



GREEK MEDIA BAROMETER

A domestic analysis of the media landscape

GREECE 2024



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GREEK MEDIA BAROMETER

Introduction

The Greek Media Barometer (GMB) is an innovative approach to describing the state of the media landscape in Greece. Inspired by the African Media Barometer,¹ it seeks to provide an integrated system of assessment and measurement tailored to the unique characteristics of the Greek media environment.

There are numerous press surveys and media indicators worldwide. They usually follow a conventional »top-down« methodology: outside bodies compile data and assess them on the basis of certain fixed standards. The Greek Media Barometer, on the other hand, is a self-assessment exercise. It provides the insiders' view and reflects the specific challenges and expectations of the media ecosystem in Greece, while also drawing on relevant European and international standards.

For its first application in Greece, the Barometer convened a panel of eight experts in the field, including media professionals, as well as civil society representatives.

The panel met for a full day to discuss the media environment in accordance with 37 predetermined indicators. The discussion and scoring were moderated by an independent consultant who is also the editor of this report, based on the draft of a rapporteur. After the discussion of each indicator, panel members allocated their individual scores in an anonymous vote on the following five-grade scale:

1. The country does not meet the indicator
2. The country meets only certain aspects of the indicator
3. The country meets certain aspects of the indicator
4. The country meets most aspects of the indicator
5. The country meets all aspects of the indicator

The sum of all individual indicator scores is divided by the number of panel members to determine the average score for each indicator. Average sector scores were arrived at in similar fashion and are meant to offer an initial understanding of the various facets of the media landscape in Greece.

This report summarises the substance of the discussions. In full respect of the confidentiality principle, panellists are not quoted by name in order to protect them from any possible repercussions. It is hoped that the report will become a valuable resource to promote an informed dialogue and create a climate for change and reforms, which are clearly needed in the media sector.

1 <https://fesmedia-africa.fes.de/media-and-publications/african-media-barometer-publications.html>

In September 2024, a few months after the debate on the Media Barometer in Greece, the Solomon Group's project "Who owns the media" was published.

It is a detailed mapping of the business activities of entrepreneurs who own a large share of the national media. The content of the study confirms many of the conclusions of the present analysis and provides a new basis for the debate in Greece on the media and the people who control information.²

Summary

Since the last bailout agreement in 2017, Greece has been recovering slowly from the financial and economic crisis, although its effects are still felt in all areas of public and private life. The country has returned to economic growth, and unemployment has decreased, but public debt remains high. In the political realm, the New Democracy party returned to power in 2019 under Kyriakos Mitsotakis, focusing on economic reforms, investment and improving Greece's international standing.

Today, Greece faces multiple challenges, such as the migration crisis, regional tensions (particularly with Turkey), and the ongoing need for economic reforms, while also taking steps to modernise and stabilise its economy and society.

In the media sector, the financial crisis caused major disruptions and realignments, with lasting effects on diversity and editorial independence. Large publishing houses listed on the stock exchange collapsed. Big businesses – including those owned by so-called oligarchs – saw their chance and made their entrance into the press sector. They took over established publishing houses and created new groups with a plethora of media.

Ownership of media is now concentrated in the hands of a few big operators, running businesses in many different areas, ranging from waste management to energy, shipping and sports teams. They use their media arms as tools to advance their wider business or political interests. As a result, the press does not work in the public interest and is unable to hold the powerful to account, whether political or entrepreneurial.

While the print and online media enjoy some constitutional protection of their editorial independence, there is no such provision for broadcasting. Article 15 (2) of the Constitution states that »radio and television shall be under the direct control of the State«. The supposedly »independent« regulator, the National Radio and Television Council (ESR) is meant to be responsible for the licensing of radio and television stations »ensuring the quality level of programmes mandated by the social mission of radio and television and by the cultural development of the country« (Constitution). The President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ESR are appointed by the government.

² <https://whoownsthemedia.gr/>

The same goes for the national broadcaster, the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), all of whose board members and chief executives are appointed by government. The ERT thus is not a public, but a state broadcaster. Interestingly, panellists noted in the discussion that even though the ERT is the long arm of government, it is fairly reliable in its news coverage thanks to the journalists working there.

In recent years the media landscape in Greece has diversified. Independent and highly professional online publications have been created by individual journalists. However, they are not yet sustainable and still seeking to establish a sound financial basis.

The majority of journalists work in large media conglomerates. Workloads generally are high, pay is low. Journalists often have to take on additional jobs to make ends meet. Influence from owners and the government is brought to bear continually and openly to ensure that journalists maintain a certain »line«. There is self-censorship and little time for investigation or proper checking of facts. Panellists pointed out that, against all the odds, some journalists still take pride in doing a good job and encourage others by their example to do the same. However, there is little or no editorial control or insistence on professional standards, and little training on such matters for media practitioners.

In addition, journalists experience ongoing threats and verbal attacks – not just from ordinary citizens. Government officials regularly denounce them in social media for being »anti-Greek, enemies of the state«. Their movements and contacts are monitored by the state, and several journalists known for investigating sensitive topics have become targets of surveillance by government, as revealed by the independent press in 2022.

Working conditions and permanent outside pressures affect the output of the media and shoddy journalism has an impact far beyond the individual case. When stories are proven wrong, trust in the media as such may be eroded. And if there is no trust in professional media, people will look for information on social media, which is awash with disinformation and pseudo-facts. This state of affairs is dangerous for stability and democracy in Greece.

All of these and other factors outlined in the report have led to the country's low ranking in the World Press Freedom Index 2024 compiled by Reporters Without Frontiers. Greece ranks 88 out of 180 countries, the lowest in the European Union. The overall average of scores in this report of just 2.0 (»The country only meets certain aspects of the indicators«) seems to be in accordance with this ranking.

Despite considerable scepticism regarding the political will to embark on reforms that may foster media freedom and independence, the panellists and authors of this report hope that their findings and recommendations will initiate serious debate on the state of freedom of expression and the media in Greece and help to lobby for meaningful change.



SECTION 1

Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are protected and promoted effectively

1.1 Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, is guaranteed in the constitution and supported by other pieces of legislation

Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees that »every person may express and propagate his thoughts orally, in writing and through the press in compliance with the laws of the State«. It further states that »the press is free. Censorship and all other preventive measures are prohibited«.

Despite this general prohibition of »preventive measures«, the article goes on to allow for the seizure (of newspapers and other publications) by order of the public prosecutor ... after circulation and in case of:

- a. an offence against the Christian or any other known religion,
- b. an insult against the person of the President of the Republic,
- c. a publication which discloses information on the composition, equipment and set-up of the armed forces or the fortifications of the country, or which aims at the violent overthrow of the regime or is directed against the territorial integrity of the State,
- d. an obscene publication which is obviously offensive to public decency, in the cases stipulated by law.

With regard to radio and television, Article 15 (2) states unequivocally that they »shall be under the direct control of the State«. This control is to be implemented by the National Radio and Television Council, referred to as an »independent authority«. One of the authority's control mechanisms is the licensing of radio and television stations »ensuring the quality level of programmes mandated by the social mission of radio and television and by the cultural development of the Country«.

The constitution thus allows for direct state intervention in the media sector. In addition, as many panellists pointed out, freedom of expression and media freedom are also endangered by the influence exerted by business vested interests.

