



NATIONAL DATA OVERVIEW:  
**ALBANIA**

# SUSTAINABILITY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM IN THE MEDIA BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

This report is based on the Study that has been carried out by a team of researchers including:

**Lead researcher:** Brankica Petković, Peace Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Regional researcher:** Sanela Hodžić, Mediacentar, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**National researcher:** Ilda Londo, Albanian Media Institute (Albania)

**Language editing:** Stephen Yeo, Michael Randall and Toby Vogel

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*This research reflects the economic position and needs of independent media outlets in 2018 and 2019, with the majority of market data pertaining to 2018 and research being finalised in November 2019. The report does not cover the dramatic changes occurring in 2020, when the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic dealt yet another blow to media businesses and further diminished the prospects for sustainability of independent media in the Western Balkans.*

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# **1. MEDIA ECONOMY/ BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**



# 1.1. Media landscape

It is hard to gauge the number of media outlets operating in Albania today. Only data on TV and radio outlets can be considered as accurate since these outlets are obliged to register with the competent authority, whereas there is no such obligation for print or online media outlets. The number of TV and radio stations consolidated in the past and there have been no significant changes for many years. The same holds true for print media. For example, although most print media fail to make a profit, only a small number of dailies have closed down. The most significant development seems to be a considerable rise in the number of online media outlets. According to the Union of Albanian Journalists, there are more than 800 online media outlets operating in the country, but it is currently impossible to verify these numbers.

**Table AL 1.** Number of media per type in 2018

Online	Radio	TV	Print
More than 800 (estimates; Union of Albanian Journalists)	2 national, 51 local, 4 community (Audio-visual Media Authority, 2018); 1 public on 5 channels, plus 4 local programmes	1 public broadcaster with thematic channels, 5 national digital platforms and TV stations, 56 local TV stations, 2 satellite, and 73 cable (Audio-visual Media Authority, 2018)	22 dailies (Albanian Media Institute, 2017)

Source: IREX MSI, 2019.

Although Albanian media proclaim their independence, they are divided along political lines. With the rise of online media outlets, professional and ethical standards are in decline. An interesting feature of the Albanian media sector is the number of news channels and news programmes: news and political shows currently outnumber entertainment programmes. Funding available to Albanian media outlets is not necessarily sufficient to sustain their operations, and commercial and owners’ interests have a major influence on editorial policy. In practice, sources of funding for the media, be they owners, advertisers or advertising agencies, are not transparent. While some journalists are well paid, others receive meagre salaries and self-censorship among journalists seems to have become the norm.<sup>1</sup>

# 1.2. Media ownership

With the exception of Public Service Broadcaster (PSB), all other media outlets in the country are privately owned. As a rule, major commercial media groups are owned by local families. Perhaps the only exception is Carlo Bollino, but he is an Italian with Albanian citizenship who has been living in the country for decades. Ownership of traditional media is relatively transparent: the relevant data is easily available in the online business registration database. The owners of online media are, however, harder to identify: online outlets are not regulated and

<sup>1</sup> IREX, 2019.



are not obliged to register with the authorities, so transparency of ownership of these media has yet to be achieved. A draft law regulating this area has been proposed, but local media organisations believe that it involves considerable risks of limiting freedom of expression.

