

Indicators on the Level of Media Freedom and Safety of Journalists in Albania 2022

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Legal framework

Despite constitutional guarantees of media freedom, freedom of expression, and information in Albania, there are ongoing signs of deterioration in these areas in 2022. The anti-defamation package has been withdrawn completely and the Government did not introduce new legal changes in 2022.

Structural challenges

The challenges to media freedom in Albania are largely structural in nature.

The media ecosystem is characterized by a symbiotic relationship between powerful economic and political vested interests, which might in some cases include organized crime (examples in 2022 of cases of the conflict of PM with media owners including Top Media Group, Focus Group).

Ownership concentration, transparency, media plurality

Despite the proliferation of media outlets, the advertising market remains limited and media ownership is highly concentrated among a small number of individuals or families (4).

These owners often wield media as a tool to exert political and economic influence, exerting strong control over reporting, editorial line, and agenda setting.

Unfortunately, no progress was made in 2022 to promote media plurality, and the trend of declining media trust poses significant challenges to overall media freedom and independence.

Concentration of public information

The concentration of public information continued in 2022, exacerbated by intensive propaganda efforts by government, disinformation campaigns by opposition groups, and systemic attempts by political actors at both the local and central levels to supplant genuine journalism with pre-prepared media content, have significantly impaired the capacity of professional media to report independently and accurately.

This worrisome trend has resulted in a highly centralized media landscape, dominated by a narrow range of viewpoints and perspectives, and has eroded the diversity of voices necessary for a healthy democracy.

Access to information

Access to information is restricted due to a lack of political will, a pervasive culture of secrecy by public authorities, and weak accountability and transparency measures.

The impact of these restrictions is especially acute on investigative journalism, which plays a crucial role in uncovering corruption and promoting government accountability.

For example, recent proposed changes to the Law on Access to Information in 2022 were widely criticized for failing to fully address the requirements of media organizations and civil society groups (abusive requests, nonexecutive power of Commissioner's decisions).

Additionally, public authorities, including new justice institutions, have introduced media accreditation regulations that further limit journalists' ability to access information.

Quality of Information and Media Content

The quality of media content has deteriorated, with an increase in self-censorship of journalists and shrinking space for independent, critical, and investigative journalism due to structural issues, working conditions and pressures.

The practice of using media outlets for blackmailing risks becoming normalized. Information disorder with issues such as fake news, hate speech, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and propaganda deteriorates the overall media landscape in Albania.

Safety of Journalists

Actual attacks on the physical safety and life of journalists and their kin remain limited in Albania.

However, few cases that are reported are not investigated properly or there is limited transparency.

Albania's state institutions have not yet established effective mechanisms specific for journalists and media staff to provide protective measures when they are threatened. 18 attacks (12 M and 6 F) registered in 2022.

Working Conditions and Labor Rights

Journalists' safety is threatened by weak implementation of labor codes, gender-specific challenges in the media sector, digital safety concerns, gendered disinformation, and general anti-media sentiment and pressures. Journalists working in local media, young journalists, women journalists face more challenges.



Recommended actions

Efforts to improve media freedom in Albania must prioritize inclusiveness, local ownership, and genuine consultation with relevant stakeholders such as media organizations, civil society, and other interest groups. It is important to ensure transparency and a participatory approach throughout the process to build trust and credibility.

Efforts to promote media pluralism and diversity of viewpoints, including measures to counter media ownership concentration and support the development of independent and alternative media outlets.

Strengthening legal protections for journalists and freedom of expression, including measures to enhance access to information, protect whistle-blowers, and combat disinformation and propaganda.

Addressing issues related to media professionalism, such as improving journalistic standards and ethics, enhancing training and development opportunities for journalists, and promoting media and information literacy among the public.

Advancing digitalization of the media sector including enforcing data protection legislation, strengthening digital security, countering gender disinformation, and exploring innovative models for sustainable media financing.