»It is debatable whether freedom of expression and independence are effectively protected in Greece, since we have not successfully managed to address the issue of »media capture«, which is a particularly powerful force in our country. In the course of the financial crisis from 2010 onwards, some very large publishing houses listed on the stock exchange collapsed owing to corruption and cash flow problems. As a result, the press landscape has changed dramatically.«

»Big businesses – including those owned by so-called »oligarchs« – saw their chance and made their entrance into the press sector. They essentially salvaged or took over parts or remnants of large publishing houses and created new groups with a plethora of media. As a result, about a dozen big operators were

formed, thus signalling the lack of independence of the media. This is even more evident if we look at what is actually happening on the ground, i.e. you will not see any media owned by Marinakis Shipping or shipping and oil tycoon Dimitris Melissanidis, for instance, being critical in their reporting on any kind of business in their portfolio. Instead these media are used as the long arm of their core businesses to keep their competitors in check. As a result, the press does not work in the public interest and is unable to control power, whether political or entrepreneurial, in any way.«

Another panellist pointed out that the media were not independent even before the crisis.

»Business vested interests have long played a part and exerted unbearable pressure. Some of them still exist, personified by telecommunications entrepreneur Vangelis Marinakis who is the president of the Greek Super League, shipping magnate Vardis Vardinoyannis,³ or businessman George Bobolas. So, this is not a new development. But since 2010 there has certainly been a qualitative difference. Now power is concentrated in the hands of fewer persons, who get a bigger piece of the pie in many different areas, ranging from waste management to energy, shipping and sports teams, and who use their media business as a tool to advance their wider, business or political interests. As far as freedom of expression is concerned, fewer cracks are now allowed in this system dominated by oligarchs – the cracks that traditional publishers were able to open and utilise.«

»We do not have media that are fully independent and where you have the freedom to say anything you want. I think we do not have that in Greece, we did not have it in the past and we are not going to have it in future.«

»[Greece] is a small country of 10 million people, with certain entrepreneurs who progressively build up power in various fields and usually in the media as well. It is their way of exerting pressure on the government for them to be able to do other stuff. Therefore, we as journalists choose and will always choose, among the media owned by entrepreneurs, which media we will work for and in what context we will move according to which government is in power.«

»Much of what we talk about does not apply in a large nationwide TV channel. We always knew there were news reports and topics that were out of the question. Sometimes, certain topics accidentally succeeded in getting through. In the early years of the Euro crisis, you could still cover some controversial topics like the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) austerity policies. Afterwards this line could not be crossed, it became a wall and those working in these media knew they could not challenge the central government line.«

Regarding independence, the panellist said, cooperative media are faced with problems of their own:

3 Vardis Vardinoyannis died in November 2024.

»It is extremely hard for independent or cooperative media to survive with decency. For me visiting a website is not decent. A not very well-informed reader may say that a website is very good and speaks the truth quite independently. What is of paramount importance is that people working there get fair and adequate pay and that there is enough staff. Employers who claim to be running independent media while they do not pay their journalists are just hypocritical. This is a small country and only a limited part of the population is willing to pay and contribute to independent media, making their survival difficult.«

A panellist also working for an independent media outlet, concurred: »We express what we believe in, what we feel and consider relevant to the community we represent, but many times we have caught ourselves saying “no” in order to remain independent, which deprives us of funding.«

Readers and users are required to know the background of the media outlet they use: »We need to know who owns it and what it represents to be able to filter what we read.«

»The Greek media may not work in the public interest; however, the people working for the Greek media serve the public interest and therefore clean up the name of the media on behalf of their owners.« There are many indirect ways to make news public, panellists said. »For instance, if something cannot be published in your media outlet, you may pass the information on to a colleague and it may thus come out on another media outlet. There are obstacles, but eventually information comes out in Greece; I do not think many things remain hidden for too long. And we have access to foreign media.«

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1 The country does not meet the indicator
- 2 The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3 The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4 The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5 The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

2.9

1.2 The right to freedom of expression is practised and citizens, including journalists, assert their rights without fear

»A big problem is that we have not defined what is meant by freedom of expression«, panellists felt. They agreed that citizens generally do not know whether they have rights to freedom of expression and information, what exactly these rights entail, and how to exercise them.

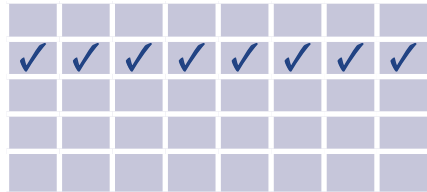
Discussion centred mainly on the abuse of freedom of expression.

»The public must know their rights, for instance when they wish to make a complaint about racist or abusive speech. In the name of freedom of expression, room is left for abuse. And when there are reactions, freedom of expression is the argument they always use.« This was also true for professionals and journalists themselves. »If we don't define what is meant by freedom of expression and abusive speech, things will remain extremely difficult.«

Scores:

Individual rating

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The country does not meet the indicator |
| 2 | The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator |
| 3 | The country meets some aspects of the indicator |
| 4 | The country meets most aspects of the indicator |
| 5 | The country meets all aspects of the indicator |



Average score:

2.0

1.3 The state honours regional and international instruments on freedom of expression and freedom of the media

Panellists expressed concern about the state's compliance with international treaties and covenants on freedom of expression and media freedom. Issues include the safety of journalists and surveillance of media practitioners (see indicators below).

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator				✓				✓	
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator									
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator									
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator									

Average score:

1.7

1.4 Restrictions on freedom of expression prescribed by law, such as legislation on defamation, serve a legitimate purpose and must be necessary and proportionate

»Freedom of expression in the country is not unlimited. There are limitations that every journalist is aware of – such as slanderous defamation, insult – and they are not included in the notion of freedom of expression.«

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator				✓		✓			
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator					✓				
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator									✓
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator		✓						✓	
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator	✓		✓						

Average score:

3.1

1.5 Journalists are protected against unfounded court proceedings with the purpose of preventing, restricting or penalising public participation (SLAPPs)

In the words of the European Commission, SLAPPs (short for »strategic lawsuits against public participation«) are »unfounded or fully or partially unfounded proceedings which contain elements of abuse justifying the assumption that the main purpose of the court proceedings is to prevent, restrict or penalise public participation«.

They are »an issue concerning sustainability and it is not an accident that most lawsuits are aimed against specific media, with specific targeting«, one panellist said. »They are intimidating, want to make information disappear and are meant as an ›example‹ for other journalists to heed.«

However, panellists said, »getting to that point is the last resort. Reporters may not be sued, but the day after the news came out, a financial audit may be initiated in the company. There are countless other steps, including bullying, phone calls, comments«. »Ads were also cut because something was written.«

»When you work for an independent media outlet, you don't care much, so you will write and may end up with a SLAPP. When you're not at an independent media outlet, you may just never write again because it's out of your hands.«

The EU Commission stated in April 2022 that »it is important to protect journalists and human rights defenders from manifestly unfounded and abusive court proceedings against public participation«. But, as panellists pointed out, the question is »how this recommendation will be translated into national law and what will happen in the meantime, including the issue of compensation for court action judged to be unfounded«.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator	✓				✓		✓	
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator		✓		✓		✓		✓
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator			✓					
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator								
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator								

Average score:

1.8

1.6 Public incitement to violence or hatred against persons or groups defined by »race«, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation with intent (hate speech) is an offence

Some panel members argued that for political change to occur, journalists need to engage with different views, even those using hate speech or harmful rhetoric, and report those views, in particular when they are expressed by personalities who exert considerable political influence. Avoiding news coverage of such views could potentially disguise important social dynamics and prevent informed public dialogue. However, as discussed, there is a profound lack of legal knowledge among journalists leading to uncertainty about what acceptable news reporting is.