**Table AL 2.** Ownership of major media per type

TV	Online* (news sites and portals)	Print (dailies)	Radio**
TV Klan (78.8%) – private (local) (Frangaj family)	Top-channel.tv (11.2%) – private (local) (Hoxha family)	Gazeta Panorama (23.74%) – private (local) (Irfan Hysenbelliu)	Top Albania (15.7%; 31.15%) – private (local) (Zhuljeta Lamaj 20%, Ervin Zeneli 40%, Sara Hoxha, Itan Hoxha, Redia Hoxha, Lorena Hoxha - 10% each)
Top Channel (57.1%) – private (local) (Hoxha family)	Balkanweb.com (6.6%) – private (local) (Irfan Hysenbelliu)	Gazeta Sport express (16.29%) – private (local) (Edevaldo Haxhiu)	Radio Tirana (5.9%; 14.51%) – public
News 24 (37.6%) – private (local) (Irfan Hysenbelliu)	Opinion.al (5.2%) – private (local) (Frangaj family)	Gazeta Shekulli (13.01%) – private (local) (Koço Kokëdhima 90%, Dionis Heqimi 5%, Sadik Llapashtica 5%)	Club FM (4.1%; 11.43%) – private (local) (Arben Bylykbashi 74%, Olta Reka 26%)
Vizion + (33.2%) – private (local) (Dulaku family)	Panorama.com.al (4.5%) – private (local) (Irfan Hysenbelliu)	Gazeta Shqiptare (12.73%) – private (local) (Irfan Hysenbelliu)	Top Gold (3.9%; 11.76%) - private (local) (Hoxha family)

Sources: IPSOS, 2018 as regards audience reach; National Business Centre for ownership shares, available at: [www.qkr.gov.al](http://www.qkr.gov.al).

\* Weekly reach.

\*\* The first figure shows daily reach, the second shows weekly reach.

Horizontal concentration in several media sectors and also cross ownership of different kinds of media outlets are issues of concern in Albania. Until 2016, for example, no legal or natural person was allowed more than 40% of shares in a national radio or TV outlet. In 2016, however, after a long legal battle, the Constitutional Court removed this barrier at the request of the major media owners (supported by the Audiovisual Media Authority). The court’s decision allowed the true owners to regularise their ownership, which made it clear that most major media outlets were in fact family-owned.

There are several major groups in Albania owning different kinds of media outlets as well as companies in media-related sectors:



**Table AL 3.** Major media owners in the country and their media groups

Owner	Media outlets	Companies (co)owned, in media-related sectors	Companies in non-media sectors
Top Media Group (Hoxha family)	Top Channel TV; Top Albania Radio; Top News; Top Gold (radio), Top-Channel.tv (online outlet), My Music (radio); gazeta-shqip.com (online outlet - formerly owned by Top Media, currently with two new owners, but possibly still affiliated with them)	Digit-alb (digital distribution platform – partial ownership); ADTN (digital distribution platform - owned by Digit-alb platform); Supersport (digital distribution platform - sport programmes owned by and distributed by Digit-alb); Publialb agency (advertising, monitoring, organisation of events, campaigns, etc.); Saras (publishing house); Shqip (publication and DVD production, organisation of events)	Valtelina (coffee and food trade); Vini & Food (food import); Loresa (commercial activities and consultancy)
Klan group (Frangaj family)	TV Klan; ABC News TV (sold in August to other owner); Klan Plus TV; Radio Klan; Klan Kosova (Kosovo); Klan Maqedoni (North Macedonia)	Klan (digital distribution platform); Media 66 (TV production); Pro image (advertising and event agency); Promo (advertising and event agency)	Albania 2017 (commercial goods trade); AS construction (construction, real estate); Portat e fatit (lottery)
Vizion group (Dulaku family)	Vizion Plus TV; Living (magazine); Vizionplus.tv (online outlet); the-living-media.com (online outlet)	Tring TV (digital distribution platform); Albanian Satellite Communications (telecommunications); Living Albania (formally owned by the wife of one of the owners – publication, advertising, event agency, production, etc.)	Alba Beton (construction); Alissa Albania (construction); Arameras (construction, partly); BIC (trade, partly); Concord investment (construction, trade); D&L administrim (real estate consultancy and marketing, partly); DUFE (trade, partly); Ergent Co (trade, partly); Euro aditiv (trade); Fonte Fontana (trade, partly); INER (trade);  Inter-gaz (oil trade, partly)
Hysenbelliu group	Panorama (daily); Panorama sport (daily); Psikologji (magazine); Panorama.com.al (online outlet); Panorama.com.al/sport/ (online outlet); Revistapsikologji.com (online outlet); News 24 TV; Radio Rash; Gazeta Shqiptare (daily newspaper); Balkanweb.com (online outlet)		Hysenbelliu group (consultancy, trade, construction, etc);  Hysenbelliu (food, restaurant, construction, etc); W Elektrik (electrical goods trade); Pegasos (trade, partly); Erjon (construction, hotel industry);  Egnatia group (construction, food trade); FAB-group (food trade);  Birra Korca (owned by Egnatia Group, beer company); Omnifactor (owned by FAB-Group, financing services); Universiteti Luarasi (owned by Panorama Group, university)

Source: National Business Centre extracts of companies.

