

Country fact sheet

Hungary



The concept of local media

Local media and community media are defined in the **Media Act**, as only about radio and television. There is no definition in Hungarian law applicable to the print press, online and social media.

This legal conceptualisation is based on the geographical area covered and the size of the audience reached.

Local media are essentially a budgetary issue for municipalities, with the annual budget decree setting the operational framework for municipal media.

2016 as a turning point

There are no debates about local news deserts. Local media became **the focus of professional debate** after 2016, when all the county's newspapers were taken over by **Fidesz oligarchs** and in 2018 by Fidesz's media conglomerate, **KESMA**.

The problem in the Hungarian media system appears in the context of the **one-party dominance of Fidesz over the entire media landscape**, in which freedom and diversity of information are severely limited.



Did you know that outside Budapest it is typically challenging to find journalists?

Municipal newspapers have a small editorial staff of 3-6 people, and even fewer journalists work for independent online newspapers.

Very few independent local media

There are very few independent services that are not part of a complex media company, i.e., non-municipal, non-networked services.

Except for a few independent local radio stations and local online newspapers, **most local media are in a situation of dependency, which is highly problematic regarding diverse and impartial local coverage.**



Lack of data and research at the local level

There is only sporadic data about the overall revenues. No separate database is available for local media companies. Similarly, no advertising data is available for the local market.



Subsidies: a problem of transparency

Municipalities fund local media, and the distribution of government advertising is completely opaque. Therefore, the problem is not the amount of financial support, but rather the lack of transparency.



5 risks of the Hungarian local media market

- Concentrated ownership of county newspapers and local radio stations.
- Discriminatory distribution of state advertising.
- Weak economic strength and advertising potentials.
- Unpredictability of municipal funding.
- Scarcity of domestic funding coupled with the constant political attacks on foreign funding.



A look into the working conditions

Pro-government county media employees access good working conditions for competitive salaries. However, they are under constant **political pressure**.

Local self-government owned media offer more modest opportunities, and working conditions vary with the ever-changing funding of local governments, which leads to economic uncertainty and lack of predictability. They also face severe **difficulties in obtaining information from official sources**.

No guarantee of avoiding political interference

No rules apply to the impartial coverage in local print and online newspapers or the use of public money. As part of *KESMA*, the county newspapers **openly and unilaterally convey the government narrative**, supported by a significant amount of public advertising.

This means that they have a secure funding base compared to other local media players, such as independent local media outlets, which instead are largely dependent on donations and grants.