Panellists also highlighted the need for media organisations to establish clear internal guidelines to limit perpetrators of hate speech from voicing their ideas, thus mitigating the risk of reinforcing harmful stories.

In contrast, another group of panellists advocated for a more assertive stance in the fight against hate speech, directly refusing to give a platform to perpetrators. They argued that, while cutting off exposure to such rhetoric, journalists should still be able to reflect the substance of opposite views without legitimising or amplifying harmful voices. This approach underlines the importance of the media's responsibility to create a safe space for inclusive public dialogue, and to prioritise the wellbeing of marginalised groups over the need to present all views on an equal footing. It reflects recognition of the power dynamics at play and the potential harm caused by giving a voice to ideologies of hate, suggesting a proactive approach to shaping the narrative while respecting journalistic integrity.

One of the examples discussed by panel members was the views of the church on the institutionalisation of civil marriage and the bill on marriage for same-sex couples. »Why should the church be involved in the debate on the recognition of civil marriage, even if it represents a part of society?« This view was supported by another panellist, who argued this was a »state issue«. »After the bill on same-sex marriages was passed political abusive speech was used and attacks of such a nature keep occurring.« »Why would journalists wish to reproduce these stereotypes on a topic related to a human right? They bring in people from the church or the far right, and these abusive words are the reason for spitting or hitting.« Another panellist argued that presenting the view of the church, which plays an important role in society, is necessary to complete a story. »The question is not whether you give them coverage but how you do it, and to answer what they say.«

»Many times, when issues of freedom of expression are discussed, as to what a journalist should include and how far to take it, I feel we don't see the elephant in the room«, said one member with reference to the political influence of the church, »thus the journalist becomes almost obliged to put forward that particular point of view«. Another panellist pointed out that when a story records who is for or against on matters such as new regulations for same-sex marriage, the aim is to show how the debate is developing: »We have to keep this distinction in mind if the story aims to reflect socio-political developments around an issue.«

»In the media they believe a topic is balanced when the opposite view is also presented. However, what an opposite view is has not been defined yet. Also, journalists are not very well informed on many topics, including disability.« With regard to disability, panellists pointed out, terms that the community itself does not want to be used are often encountered.

»There needs to be continuous training on language issues that have nothing to do with political correctness. The training level is low and there is a need for training in terminology and how to approach it.«

»ESIEA (Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers) has its code of ethics, but if we look at the existing codes, we realise they do not represent everyday life. The ESIEA code does not refer to sexual orientation, it does not refer to gender identity.»

Concerning the option of waiting for the sector to self-regulate, most panel members agreed that this is the wrong policy. »We need to regulate to go faster, we can't wait that long.« In particular, »minority groups don't have the privilege of waiting.«

»Journalists who allow or use abusive speech do so consciously, and there is a great number of people in the media who do so consciously and systematically.«

»A journalist has many tools to highlight the political dimensions of an issue, and do so without giving way to abusive speech.«

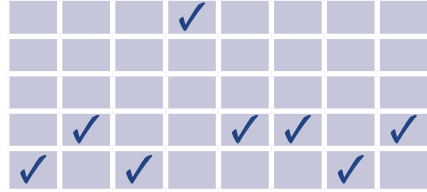
The point was also made that when phrases such as »illegal immigrants« or abusive or insulting language from church members is used, this is passed on unfiltered by the media, unlike – for example – other derogatory references such as »the cops«. »The rules applying to the participants of a discussion are not the same for everyone,«

The discussion also included reference to the work of cartoonists, especially in cases where they make derogatory comments about a minority. Should they have the right to do so or should they be censored? »For me, criticism of prevailing opinion is necessary«, a panellist argued in an attempt to provide an answer.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

4.0

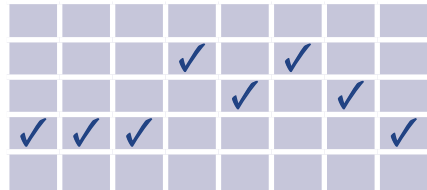
1.7 Confidential sources of information are protected by law and/or the courts

The vast majority of participants agreed that the country meets most aspects of the indicator, signalling a general recognition of the protection of confidential information sources by the legal system and the courts

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

3.3

1.8 Public information is easily accessible, guaranteed by law, to all citizens

Access to public information is a fundamental right that influences the quality of democratic societies. In Greece it is guaranteed by Article 5(a) of the constitution. The legal framework establishes procedures for citizens to access public documents and data, setting clear guidelines for public authorities to follow. Exceptions may be imposed only on the basis of reasons specified by law and insofar as they are absolutely necessary and justified for reasons of national security, privacy and the protection of sensitive personal data.

While there are formal guarantees of the right of access to information in the constitution and other laws, its practical implementation faces significant challenges. These include bureaucratic delays, lack of awareness – on both sides, citizens and the authorities – as well as resistance to transparency within certain public institutions.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator		✓	✓						
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator								✓	
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator				✓			✓		
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator	✓				✓				
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator									

Average score:

2.6

1.9 No person is subject to retaliation in any form for releasing information on wrongdoing or serious threats to, for example, public health, safety or the environment, in the honest belief that such information is substantially true

In 2022 Parliament passed a law to comply with a European Union directive that lays down common minimum standards for the protection of whistleblowers reporting violations of EU acts. Such breaches may occur in a wide range of areas, including public procurement, product safety, transport safety, protection of the environment, public health, protection of privacy and personal data.

The law provides for channels through which citizens can bring forward information on wrongdoing in these areas or lodge complaints against public servants, influential business people or employers. Besides internal information mechanisms within institutions, there is also the National Transparency Authority, a government body established to enhance transparency, prevent corruption and promote accountability across public administration and other sectors. If these channels do not deal with such reports sufficiently the informant is entitled to make a public disclosure. In cases in which whistleblowers have reasonable grounds to believe that the breach they seek to disclose may cause danger to the public interest, in the case of an emergency or if there is a prospect of retaliation, they can also go public without using official channels.

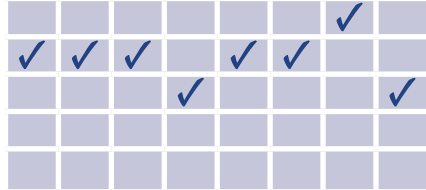
There seems to be little awareness of these legal provisions, either in the media or among the general public.

Panellists felt that the practical application of the new law is lagging behind and increased transparency and protection of whistleblowers are needed.

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1 The country does not meet the indicator
- 2 The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3 The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4 The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5 The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score: 2.1

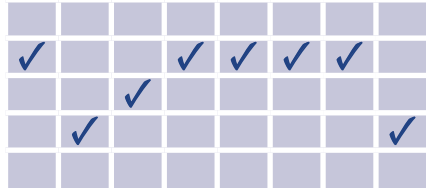
1.10 Civil society in general and media lobby groups can work freely and actively advance the cause of media freedom

Panellists felt that the performance of civil society and media lobby groups in defence of media freedom is generally positive. However, some limitations still exist and media lobby groups face challenges in some sectors.