All the aforementioned major media owners have significant business interests in various non-media sectors.



The media sector in Albania, with its large number of media outlets, has in the past been perceived as fairly diverse and reasonably pluralist. Such perceptions do not, however, seem to be borne out by the data. Local media experts believe that existing audience measurement lacks reliability and is skewed by the influence of the TV stations that use the audience measurement services, and the available data indicate notable concentrations in the media sector. BIRN's calculations concerning media ownership in Albania suggest that four major owners (the Frangaj, Hoxha, Dulaku, and Ndroqi families) attract 48.93% of the TV audience, as indicated by the Abacus data. Calculations based on Telemetrix data showed that the TV audience share captured by the four largest owners (the Frangaj, Hoxha and Dulaku families, and Irfan Hysenbelliu) was 58.6%. As regards the radio sector, four major players (Hoxha Family, Arben Bylykbashki, Public Radio, and the Ndroqi family) attract 63.96% of listeners. In the print market, one major owner (Irfan Hysenbelliu) attracts 30.2% of the readership, while the four largest owners (Irfan Hysenbelliu, Koço Kokëdhima, Henri Çili, and the Dabulla Brothers) attract a total 43.29% of the readers.<sup>2</sup>

The Competition Protection Authority has occasionally considered cases related to competition in the media sector, usually prompted by complaints from within the media community. The Authority has, however, usually sided with the major media players.

## 1.3. Media funding

While the relatively large number of different kinds of media in Albania might be taken as a sign of dynamism, diversity and pluralism, it is doubtful that the existing advertising market can support such a large number of media outlets. Only a few major TV outlets seem to be profitable, and then only with advertising from their owners' other businesses.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.3.1. Advertising

The exact size of the media advertising market in Albania is not known. There are no official or well-accepted data on this market, and different sources provide different estimates. According to IPSOS Media Landscape 2018, the size of the advertising market was estimated at €32 million in 2017 and €34 million in 2018.<sup>4</sup> Data produced by the Monitor magazine put the size of the market at nearly €37 million in 2017 and just over €39 million in 2018.

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<sup>2</sup> Media Ownership Monitor, <https://albania.mom-rsf.org/en/findings/media-concentration/>.

<sup>3</sup> IREX, 2019: 8.

<sup>4</sup> IPSOS, 2018.



**Table AL 4.** Advertising spending per media type, 2018 and 2017 (in million euro)

Media	2017	2018
TV	23.36	24.48
Print	0.96	1.36
OOH	4.16	4.08
Radio	1.6	1.7
Online	1.92	2.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>€32 million</b>	<b>€34 million</b>

Source: IPSOS, 2018. The figures refer to mass media budgets, without VAT, production costs and agency discounts.

**Table AL 5.** Advertising spending per media type (in million euro)

Media	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
TV	30	28	30	31	29	31.5
Print	3.3	3	2.7	2.2	1.8	1.4
OOH	3.7	3.3	3	3.2	2.8	2.9
Radio	1	1.2	1	0.9	0.93	0.9
Online	0.8	1	1.2	2	2.4	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>€36.93 million</b>	<b>€39.2 million</b>

Source: Monitor magazine, February 2019. Estimate based on total advertising broadcasting time, advertising space in print media, financial reports by media outlets, marketing expenses of biggest companies, etc.

TV stations captured by far the largest share of the advertising revenue (72% according to IPSOS, and 80% according to Monitor). The available data shows a considerably smaller and shrinking market for advertising in print media outlets (falling from €3.3 million in 2013 to €1.4 million in 2018).<sup>5</sup> It also shows an expansion of the advertising market for online media (rising from €0.8 million in 2013 to €2.5 million in 2018).

