



## Context

In 2022 the Ministry of Culture commissioned a study into the regional and local media landscape in Latvia. The report has identified **a shortage of local news provision** in the capital city Riga and municipalities around it.



In Latvia, there is no legal definition of local or regional press, or community media.

In these areas, there is either none or only one local or regional media outlet present. Nevertheless, results have not triggered any wider debate, either among industry professionals or the public.

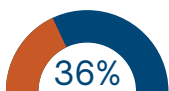


The most common local and regional media outlets in Latvia are **news websites and newspapers**. Less common are local and regional radio stations and TV channels.

**Ivonna Plaude, Chair of the Latvian Regional Media Association, on the Latvian local and regional media scene:**



“The number of local journalists continues to gradually decrease. A shortage of editorial staff, scarcity of funding making it difficult to hire enough employees, ageing newsrooms, trouble attracting young journalists, low salaries, overwork, and burnout are idiosyncratic of the Latvian local and regional media scene”



**Low readership of local print media outlets**

Only 36% of the interviewees in a 2022 survey say they have read local print media over the last month.



## How municipalities affected the culture of regional media usage

Historically, the development of the local press in Latvia was **negatively affected by informative leaflets issued by local municipalities**.

For a considerable time these contained journalism-like content and were delivered to all residents of the region free of charge. In all regions, municipal information publications have been used to strengthen the influence of local political power. This affected the culture of media usage in the regions, as part of the audience gets used to free information, thus undermining the local press.



## Different forms of state support

Since 2017 local and regional media can obtain **direct state support** for the creation of quality journalism content. This is administered by the **Media Support Fund (MSF)**, which has a separate programme dedicated to the support of regional and local media.

Regarding indirect state support, **local print media qualify for a reduced VAT (5%)** and receive compensation for press delivery.



## Working conditions of Latvian local journalists

In line with the data of the **Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS)** from 2021, local and regional media journalists admit to receive **constant online threats**:



## Editorial independence under review

General media regulation protects media freedom and editorial independence, but **the regulatory framework cannot be considered fully effective**. Moreover, both the definition and the regulation behind state advertising are missing.

There are two regions in Latvia in which the local press has been indirectly connected with the influence of local and national politicians: **Daugavpils** and **Ventspils**.

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Access the  
full report  
with sources