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1 The country does not meet the indicator
- 2 The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3 The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4 The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5 The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score: 2.6



SECTION 2

The media landscape is characterised by diversity, independence and sustainability

2.1 A wide range of information sources (print, broadcasting, internet) are accessible and affordable to the public

The discussion delved into the complex meaning of media pluralism, emphasising the qualitative aspect of diversity versus mere quantity. Panellists also pointed to the predominance of a few media outlets in shaping public discourse. »Pluralism doesn't just mean that there are many outlets. When there is a huge pool of media, especially on the internet, people often argue 'but how can you say there are no independent media when there are hundreds of them?' But the real question is how many different voices there are.«

»If there are actually 100 media that all carry two or three basic stories, reference cannot be made to pluralism and diversity.« »The issue is not quantitative; it is qualitative.«

»The picture is not exactly black or white, because it has to do with which media prevail. If there are 100 media outlets, but the ones reaching the majority of the public amount to three in number, reference cannot be made to pluralism.« »It is one thing to note that this situation exists, and a different thing to assess how widespread it is. If most people, eight out of ten, consume certain media only; that is not diversity.«

For many reasons, including the crisis in print, it is very difficult to determine the exact circulation of print. What is certain is that even the oldest and most respected daily newspapers do not exceed a circulation of 10,000 copies and that everyone is now turning online and the opportunities it offers.

According to the European Union Digital Decade Country Report 2023, in Greece 82 per cent of the population use the internet, slightly below the EU average of 89 per cent. Some 78 per cent of the population use social media.

In the discussion on the emergence of new initiatives and subscription models in the media, panellists focused on the role of independent journalism in promoting diversity. »In recent years the media landscape in Greece has clearly diversified. This happened with the creation of independent and highly professional online publications such as Solomon, the Media Institute for Investigative Reporting (MIIR),⁴ and Reporters United; before that Athens Live as a first attempt.« At the end of 2010, the first foundations were laid for the development of such publications.

»However, these media are not sustainable yet: They need to be able to develop their activities in the way that their counterparts abroad have, where there is a funding and support culture, for example crowdfunding. I believe that in the coming years this will change progressively.«

4 Mediterranean Institute for Investigative Reporting <https://miir.gr/>

»It's also interesting to see the online edition of *Kathimerini* changing over to a subscription model. A leading media outlet in Greece has thus decided to set up a paywall and say ›pay for our good content‹, as is done by the *New York Times* and other foreign media.«

»There is relative diversity in the established media, of different political orientations, although the progressive spectrum and the left wing are represented by only a few.«

There was doubt expressed »that the existence of some independent media amounts to diversity«. »Independent media and investigative journalism are not only needed, but they are also a lifeline and contribute to diversity«, said someone else.

»We are also deeply and incredibly Athens-centred. The press in the provinces is broken. So, diversity includes a number of aspects we are not, I think, very good at.»

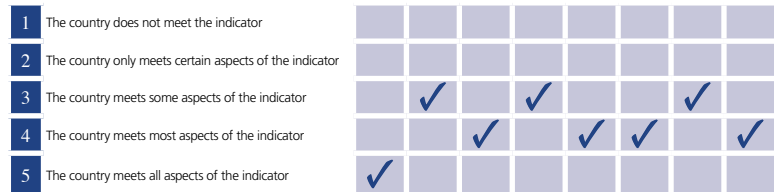
Regarding public accessibility and affordability, the panellists expressed two clearly different stances:

»It's very unfair for people to think that they are entitled to information for free, because it's not free. Why should these people (journalists) have to starve or work from morning till night in the name of the nice idea that information must be disseminated.« »Social groups that are economically deprived cannot be excluded from information. But the fact that some people don't have money should not be used to justify that journalists are not well paid.«

»And digitalisation has created even greater inequalities«, another panellist said. »You have to have access to the internet for you to access online media, websites and so on.«

Scores:

Individual rating



Average score:

3.8

2.2 Adequate competition legislation/regulation seeks to enforce transparency of media ownership and to prevent media concentration and monopolies

Article 14 (9) of the constitution includes a detailed provision on media ownership:

The ownership status, the financial situation and the means of financing of information media must be made known as specified by law. ...The concentration of the control of more than one information media of the same type or of different types is prohibited. More specifically, concentration of more than one electronic information media of the same type is prohibited, as specified by law. (...)

At the time of writing, the Alafouzos Family (shipowners) own the *Kathimerini* newspaper and its online version, Skai TV and Skai Radio. Evangelos Marinakis (also shipowner) owns the newspapers *Ta Nea* and *To Vima*, as well as TV stations MEGA Channel and the online media outlet in.gr. Vasilis Kouris and family own radio stations Red 96.3 FM, Lampsi 92.3 FM and Melodia 99.2 FM. Panellists underlined current challenges, including non-transparent licensing procedures and the transfer of politicised practices by traditional media to their respective online outlets. There was broad consensus on the unprecedented level of political influence and editorial uniformity after 2015, when Alexis Tsipras became Prime Minister, and general concern about the diversity of voices in the media landscape.

»The press has never been completely independent, it has always been intertwined with political power and business interests. In the past there used to be important publishing interests, big traditional publishers, who pursued the media line, depending on their own political convictions and which government they wanted to blackmail or follow. In fact, we had both – of equal or almost equal importance in terms of influence. There were the *Eleftherotypia*, *Apogevmatini* and *Eleftheros Typos* newspapers. All this collapsed with the crisis.«

»The conjuncture we are at now, with the influence the media has, government pressure on such a broad scale has never been witnessed in the past.« »One political voice has prevailed, especially from 2015 onwards.«

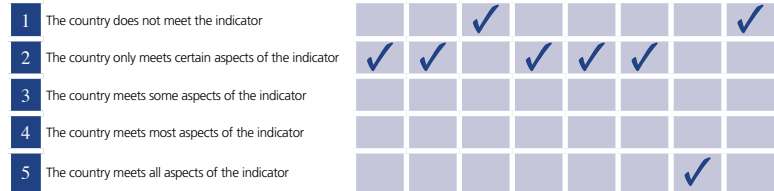
»The broadcasting regulator National Council for Radio and Television (ESR) has a large archive which is supposed to include lists of shareholders of broadcasting outlets and we are happy to have it.« This archive, panellists said, could serve as a tool for creating transparency on media ownership. »But ESR is terribly understaffed.« Therefore, the information available is outdated and requests are answered with a delay of more than one or two years.

»When the New Democracy Party came into government in 2020 it created a different register, in which a media outlet needs to list and declare who its owner is. The process is supposed to be controlled by the General Secretariat

of Information, which along with the National Intelligence Service is directly under the Prime Minister’s Office, which I find problematic.« »Unfortunately, this register is not publicly accessible.«

Scores:

Individual rating



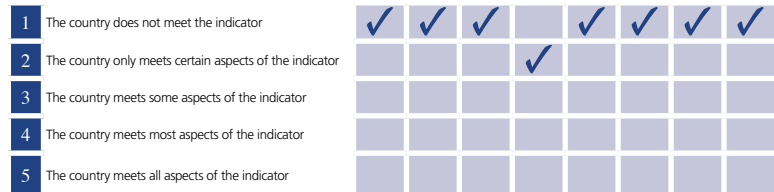
Average score: 2.1

2.3 Government promotes a diverse media landscape with economically sustainable and independent media outlets

The overwhelming majority of panellists strongly support the view that government is not adequately promoting a diverse media landscape with financially sustainable and independent media.