According to Monitor, around €20 million – or more than half of the total advertising spending – was channelled via advertising agencies in 2017, the largest ones being Unlimited Media (local), Spot Communication (local, linked to Unlimited Media), and Ogilvy (foreign-owned). The biggest spenders as regards TV advertising include the mobile telephone companies Telekom Albania and Vodafone, the digital networks Tring and Digitalb, the mobile company Albtelecom, the Albanian bank Credins, the insurance company Sigal, the beer company Birra Tirana, the insurance company Albsig, and Procter & Gamble. Many of these companies are also among the biggest advertisers in online media outlets, including Vodafone, Credins, Albtelecom, Telekom Albania, and Tring, while Raiffeisen, Alpha Bank, ABI Bank, and UKT (a public water supply company) are also among the major players in the online media advertising market.

Because they are responsible for channelling large advertising spending to media outlets, advertising agencies – and their clients in the telecommunication and banking sectors in particular – exercise influence over the editorial policies of Albanian media outlets.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Monitor magazine, February 2019.

<sup>6</sup> IREX, 2019.



### **1.3.2. Role of the government in media funding**

The state's most notable role in the media sector is its contribution towards the budget of the RTSH, the public broadcaster. In 2018, RTSH had around €18 million of expenditures, of which the state provided around 30% (about €5.54 million). The uses to which the state funds are put seem to vary from year to year but they are mainly earmarked to cover audio and audiovisual broadcasting services for Albanians abroad and the service in foreign languages; major technical projects introducing new production and broadcasting; major film or other national artistic productions; and the RTSH symphony orchestra.

Apart from this expenditure, the Albanian state does not play a substantial role in the media sector, either by providing subsidies or in terms of spending on advertising.<sup>7</sup> Albanian legislation does not stipulate any assistance to media and no specific support scheme has been established by the government. The only exception is the government decision of April 2019, based on the 2012 strategy on digital switchover, to grant €5 million to TV stations for digital switchover. These funds are to be disbursed to commercial operators as follows: €1 million to local broadcasters to cover the fees they pay to the PSB's digital network which hosts them; €2 million to be allocated to what is termed "experienced" digital broadcasters for their past investments; while the rest of the funds go to "historical" operators to support their transition from analogue to digital transmission.

While an overview of all state treasury transactions is updated daily on the website of the Ministry of Finance, it is not possible to fully track government transfers to media, including for advertising, since these may be made under different budget lines (e.g., subscription to media, publication of notifications) or channelled through advertising agencies. As noted, existing data suggests that the government, other public entities, or public companies are not among the significant spenders as regards advertising in media. Apart from Tirana Municipality, which was the 12th biggest advertiser in print media, and the UKT (water supply company under the supervision of the same municipality), which was the 9th biggest advertiser in online media, no other public institutions appeared among major spenders on advertising in 2018.<sup>8</sup>

As regards taxes, spending on media equipment, including on newspaper printing plants, as well as on advertising in print and electronic media, was exempt from VAT until 2019. In 2019, the VAT rate for advertising in electronic media was increased from 0% to 6%, the standard VAT rate in the country being 20%.

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7 IREX, 2019: 9.

8 Monitor magazine, February 2019.



**Table AL 6.** State subsidies in the media

Public body	Amount	Media outlet
Central government	Approximately €5.54 million (around 30% of total)	RTSH (2018)
Central government (under the 2012 strategy on digital switchover)	€5 million	TV stations €1 million to local broadcasters to cover fees they pay to the PSB's digital network which hosts them; €2 million allocated to "experienced" digital broadcasters for past investments; approximately €2 million to "historical" operators to support switch from analogue to digital

### 1.3.3. Donor funding

International donors also provide support to the Albanian media sector. While no comprehensive data on donor support is available, it seems that the funds mostly support media training and, as was the case recently, the strengthening of media organisations and associations, and (to a lesser extent) the production of media content. The European Commission, the Open Society Foundation, and USAID are among the significant donors.



