 2020)



## CONCLUSION

This report provides an overview of the challenges to independent media and building trust in journalism in Hungary. It is based on a series of stakeholder interviews with representatives from across the Hungarian media landscape. The report demonstrates that the Hungarian government's systematic capture of the media has had a huge impact on the media's ability to perform its watchdog function, calling the government and its allies to account, exposing corruption and providing the information required to citizens to allow them to fully participate in political processes. Trust in the Hungarian media is extremely low as a result.

Financial control of the media market, control of media regulation and legislation combined with the government's power over the public media and private television has created a highly challenging and problematic environment for independent media and alternative voices to operate within. Disinformation and hate speech are rife in the public media which can see independent media coverage forced into being reactive. The narratives that dominate – anti-EU, anti-migrant, anti-NGO, anti-Roma, anti-climate change – continue to divide and polarise an already fragmented public.

The impact that this environment is having on ethical practice and values is concerning. Key journalistic principles such as diversity, independence and accuracy are being negotiated in the face of political and financial competition and media control. The lack of professionalism in the public media is undeniable but practice in the independent media is also suffering. While freedom of the press exists in the theoretical sense, propaganda and control are the presiding factors which define the media landscape.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholders were all asked to consider where the opportunities for developing the Hungarian media might lay. As a whole, they were adamant that the European Union and European Parliament needed to play a bigger role, putting pressure on the Hungarian government to support a healthier pluralism by withdrawing financial grants and projects. Financing of investigative work and independent media across the board was also considered to be an essential factor in enabling a healthier public sphere.

In developing proposals for media development, it is important to iterate the importance of consideration for the context of Central Eastern Europe and Hungary in particular. While there are lessons to be learned from other countries in the region, Hungary has a specificity that must not be ignored. Media development interventions should consider the political and economic context first and foremost when designing and financing projects.

With this in mind, the following recommendations will focus on providing long term solutions to some of the issues that journalists and the media are currently facing in Hungary. These recommendations are aimed at the policymakers, media, NGOs and CSOs and donor communities who are active in the support and development of freedom of press and the media.

**Dialogue with official institutions** Campaigning for the European Union and Parliament to intervene in the situation of the Hungarian media has been ongoing. There have been calls for the EU to freeze grants and financial aid to the Hungarian media as well as apply sanctions against Hungary and withdraw its voting rights if the government does not comply with EU policies on media freedom and fair trading/competition. It is the EU's role to hold the Hungarian government to account for its actions. While little has been done by way of showing solidarity with the Hungarian media, there is still a role for the EU to play in enabling some change in the current status quo.

**Journalism associations and collaboration** While there have clearly been a number of unrewarding attempts at the formation of unions and press councils, there still exists opportunities for the Hungarian media to unify and create networks of support and solidarity. The Association of Journalists needs to consider how it might attract younger members by providing them with access to services and resources that can support better practice. There are also regional and international networks which could provide greater knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

**Small grants and financial support for independent media** There is no doubt that the Hungarian media would benefit from direct financial support from donors to develop content and resources for staff. Some stakeholders said that they felt inexperienced in the skills necessary to apply for donor funding so there is also some scope for providing capacity-building and training on proposal writing and grant applications. Others suggested that there was a further opportunity to help fund IT solutions that would encourage media outlets to develop more user-friendly context appropriate paywall solutions. Financial solutions should be directed at local and regional media platforms as well as a number of emerging rural platforms.

**Higher education** While most journalists in Hungary have received some access to higher education, the teaching of journalism has been largely disregarded, with very few courses available which focus on teaching professional and ethical journalism skills. Better support should be given to further and higher education institutions who wish to change the current environment for the media and improve the quality of journalism in Hungary. Many academic journalism programmes focus on the theoretical and lack any proper connection with practice. There is an opportunity for partnerships with international academic institutions and the provision of journalism training by distance or online learning. Guest lectureships and teaching secondments would also provide media students with knowledge and learning from journalism experts outside of Hungary.

There is also an opportunity to support further research, content analysis and media monitoring of the Hungarian media.

**Media literacy** There is a need for better and further education of citizens on how to understand and engage with online media and recognise disinformation and hate speech across all platforms. A media-literate audience would encourage greater professionalism in the media community, as well allow for more innovation and the development of content that would fulfil the needs of Hungarian audiences. An understanding of media literacy at a higher education level would also provide students and future journalists with a better understanding of the challenges and pitfalls of their profession.

**Online harassment and defamation** Hungarian journalists are dealing with increasing attacks from the government and its allies. Harassment, in the form of smear campaigns, is rife. These attacks need to be documented and work should be done to identify where these attacks are coming from and how they are orchestrated. Journalists and media practitioners in Hungary should find regional and international networks of support in order to assist them in dealing with ongoing harassment. A number of online tools and courses to combat online harassment and defamation are available free of charge which should be identified and eventually made available in Hungarian.



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