Scores:

Individual rating



Average score: 1.1

2.4 The state allocates funds for public advertising and other funds in a transparent manner and refrains from using its power over the allocation of such funding as a means to interfere with editorial content

The criteria for distributing state advertising funds are often unclear, and there is a perception that the process can be biased in favour of media outlets that support the government. Some media outlets that receive significant government advertising revenue are accused of adopting a favourable stance towards the government or avoiding critical coverage.

Media outlets that try to be independent from government have to look elsewhere for their funding.

»Some media outlets are subscription-based and part of their costs are covered by their owners.« »People pay for a lot of other things but not for information. People are used to getting information free of charge.«

»The examples of Kathimerini and Ta Nea are instructive: because their owners have a lot of money, they can at any time pass on a cost to their other businesses and thus cover possible losses. They are also already established media; they have established common and quality content for a particular audience and may more easily move to subscription options.«

»The collaborative media, the independent media, the research groups, they are all struggling to survive by paying marginally decent salaries, with journalists not just playing the role of journalist, but also of project manager and fundraiser, because there is no budget to support all this.«

»Those funding you in any way, even indirectly, set an agenda, but not to the extent that classical media and classical businessmen do.«

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator		✓	✓		✓		✓	
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator				✓		✓		✓
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator	✓							
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator								
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator								

Average score:

1.6

2.5 The size of the advertising market can support a diversity of media outlets

Panellists were unanimous in their assessment that this is not the case in Greece:
 »Greece is a terribly small market and has been a poor country for decades.«

The scarcity of overall ad spend is causing two main problems for journalists: dependence on advertisers and low wages.

»Those who have worked in a newsroom know that the most important thing is who their employer gets along with. Every media outlet has its preferred businessmen. The problem is that you can't write anything negative about half of them.«

»Wages are very low, you have to work two jobs to have a decent income. This has an impact on the quality of news reports as you have to exhaust yourself to keep up with everything, but also on the personal lives of professionals in the field - which nobody cares about.«

»Even the good media have a certain financial ceiling. The future looks bleak. The question is: How many years will you be able to do side jobs to make a living in this profession?«

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator	✓								✓
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator									
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator									
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator									

Average score:

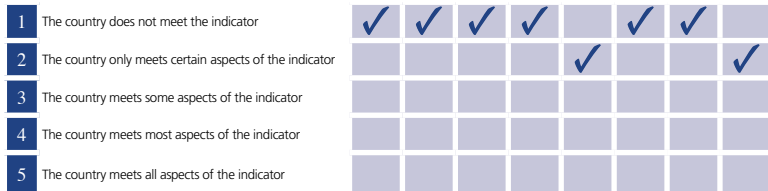
1.8

2.6 All media fairly reflect the voices of both women and men

Women are generally underrepresented in the media, both as sources of information and as subjects of reporting. When represented, they are often treated in a stereotypical way, being shown as caregivers, homemakers or in roles that emphasise their physical appearance. Men, on the other hand, are often depicted as authoritative figures, leaders or professionals.

Scores:

Individual rating



Average score:

1.3

2.7 The media fairly represent the voices of society as a whole, including minorities and marginalised groups

Over the past few years the visibility of members of the LGBTQ+ community has increased, with corporate advertising being placed in the growing sections of the media that target this group.

However, panellists expressed strong concerns over political interference in media coverage, with threats of advertising cuts linked to editorial decisions.

During the debate on the bill legalising same-sex marriages, for instance, the media received threats from the political arena, warning that this issue was not to be highlighted at the risk of having advertising cut. »What do you do in that case? Do you keep supporting what you believe in or do you stop existing? This is a reality smaller media regularly face.«

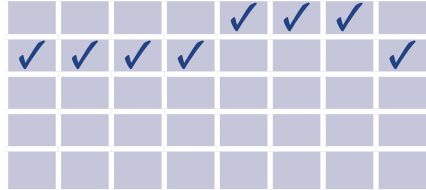
In the context of diversity, panellists noted a lack of reporting on refugees and migrants. They spoke of pressure to downplay violations of human rights against migrants, revealing an unwillingness within Greece to address these issues domestically: »On refugee issues and pushbacks, the Greek public is silent. Pressure to change things comes from the international community, because we

don't say a word about it in Greece. We don't even use the expression ›violation of the human rights of migrants.«

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1** The country does not meet the indicator
- 2** The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3** The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4** The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5** The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

1.6



SECTION 3

Broadcasting and the internet are regulated independently and are free from state interference

3.1 The bodies that regulate public media are independent, are appointed transparently and protected by law against political or commercial interference

The National Council for Radio and Television (ESR) is responsible for granting licences to broadcasters and ensuring they adhere to content and ethical standards. The ESR also has a role in overseeing online media and content. This includes ensuring that online content adheres to Greek laws regarding media standards, such as prohibitions on hate speech or the protection of minors. To this end the Council monitors broadcast and internet content and oversees compliance with laws and regulations. The Council has powers to impose penalties on broadcasters and online media that violate the regulations.

The President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Council are appointed by the government, subject to approval by parliament. The board of the ESR consists of seven members, appointed by the Conference of Presidents of Parliament (speakers of Parliament, presidents of committees, representatives of parliamentary groups) with a 4/5 majority. Members serve for a term of six years.

»It is a matter of the rule of law, because the legislation is not enforced.«
 »A mere mention of the names of previous and current ESR members is self-evident.« »Conservative people are appointed at ESR, which does not reflect the future or the upcoming changes.«

With the 2019 Law on the Executive State which gives the Prime Minister direct control over government administration and coordination, the likelihood of state intervention has increased dramatically, panellists said.

»To operate effectively in public life independent authorities should have a minimum common acceptance of the people who sit in these authorities. ESR does not have such common acceptance, not even as a pretext.«

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator			✓		✓			
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator								
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator								
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator								

Average score:

1.3

3.2 The funding of the regulators is sufficient to enable them to fulfil their mandates in effectively and independently

The broadcasting regulator is severely underfunded and understaffed and thus unable to fulfil its mandate.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator			✓		✓			
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator								
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator								
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator								

Average score:

1.3

3.3 The regulatory body in charge of public media regulates the services and licences in the public interest and ensures fairness and a diversity of views broadly representing society at large

The ESR is an authority that could be a useful ally in supporting quality journalism, panellists said. Instead, it is highly problematic. »How can ESR intervene in something that is in principle unregulated? Intervene to enforce what?«

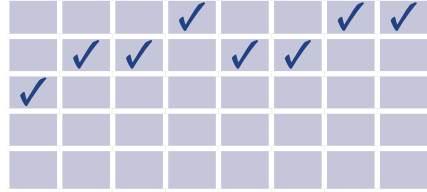
»I think ESR operated differently over the previous period. Even concerning the briefing of journalists, they used to be briefed systematically on a range of issues every Tuesday, now it's only once in a while.« »They have been talking about a Code of Ethics for a long time, there was a meeting and then the issue froze.«

»Generally, there have not been any serious decisions over the last five years, ESR is a dead thing when it comes to overseeing content.« Instead, panellists said, the authority seemed to focus mainly on abusive language and attempts to restrict the use of terms such as »gay« or »lesbian« in afternoon programming.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

1.8

3.4 The public media are accountable to the public and protected against political or commercial interference, governed by a board representative of society at large, and selected in an independent, open and transparent manner

As mentioned under indicator 1.1, the constitution in its Article 15 (2) states unequivocally that radio and television »shall be under the direct control of the State«.