**Table AL 7.** Donor funding in Albania: major donors and programmes

Donor	Programme title (programme duration)	Recent grants	Details
EC	Towards improved labour relations and professionalism in the Albanian media	€298,466.28 Instituti Shqiptar i Medias Foundation (30 months, from March 1, 2018)	Focusing on strengthening capacities of local media organisations and associations, half of the amount devoted to sub-grants for these organisations.
EC	Technical Assistance to Public Service Media in the Western Balkans (regional project)	€1.5 million covering six Western Balkan countries (2018-2020)	The project aims to revitalise the region's public broadcasting sector and bring new confidence to the key stakeholders involved.
EC & OSCE	Media in focus project	N/A (30 months, ending June 2020)	The project aims to help RTSH to regain public confidence by offering media products aligned with the public's interest; also involves public university department of journalism.
OSFA	Research on media and public trust and on state advertising	AMI (9 months)	Two surveys and monitoring, aiming to raise awareness in two different aspects of media.
European Commission, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Robert Bosch Foundation, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.	Balkan Transitional Justice Initiative (regional project)	BIRN HUB (2018-2020)	The programme aims to promote best practice among local media outlets in reporting on often sensitive post-conflict transitional justice issues.
ERSTE Foundation and Open Society Foundations	Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence	BIRN HUB (annual since 2007)	The programme provides training and networking for 10 journalists from the region every year, each of whom produces an investigative or analytical article with regional relevance.
USAID	Justice for All	Working in the justice area, but with investigative journalism component, mainly through grants (2016-2021)	The project also provides assistance to civil society organisations and investigative journalism and media outlets to strengthen their roles as important actors in the justice reform process and as watchdogs for implementation of reforms.

### 1.3.4. New alternative sources of media funding

There are other innovative funding possibilities (e.g., crowdfunding, micro donations, memberships, other alternative approaches to generate income) but these do not seem promising. The new media initiatives, such as BIRN, the Albanian Quality Journalism Centre, and Faktoje, are not registered as businesses but as NGOs. None of them is a commercial operation: they



are all donor-funded; they do not use advertising on their webpages or in their content; and they do not monetise the content that they distribute in any way or form.

None of the media initiatives were close to having a new model of financing other than donor funding. Interviewees did mention (briefly) fundraising appeals directed to their audiences. These seemed, however, to be aimed at raising the recognisability of the media outlet and attracting new followers, rather than offering a route to financial sustainability (although attracting more followers might be helpful, at least in the long term).

## 1.4. Consumer base/audiences

TV stations in Albania attract much larger audiences than do the other types of media.

**Table AL 8.** Audience reach by media type (per number of individuals)

Media type	Audience reach (million)
TV	2.23
Print (dailies)	0.81
Radio	0.91
Internet*	1.76

Source: IPSOS, 2018.

\*Internet coverage.

**Table AL 9.** Audience reach by media type (percent)

Media Type	Audience reach
<b>TV*</b>	TV Klan (78.8%); Top Channel (57.1%); News 24 (37.6%); Vizion + (33.2%)
<b>Print (dailies)</b>	TOTAL: 36.12% Gazeta Panorama (23.74%); Gazeta Sport express (16.29%); Gazeta Shekulli (13.01%); Gazeta Shqiptare (12.73%)
<b>Radio**</b>	TOTAL: daily reach (24.5%); weekly reach (40.84%) Top Albania (15.7%; 31.15%); Radio Tirana (5.9%; 14.51%); Club FM (4.1%; 11.43%); Top Gold (3.9%; 11.76%)
<b>Online (news sites and portals)***</b>	Top-channel.tv (11.2%); Balkanweb.com (6.6%); Opinion.al (5.2%); Panorama.al (4.5%)

Source: IPSOS, 2018.

\*The figures represent audience reach by leading TV outlets. Total reach not calculated by the data provider.

\*\* The first number represents daily reach, the second number represents weekly reach.

