

Country fact sheet

Italy



Context

In Italy, there is no dedicated discourse addressing local news deserts; the primary focus is on the financial sustainability of local media outlets rather than the sheer quantity of such outlets. Local media outlets fiercely compete for a significantly declining source of revenue. On the one hand, citizens traditionally show a relatively low willingness to pay for information; on the other, the majority of media activities have shifted online, where advertising serves as the primary source of revenue.

Community media struggle to innovate

Based on interviews with media experts, Italian community media have not developed in the last two decades. While a few successful experiences can be observed, they appear to be **isolated cases**.

The rationalisation of broadcasting services, including TV and radio, has tended to **favour larger** and more established **media companies**.

The **reach** of local press (both print and online) has experienced a significant decline in recent years.



In the case of print newspapers, most towns in Italy have **one** or **two** dominant newspapers, indicating a relatively **high level of market concentration**.



Number of local media journalists since 2008/2009

PSM does not give adequate coverage to provinces

RAI has established 21 regional offices. However, it has been observed that the editorial content of RAI's regional information provision tends to be centred around the respective regional 'capital' city.

Challenges in representing the diverse needs of Italian journalists

Local journalists' organisations frequently consist of retirees, potentially prioritising established members' interests, and posing challenges in representing diverse needs, especially for younger and freelance journalists with different priorities and working conditions.

Bureaucracy and unclear objectives hamper the effectiveness of financial public support



Many Italian regions consistently provide support to local media, but the level of support varies significantly among regions. Moreover, obtaining public support involves high bureaucratic costs and uncertainties, which **dissuade** some media outlets, especially those with limited staff, from applying.

The effectiveness of financial public support is questioned due to **unclear objectives** and a distribution method (based on the number of journalists in each news outlet) favoring larger metropolitan outlets.

Community media, like other local and national media outlets, face challenges in revenue generation. There is a lack of reliable data regarding their 'private' sources of revenue, primarily because community media are **not obligated** to file financial statements. Additionally, there are **no significant funding sources** exclusively earmarked for fostering **innovation in local media**.

High risk detected for the safety of local journalists

Freelance journalists play a crucial role in sustaining the local press, but frequently face unfavourable working conditions, especially in online media outlets. The average compensation for a freelance journalist can be around 20,000 euro per year. Limited resources, increased workloads, and precarious employment situations can all contribute to a decrease in content quality.

Editorial independence at risk

There are concerns about **conflicts of interest** and potential **political pressure** on editorial content for various local media throughout Italy.

The **independence of the local branches of AgCom** raises concerns as Regional Council members have the authority to appoint members of the local Corecom. This system gives the regional political majority control over the committee responsible for monitoring local information independence.



TV news is showing a declining focus on **marginalised groups** like LGBTQ+ communities and people with disabilities. Programs often address these groups **superficially**, using sensationalist or paternalistic tones and featuring polarised debates. In contrast, radio, podcasts, and online content creators exhibit better representation and in-depth exploration of diversity-related issues.

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