The Board of Directors of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) usually consists of a President, a CEO, and five or more members. These members oversee the strategic direction and governance of the organisation.

All board members are appointed by the government, specifically the Minister of State or the Minister responsible for media and communications. These appointments are usually made after consultations with relevant stakeholders.

Thus, the ERT is not a public, but a state broadcaster.

»It's terrible that every time the government changes, the president of the ERT has to change as well.« And, another panellist added, the president of the Athens and Macedonian News Agency, as well. »The way in which the management of the media is chosen and therefore their policy is influenced must be changed; if no guarantees are provided, there will be no independence.« »It is an institutional, structural issue, at the heart of the rule of law.«

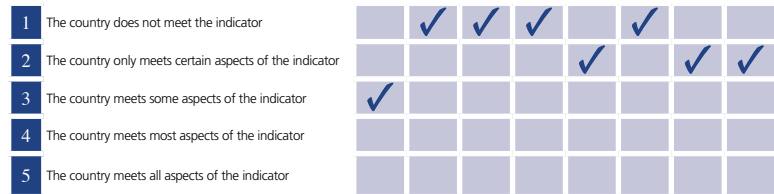
»There has always been a problem – however, this has increased dramatically since the ERT came under the Prime Minister's supervision – an outrageous rule of law issue.« This refers to the abovementioned 2019 Law on the Executive State.

»At ERT they sometimes say »let someone else run it and we'll put it on air afterwards«, because there is the problem that the powers-that-be will can just make a phone call to get their way, exactly because the management is appointed by them.«

Still, panellists maintained that ERT as a supposedly public organisation has an obligation to cover the full range of the political spectrum. »The news bulletin will be more pluralistic, partly because the other channels do not bother.« »There is something contradictory about ERT. Although it fully depends on interference and is the long arm of the government, at the same time I think it is very reliable as to its news coverage.«

Scores:

Individual rating



Average score: 1.6

3.5 Public media are adequately funded in a manner that protects them from political interference through budget allocation and commercial pressure

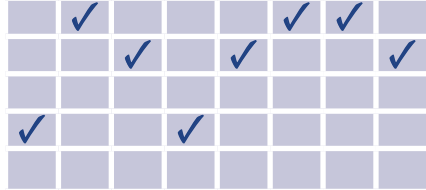
ERT's funding comes primarily from television licence fees, which are mandatory and included in households' electricity bills. Advertising revenue is relatively small in comparison and there is government funding for specific projects or in times of financial difficulty.

Like many public media, ERT operates under budgetary constraints, which can impact the quality and scope of its programming. Financial support from government in certain cases may become a matter of concern even for a state broadcaster because this may have an additional negative effect on its editorial independence.

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1** The country does not meet the indicator
- 2** The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3** The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4** The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5** The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

2.1

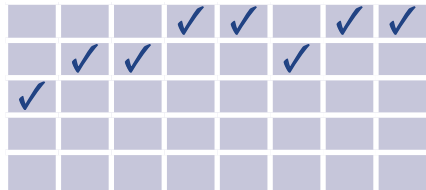
3.6 The editorial independence of public media from political influence is guaranteed by law and complied with

As already outlined, this indicator does not apply in Greece because ERT is not a public but a state broadcaster.

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1** The country does not meet the indicator
- 2** The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3** The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4** The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5** The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

1.6

3.7 The state protects everyone’s right to privacy and the confidentiality of their communications, and refrains from indiscriminate and untargeted surveillance, as well as from collecting, storing, analysing or sharing of such communications

A major scandal erupted in 2022 when Greece’s independent press revealed widespread surveillance of journalists, politicians and business figures by the

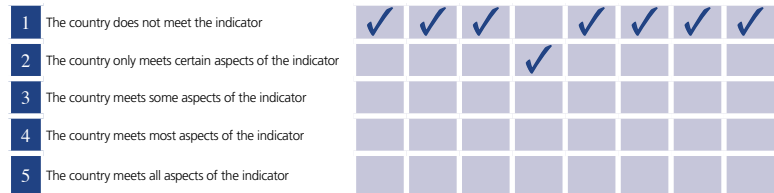
Greek government.⁵ The perpetrators had used Predator software, which allowed them to gain full access to the targets’ devices, including calls, messages and emails. It may even activate their camera and microphone. The main targets were several journalists known for investigating sensitive topics, and the leader of the opposition, Nikos Androulakis. The Prime Minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, denied direct involvement. He admitted that the surveillance of Androulakis was a »mistake«, but said that he had not been not aware of it.

»Politicians abroad have resigned for less blatant acts.« In Greece, the scandal led to the resignation of the head of Greece’s National Intelligence Service (EYP), and the General Secretary of the Prime Minister’s office, a close associate of Mitsotakis.

The scandal did not cause a major political earthquake »because the issue of rights is not understood, and the very people who defend privacy or should defend it, i.e. politicians themselves, do not have the knowledge or the tools to do so. It wouldn’t occur to people to discuss wire-tapping.«

Scores:

Individual rating



Average score: 1.1

3.8 The state upholds the right of individuals to seek, receive and impart information through digital technologies and does not remove, block or filter any content, unless such interference is compatible with international human rights laws and standards

In general, the Greek government upholds the right of individuals to seek, receive and impart information through the internet. If there is interference, such actions are generally carried out within a legal framework and are often subject to judicial oversight.

⁵ <https://insidestory.gr/article/ola-osa-theleis-na-xereis-gia-tis-ypoklopes-alla-ntrepesai-na-rotiseis>

Legislation provides for the government to block websites that are involved in the unauthorised distribution of copyrighted material, such as movies, music, software and books. It may also take action against websites used for illegal activities, such as online gambling (when not licensed by the Greek authorities), child pornography, human trafficking, or drug sales. Law enforcement agencies, in collaboration with the judiciary, may issue orders to block or remove content related to criminal activities. Content that promotes hate speech, racism or defamation can also be targeted for removal. Greek law has provisions that allow individuals or groups to file complaints about such content, leading to potential legal action and content removal.

Despite this legislation, in the view of panellists »the internet is a free-for-all, it's the Wild West, and information is what people say just because they say it.« »Negative news gets a lot of publicity, but public denials of such news do not attract much attention.«

»I think we now have to discuss how the state may intervene in platforms that dominate the market and do not comply in their content with legal and ethical requirements, in particular on the way information is disseminated.«

»Regarding social media, the public also bears responsibility. This requires further research.« Questions were raised about what algorithms service providers use. As one panellist said, »it is crucial that information on the algorithms be transparent because the majority of people get their information from these media.«

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator			✓					✓
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator					✓	✓	✓	
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator	✓	✓						
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator				✓				
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator								

Average score:

2.3



SECTION 4

The media operate with high professional standards and in a safe environment without outside pressure

4.1 The media follow voluntary codes of professional standards, which are enforced by self-regulatory bodies that deal with complaints from the public

The Journalists Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers (ESIEA) Code of Conduct contains several key principles, including truth and accuracy, impartiality, respect for privacy, avoiding conflicts of interest, respect for human dignity, responsible reporting, protection of sources and avoidance of plagiarism.