\*\*\* Weekly reach. Total reach is not calculated by the data provider.



## 1.5. Competition, dominant position and its implications

As is the case around the world, traditional media in Albania face competition from internet-based outlets. As regards social media, 61% of the Albanian audience used Facebook in 2018, followed by YouTube (45.7%), and Instagram (39%). While online media outlets have mushroomed in recent years, domestic news websites and portals have not yet fully captured the attention of Albanian audiences.

In 2018, the weekly reach of the major players was as follows: Top-channel.tv (11.2%), Balkan-web.com (6.6%), and Opinion.al (5.2%).<sup>9</sup>

Measurement of audience behaviour tends to be an issue of concern in Albania. Audience data is not public and its reliability is often questionable. In spite of sporadic discussions within the media community, no common and reliable measurement method has materialised as yet. Global players in the field of audience measurement have also not found the small Albanian market very attractive.<sup>10</sup>

### Issues of concern:

- Division of media outlets along political lines;
- Lack of transparency of media financing;
- Horizontal concentration in several media sectors as well as cross ownership of different kinds of media outlets;
- Media owners with significant business interests in other industries;
- Major influence of commercial and owners' interests on editorial policy;
- Lack of reliable audience measurement.

Sporting events represent perhaps one of the most lucrative acquisitions for digital platforms in the country, since broadcasting them greatly affects subscriber loyalty and boosts advertising sales. Apart from PBS, there are two major digital platforms that sell packages to subscribers, Tring and Digitalb, with five and seven sport channels on each platform, respectively. The commercial operators have consistently outmanoeuvred the public broadcaster to obtain the rights to broadcast major football events. PBS has blamed this on its lack of funds and its more rigid rules concerning bidding procedures. RTSH has made great efforts in the recent period and has obtained broadcasting rights for certain football competitions as well as for Formula One. In the past, the PBS management occasionally complained against the national football federation, claiming that there were cases when they were not invited to the bidding process.

<sup>9</sup> IPSOS, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> IREX, 2019.



**Table AL 10.** Holders of sports broadcasting rights

Event/Channel or platform	Digitalb/Supersport	Tring/Vizion Plus	RTSH (PBS)
UEFA Champions League (2018-2021)		✓	
UEFA Nations League (2018-2021)	✓		✓ (Albania matches only)
UEFA Euro 2020	✓		✓
Albanian Superliga (2018-2022)	✓		
UEFA Europa League (2018-2021)	✓		✓
Premier League (2018-2022)	✓ 4 matches per week		
La Liga (2018-2021)	✓		
Serie A (2018-2021)	✓		
Bundesliga (2017-2021)	✓ <i>through Eurosport 2, part of Digitalb</i>		
Copa del Rey	✓ <i>finals only</i>		✓ <i>semi-finals only</i>
Copa America 2019	✓		
FA Cup (2018-2021)	✓		
Formula One (2018-2021)			✓

Turkish series are also popular with audiences, and mainstream TV stations (e.g., TV Klan, Klan Plus and Vizion +) feature them regularly. This is not, however, the case with many news channels operating in the country.



## 1.6. Media industry associations

There are three industry associations in the media sector and the related advertising sector in Albania.

**Table AL 11.** Media industry associations

Association	Details
Association of Electronic Media	Mainly an association of owners of main Albanian media. It is only active on an ad hoc basis and mainly for business-related purposes, while there have been no joint initiatives as regards, for example, self-regulation or audience measurement
Association of Cable and Analogue Broadcasters	Mainly consists of local broadcasters which try to cooperate with one another and to represent their interests before AMA, the national regulator (e.g., they were successful on several occasions in negotiating a lower fee payable to PBS for hosting local broadcasters on its digital platform)
Albanian Association of Advertising Agencies	Only recently established (2018) with no noticeable achievements as yet



## **2. ECONOMIC SITUATION AND NEEDS OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA**



As many of the selected media outlets are owned by media moguls who often have significant business interests in non-media sectors, this part of the research focuses on selected new media initiatives. The selected media outlets and similar initiatives are essentially the only independent media outlets in the country.

