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Media in Europe face multiple threats, shows new media pluralism study

The 2020 Media Pluralism Monitor confirms mounting harassment against journalists, media outlets face increasing economic uncertainty, as online media sphere fails to reinforce pluralism.

The European University Institute (EUI) has released the new [Media Pluralism Monitor \(MPM2020\)](#). The MPM2020 has been updated for the Digital Age with the addition of many new indicators and variables related to the digital transformation of the news and the media.

The Study confirms the trends observed in the media sector in the past years: journalists are more and more victims of harassment; the sustainability of the news industry is at risk across Europe, while the gatekeeping role of digital platforms is on the rise.

The MPM2020 is a scientific data-driven effort to document the risks to media pluralism in the European Union Member States (UK included) as well as in candidate countries, Turkey, and for the first time Albania, over the years 2018 and 2019, based on a set of 200 variables organised in 20 indicators. None of the countries analysed are free from risks to media pluralism.

The assassinations of Jan Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová in Slovakia, of Lyra McKee in Northern Ireland and of Viktorija Marinova in Bulgaria sadly confirm that Europe is not immune from horrendous crimes against journalists.

“Threats and harassment of journalists are increasingly happening in the online sphere and especially against female journalists, and these may have had a chilling effect on journalists’ freedom of expression and their ability to continue their work unharmed,” said **Professor Pier Luigi Parcu**, Director of the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom at the EUI. *“Even more worrying is the potential normalisation of threats against journalists from politicians, those who are best placed to foster an enabling environment for journalists,”* he added.

This is happening against a backdrop of increasing uncertainty for the economic sustainability of news media, potentially threatening the industry itself and the diversity and pluralism of quality information and news that exists as an essential pillar of democracy. The sustainability of the media sector is further affected by the disruptive role of digital intermediaries that are increasingly draining advertising revenues from the publishing sector.

The analysis provided by the MPM2020 provides a sound basis to inform policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders on the health of the EU media environment.

The Monitor is carried out with the support of a grant awarded by the European Union to the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom at the Robert Schuman Centre, EUI.

Selection of key findings:

- **Physical and digital safety** continues to be an issue as threats and harassment against journalists increase across Europe. Threats from politicians and the online sphere - especially against female journalists - may have had a chilling effect on journalists' freedom of expression.
- In this worsened economic landscape for media, 14 countries recorded a high risk of **influence over editorial content by commercial and owner interests**.
- High risk is often associated with the lack of transparency and accountability of **political advertising online** when compared to heavily regulated **audiovisual media**.
- Online hate speech against vulnerable groups is under-investigated and poorly handled in most countries.
- **Economic threats** are related to the high concentration of digital intermediaries with the top two commanding more than half the market in all countries and ⅔ of the digital advertising market in most countries. This puts the economic sustainability of quality journalism at significant risk. However, media viability slightly improved for online news in some markets, reflecting either a resilience of quality traditional media or the availability of alternative business models for digital news media.

Access the full report: <https://cmpf.eui.eu/mpm2020-results>

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For further information, please contact:

Luc Steinberg

[Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom](#)

Mobile: +32 4993 80592

Email: lucien.steinberg@eui.eu