»If professional standards were in place, they should be included in the contracts. An effort was made in the last collective agreement for public media to incorporate the code of conduct of ESIEA. This, however, is wishful thinking. The code is not implemented and enforced.«

Panellists agreed that the basic principles of ethical journalism should be respected. »But current affairs are quite overwhelming, and it is more important to get breaking news out fast.«

»This is where individual responsibility comes into play, because in all media, even in those that have loose standards, there are people who take pride in doing a professional job and make sure that their colleagues also meet certain standards as regards the content they produce.«

However, it was pointed out that this is not enough.

»How many media have a subeditor or a proofreader, even for the simplest syntax and spelling errors?« »Internal control levels in many media outlets are tragically low, i.e. regarding the requirement to provide evidence for what you write. There is no control from the Editor-in-Chief.«

»This lack of responsibility and control is damaging. When they are proven wrong in the eyes of the world, this also brings about a number of other problems.« In other words: trust in the media as such is being eroded.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator	✓		✓		✓				
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator									
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator									
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator									

Average score:

1.6

4.2 The standard of reporting follows the basic principles of accuracy and fairness

Discussion focused mainly on the circumstances that make it hard for journalists to uphold standards of professional reporting.

»When journalists work under ›galley slave‹ conditions, when they need to upload a news item every hour or so to refresh the site, it is impossible to have a high level or any level of standards. As regards current affairs there are no specifications other than clicks or what the metrics say. The biggest enemy, beyond economic viability, is the commercialisation of the news, which again relates to sustainability. Because if the prerequisite for the content is to sell, then it is de facto not qualitative. No one cares either about the truth or the quality, as long as they can sell. Perhaps what I am saying sounds exaggerated.«

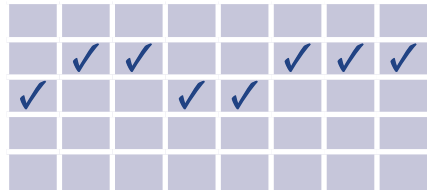
»Pressure does not only come from your working environment; there is financial pressure as well. When you suffer from financial stress or you are afraid of losing your job, this may affect the quality of your work. You may work in a very toxic environment and you may not leave because you are afraid of not finding a job anywhere else.«

»Wages are an important parameter; you can't uphold high standards when you're struggling and you're forced to have a second and a third job.«

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

2.4

4.3 Owners of established mainstream private media refrain from interfering with editorial independence

»The working environment is a jungle, so you are subjected to a lot of pressure. Issues in the workplace must be solved collectively and by work contracts.«

A number of panellists pointed out that »the degree of pressure is huge if you criticise the performance of government, even in the mildest of ways. I know about shows written at noon and scheduled to play in the evening and, when the rumour comes out regarding a certain piece about to be released, people from the government call the director to ask for this item not to be broadcast. And we're talking about reports that won't bring down the government, they're just being critical.«

In the independent cooperative media, one panellist said, »there is freedom, sometimes to the extent of stupidity, almost problematically«.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator				✓	✓	✓		
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator	✓	✓	✓				✓	
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator								✓
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator								
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator								

Average score:

1.8

4.4 The editorial independence of the media is adequately protected by law against undue political interference by the state or other powerful groups

»There is a chain of interventions. It's not like they call you and tell you not to write this. However, if you are not financially sustainable, you are not independent from interference. The staff of big media are at the mercy of state and owner interventions.«

During the refugee-migrant crisis, »when there were negative news reports, they would make phone calls. Government officials would call foreign correspondents and say »why are you writing this?« Interference, panellists said, is obvious and actually done »in a vulgar way«, citing as an example phone calls »asking for the removal of the people who wrote things that did not appeal to some other people«.

»We say we have an independent authority regulated by law and we have an independent authority that monitors the implementation of the law, but both cannot work.«

»I don't think that this will change, because that's how our country is.«

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator	✓				✓	✓		
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator		✓	✓	✓			✓	
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator								✓
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator								
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator								

Average score:

1.8

4.5 The media cover the full spectrum of events, issues and cultures, including business/economics, cultural, local and investigative stories

Panellists expressed quite different views on the indicator, reflecting their individual experiences and perceptions of media coverage, news development and the quality of information provided to the public.

All of them agreed, however, about two incidents in which media coverage was found to be generally inadequate.

In February 2023, one of the deadliest rail disasters in Greek history occurred near the town of Tempi, between Athens and Thessaloniki. The accident involved a head-on collision between two trains and resulted in 57 deaths. The disaster made headlines, of course, and the government pledged to improve railway infrastructure. There was no follow-up investigative story on any progress made or any failures by government to live up to its pledge – the media were silent.

It was only on the first anniversary of the accident, when thousands of people, including victims' families, took to the streets in nationwide strikes and protests that the tragedy resurfaced in the media agenda. Demonstrators called for justice and accountability, not only in relation to the accident but also on broader issues linked to austerity measures and privatisation of public services. The press reported on it. But no follow-up story has been published.

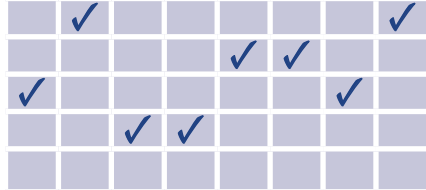
The same happened with the surveillance scandal, described under indicator 3.7, when widespread surveillance of journalists, politicians and business figures by the Greek government was revealed. Initially, the story was not covered by the media channels. They only started reporting »when there was disagreement

between media mogul Marinakis and the government, at an irrelevant point in time. Once they called a truce, the topic disappeared from the headlines«.

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1 The country does not meet the indicator
- 2 The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3 The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4 The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5 The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score: 2.5

4.6 Journalists and editors publish freely without self-censorship

Due to pressure from publishers, government or other interests, as already mentioned, self-censorship among journalists and editors is widespread and freely admitted to: »Speaking from personal experience, I have exerted self-censorship.«

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1 The country does not meet the indicator
- 2 The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3 The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4 The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5 The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score: 1.9

4.7 Journalists and media houses have integrity and there is no corruption

All panellists expressed their concern about the lack of integrity and the pervasiveness of corruption in the media.

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator									
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator								✓	
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator									
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator									

Average score:

2.1

4.8 The state guarantees the safety of journalists and other media practitioners

It appears that the issue of journalists' safety does not feature at all on the government's agenda. For media practitioners themselves, on the other hand, safety is a daily worry, as panellists pointed out. They referred not just to constant threats and verbal attacks against them (see indicators 4.9 and 4.10), but also to working conditions.

There are also problems journalists create themselves, colleague-related problems. »Insulting language and swearing is a daily occurrence in newsrooms.« Unfortunately, the journalistic world is quite toxic with discrimination such as »homophobia, transphobia, misogyny«. How often do women engage in political news reporting? How often do women take a management position at an early stage?»

Scores:

Individual rating

1	The country does not meet the indicator		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
2	The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator	✓								✓
3	The country meets some aspects of the indicator						✓			
4	The country meets most aspects of the indicator									
5	The country meets all aspects of the indicator									

Average score:

1.5

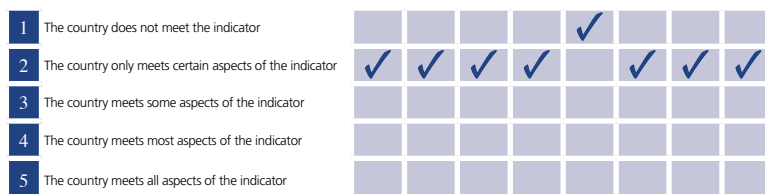
4.9 The state takes effective legal and other measures to investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of attacks against media practitioners, and ensures that victims have access to effective remedies

In April 2021, veteran crime reporter Giorgos Karaivaz was shot and killed near his home. Two suspects were arrested in 2023, but later acquitted because the court found there was insufficient evidence to convict them. The murder thus remains unsolved and has come to serve as a symbol of the problems for the Greek media. »When I heard about the homicide of Karaivaz - I have never in my life written any news reports that I felt were threatening in any serious way - my stomach was in knots. We live in a country where this happens.«

There are serious shortcomings in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of attacks against media professionals, and victims do not have easy access to effective remedies.