The Albanian media sector is currently relatively concentrated, and it is difficult for small independent media to survive, especially since ownership concentration and lack of transparency in media financing and state advertising put independent media at a disadvantage.

Another barrier to sustainability lies in the culture of media consumption. There is a lack of copyright enforcement, and an overall lack of respect for the rights of publishers and authors. There is also no culture of charitable donations on the part of companies or the public. There is a need for education of the general public in media literacy, not only in order to equip them with the knowledge on how to tell proper information from fake news, but also to instil an appreciation for accurate journalism and journalism in the public interest.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.1. Who they are

For the purpose of this exercise, six of the longer-established media outlets/media groups were selected, as media that are directly or indirectly linked to political or other groups but try to preserve a professional level of journalism. These are listed in Table 12 below. Three further outlets were selected as important new media initiatives. These are listed in Table 13 below.

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<sup>11</sup> Interviews with representatives of the three selected new media initiatives.



**Table AL 12.** Selected media

Media group/media outlets	Main features
<p><b>Top Media Group</b> Top Channel TV (national TV), Top Albania Radio (national radio), Top Gold Radio (local music radio), Saras (publications), Digitalb (multiplex, shared with Union Group and others), ADTN (multiplex, owned by Digitalb).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commercial, private ownership, local (Hoxha family mostly, but also partnership with other stakeholders)</li> <li>• transparent ownership, accessible in online database</li> <li>• Top Channel TV is one of the main national TV stations, while Top Albania Radio and Top Gold Radio (music only) also appear to be popular</li> <li>• significant investment in technology</li> <li>• they set standards as regards technology and they have pioneered formats of investigative reporting and different programmes in entertainment</li> <li>• revenue sources: advertising, subscriptions to digital platform, other businesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Klan Group</b> TV Klan (national), Radio Klan (local), ABC News (local news channel, sold in August), Klan Plus (local TV).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commercial, private ownership, local (Frangaj family)</li> <li>• transparent ownership, accessible in online database</li> <li>• TV Klan is one of the two historical national TV channels in the country</li> <li>• significant investment in technology</li> <li>• they broadcast a daily investigative programme and arguably also the most watched and balanced current affairs programme</li> <li>• revenue sources: advertising, subscriptions, other funds.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Media Vizion</b> Vizion + (TV station, one of the five commercial digital licenses), Tring (digital multiplex), Living magazine and publications (lifestyle).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commercial, private ownership, local (Dulaku family)</li> <li>• transparent ownership, accessible in online database</li> <li>• Vizion + is one of the historical national TV channels in the country</li> <li>• significant investment in technology</li> <li>• revenue sources: advertising, subscriptions to digital platform, other businesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Panorama Group</b> Panorama (daily), Panorama Sport (daily), Psikologjia (monthly magazine), Press Distribution network, Focus Press, Gazeta Shqiptare (daily), Balkanweb (online news agency), Radio Rash (local radio), News 24 TV (local TV).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commercial, private ownership, local (Irfan Hysenbelliu and family)</li> <li>• transparent ownership, accessible in online database</li> <li>• they have what is considered to be the best-selling daily and their online media outlets and news channel are considered to be widely followed</li> <li>• revenue sources: advertising, other businesses, other funds</li> </ul>
<p><b>Yldon Media Group</b> Ora News TV (local TV), Radio Ora (local radio).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commercial, private ownership, local (Ndroqi family)</li> <li>• transparent ownership</li> <li>• the media group includes one of the main news TV channels</li> <li>• regular news reporting, studio interviews, and other current affairs programmes</li> <li>• revenue sources: advertising, other funds</li> </ul>
<p><b>Carlo Bollino and Alba Malltezi</b> Report TV, Shqiptarja.com (news portal and daily newspaper, published until November 2019)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commercial, private ownership, local (essentially family-owned; Bollino is an Italian with Albanian citizenship who has been living in the country for several decades)</li> <li>• the group controls one of the main news TV channels, as well as an important daily newspaper</li> <li>• regular news reporting, studio interviews, and other current affairs programmes</li> </ul>