Scores:

Individual rating



Average score:

1.9

4.10 The state refrains from arbitrarily arresting and detaining journalists, as well as engaging in attacks, threats or unlawful surveillance against them

Panellists did not mention arrests or detention of journalists in recent times. When it comes to threats against journalists or state surveillance, however, they painted quite a bleak picture.

Journalists and other media practitioners experience ongoing threats. Government officials regularly attack journalists in social media for being »anti-Greeks, enemies of the state«. »There are colleagues reporting on the Mafia of Mykonos, they have been victims of threats against their lives.«

There is »a sense of frustration in this job, ranging from the magnitude of impunity to online threats«.

Media practitioners are also monitored by the state as in the case of a journalist who reported on the Piraeus Bank scandal. The bank is one of Greece's largest financial institutions. The scandal primarily revolved around issues of mismanagement, questionable financial practices, and potentially fraudulent activities. Movements of other journalists were monitored when they reported on the situation of refugees in camps and on the Turkish border. Even the director of the leading newspaper *Kathimerini* was surveilled. »No-one remains unaffected by the fact that the people working next to them are monitored.« »There is no way we can protect ourselves.«

Scores:

Individual rating

- 1 The country does not meet the indicator
- 2 The country only meets certain aspects of the indicator
- 3 The country meets some aspects of the indicator
- 4 The country meets most aspects of the indicator
- 5 The country meets all aspects of the indicator



Average score:

1.8



SECTION 5

Good practices and reform proposals

In this part recommendations and policy reforms are explored that can be undertaken to improve the Greek media landscape. The discussion on this subject was intense but also characterised by great restraint and scepticism. All panellists agreed that in a Wild West-like setting there is no hope for substantial change. These are the experts' proposals.

Equality policies and education

Panellists proposed a series of reforms concerning the effective defence and promotion of equality, better preparation for journalists on issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as broader issues of education and professional training. Specifically, they recommended the institutionalisation of gender equality policies with quotas set for men and women in positions of responsibility, as well as the setting up of an equal opportunities committee to monitor the situation together with managements and act as an advisory body.

Particular emphasis was placed on the need for cooperation between employers, the Ministry and ESIEA (Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers), to create opportunities for organised education and training. ESIEA is already trying to build a structure, in line with the standards of GSEE INE (Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Greek Workers). In addition, it was proposed that the Union and the media themselves invest in continuous professional development and further training with regard to terminology and skills

Improving the work environment and guaranteeing ethics

In order to improve the work environment and ensure the implementation of codes of ethics, panellists proposed the establishment of HR offices that employees may resort to in order to tackle situations that put them in a difficult position. The need for proper implementation of existing legislation was also stressed. Panellists also called for the setting up or strengthening of fact-checking departments in the major media, so that information is double-checked before it is published.

The establishment of an observatory or advisory body was also proposed, to which workers may report possible exertion of pressure or censorship-related problems anonymously. For the purpose of translating the SLAPP EU Directive into Greek law, panellists suggested that a legislative committee be set up with well-known members, including journalists, to do the job properly.

Transparency and diversity in the ownership and operation of the media

In order to ensure transparency and diversity, a simple, clear and applicable code of ethics, »adapted to the current reality« was proposed, which could serve as a guideline for professional standards. A mechanism should be established to address and resolve conflicts of interest. With regard to transparency of media ownership, as well as limitations on the concentration of media control, panellists called for the implementation of Article 14(9) of the constitution.

Measures should be taken to ensure that board members and managers of the ESR (Greek National Council for Radio and Television) are qualified for their job and reflect the diversity of Greek society.

The allocation of state funds for public advertising and other funds for media support needs to be transparent. At present, there is a perception that such appropriations are biased in favour of media outlets that are supportive of the government.

More attention needs to be given to the safety of media practitioners while covering demonstrations, fires or violent conflicts. The war in Ukraine was cited as an example: journalists are being sent to the country without having the necessary training and preparation.

Improving the professional environment

Finally, panellists called for the improvement of precarious working conditions in the media generally. Journalists, they said, should have an appropriate working environment, realistic working hours and decent wages, so that they can do a good and professional job of informing the public.

Conclusions

The discussion on the barometer for the Greek media has been very interesting and informative for everyone, including the participants themselves. First of all, starting from the methodology and discussion on the situation of the Greek mass media, there was extensive reflection on what is really defined as »freedom of the press« in Greece, as well as about whether without a regulatory framework the notion of freedom may ensure quality and substantial journalism in the country serving the common interest, equal and objective representation of all vulnerable groups and provision of objective information. The answer to this crucial question showed that the regulatory framework, democratic safeguards, cross-checking of facts and in-depth investigations are key. Greece's low score on the global indicator of freedom of the press was thoroughly discussed as it continues to concern and dominate public debate. All factors contributing to

Greece's low ranking were brought to the fore and analysed. It was found that, although Greece has a lot of media outlets it does not guarantee pluralism and objectivity.

A prominent topic of discussion was media ownership, including conflicts of interest, both at business and political level, and how this framework affects the quality of journalism overall. External influence is considerable and clear, and visible on a daily basis in the media, as journalists are called upon to, involuntarily or voluntarily, serve a »line« that may change at any time. This is a deterrent to objective journalism. This volatility, combined with the multiple vested interests represented by Greek media outlets, is a deterrent to the journalists who work for them; thus, they often »censor« the work they are called upon to do, knowing it may never come out. In combination with the precarious nature of the journalists' profession and the fact that many people are required to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, this creates a suffocating work environment for journalists, with disproportionate effects both on the job and on the mental health of the persons themselves.

Precarious work was highlighted by all the participants in the discussion and proposals were made on how journalist trade unions could ensure the quality of work and guarantee jobs. At the same time, the role of the National Council for Radio and Television (ESR) was underlined; there was consensus it should be reformed so as to ensure that it does supervise the media, as it is supposed to in accordance with its establishment as a competent independent authority. It should not be appointed by the government.

Accordingly, it was agreed that the code of journalistic ethics needs to be updated to meet the requirements laid down by the development of mass media, ranging from the printed press and radio and TV broadcasting to media of multiple types and different forms (platforms, social media). At the same time, journalists' unions are called upon to assist the people working in these media in the current volatile conditions, such as during the coverage of wars, ensuring them mental support and helping them to work in safe and healthy settings, free from threats and from losing their job.

The SLAPP cases were an important discussion topic, bringing into the foreground the great threat they pose both to journalism and democracy as a whole.

Finally, the need for the continuous professional development of journalists in terminology and issues was brought to the forefront. This is intended to enable them to foster inclusive speech for all social groups. This will also contribute to the elimination of underrepresentation or lack of representation and create »podiums« of pluralism for everyone, regardless of their characteristics, beliefs and other features that create or reproduce discrimination.

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