**Table AL 13.** Selected new media initiatives

Media	Main features
<b>Reporter.al</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• online media outlet</li><li>• set up by BIRN Albania, it is a part of the regional BIRN network; registered as an NGO</li><li>• independent online media outlet, focusing on investigative reporting</li><li>• they set a high standard as regards reporting and fact-checking practices in the country, often addressing delicate topics not reported in other media</li><li>• donor-funded (EU and also other donors)</li></ul>
<b>Faktoje.al</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the only fact-checking website in the country, verifying truthfulness of public statements by public officials</li><li>• a project led by two NGOs, Gender Alliance for Development Centre and National Centre for Social Studies</li><li>• they produce written and video content</li><li>• they have started doing more reporting involving video and infographics</li><li>• donor-funded (mainly USAID)</li></ul>
<b>Albanian Centre for Quality Journalism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NGO, operating also a website that features investigative reporting</li><li>• they produce written and video content</li><li>• they also organise training for journalists, produce manuals, and carry out other activities supporting independent journalism</li><li>• they started cooperation on investigative programmes with the PBS, something the PBS was lacking</li><li>• they provide practical training to students of journalism, something they might lack at the university, and engage them in reporting</li><li>• donor-funded (US and other donors)</li></ul>



## 2.2. The economic situation and needs of the selected examples of independent media

The selected new media initiatives are not registered as businesses, but as NGOs, hence their financial data is not available. They are not commercial enterprises, and funds for their operations come from donors.

None of the independent media initiatives in the country is funded from advertising: these media are entirely dependent on donor funding. While this ensures the necessary freedom to engage in professional and independent journalism, such a model is not necessarily sustainable. Independent initiatives are not optimistic about new models and possibilities of growth in the context of a non-transparent and chaotic media sector that lacks guarantees of media pluralism. Among other things, in the absence of reliable audience measurements, advertising practices and distribution of funds are not necessarily transparent and fair.

The more specific practical needs of the selected new media initiatives for more sustainable development can be summarised as follows:

**Table AL 14.** Needs of selected new media initiatives

Media	Investment needs
<b>Reporter.al/BIRN Albania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transfer of latest technology from EU countries</li> <li>• investments in equipment</li> <li>• increasing staff capacity for use of latest technology, expansion of audience for their work, and for financial models which have proven to be sustainable for small independent media</li> </ul> <p>(Access to and training for the use of the latest technology for the purpose of expanding the existing scope of reporting and introducing new reporting formats.)</p>
<b>Faktoje.al</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff</li> <li>• training of staff</li> <li>• databases</li> <li>• training aimed at expanding the audience for their production</li> <li>• training on digital skills</li> </ul> <p>(IT experts, designers, photographers, and programmers are currently not part of the newsroom, and services by such professionals are outsourced?. As the organisation has no funds available for this purpose, there is a considerable need to fund the hiring of new staff. Investment should also go towards paid access to databases because they are often expensive and media cannot afford them. There is also a need for training for staff on how to use existing social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) or produce a newsletter to expand their audience base and provide them with quality and relevant content.)</p>
<b>Albanian Centre for Quality Journalism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSLR cameras</li> <li>• microphones</li> <li>• capturing rigs</li> <li>• training for journalists in this area</li> <li>• computers for editing</li> <li>• professional software, etc.</li> </ul> <p>(One of the objectives is to adopt new forms and formats of news delivery which require additional equipment. In addition, professional training is needed for students of journalism with whom the organisation works, as well as for working journalists.)</p>

Source: interviews with representatives of the three selected new media initiative



### **SOURCES ON BUSINESS INDICATORS**

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### **LIST OF INTERVIEWS**

Kristina Voko, BIRN Albania, director, 10 August 2019.

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Klodiana Kapo, Faktoje.al, director, 12 August 2019.

Erblin Jaku, Top Channel TV, 18 June 2019.



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