

Country fact sheet

Portugal



Context

Following the end of the dictatorial regime in 1974, there was a **proliferation of local media in Portugal**, mainly radio. The number of local newspapers also increased, but often with solid ties to municipalities, which meant their independence was called into question.

The **international media crisis in the first decade of the 20th century led to many local newspapers closing without being replaced by local online media**. However, the topic of news deserts has yet to expand in the Portuguese political and societal agenda. The current debate about it is residual and confined to academia and newsrooms.



50%

Insufficient coverage in suburban areas

Suburban areas that surround big cities are usually covered by national media, but not in a detailed way. These areas are usually misrepresented, and associated often with big headlines about crime and poverty.



A look into the PSM in the country

Besides the headquarters in Lisbon, the public service **Rádio e Televisão de Portugal** (RTP), has a production centre in Oporto, **5 regional broadcasting centres and 3 newsrooms**. It also has editorial offices in the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and the Azores. **Lusa**, the Portuguese news agency, besides the main newsroom in Lisbon, **maintains newsrooms and correspondents spread across all districts and autonomous regions**, organised by regional editorial offices.

More than a half of Portuguese municipalities at risk

According to the Media Trust.Lab 2022 study on news deserts in Portugal, more than half of the municipalities can be said to be in a 'news desert situation' or on the way to becoming one.



The case of local radio

Radio plays an important role in rural areas, with several dedicated programmes. However, many radio stations have assigned frequencies but **broadcast programming and information with little link to the regions in which they operate**. Communication groups acquire the radio stations in suburban areas to increase their geographical coverage, but without prioritising local information.



State support as a crucial factor

State subsidies for the media are properly regulated in Portugal, and no concerning issue is found with regards to its distribution. The state is also obliged to carry out institutional advertising in the media. **The amount allocated to regional and local media outlets in 2022 increased of 37%** compared to the previous year. However, in 2022, the overall investment in state advertising dropped by six million euro.

The government has also announced plans to increase existing **support for the mailing of the regional and local press**. The Minister of Culture has recognised the need and pledged a 12.5% increase, since this funding has been frozen since 2015. The regional and local press see this increased support as essential to their future.



A concerning lack of market plurality

The regulatory framework does not prevent media and digital market concentration. **Five players control the media business in Portugal:** *Impresa*, *Cofina*, *Media Capital*, *Global Media*, and *RTP* (state owned). The Catholic Church is also, directly or indirectly, one of the main owners of regional and local press.



Media addressing minority groups

The representation of marginalised groups in both PSM and private media and the engagement of local media outlets with their audience is low.

According to the last regulatory report from the ERC, there is a **low number of programmes promoting cultural diversity and minority interests** on the main public broadcasting television channel and the two leading commercial TV media (SIC and TVI).

There are however interesting niche reporting practices in foreign minority languages, such as the **local Lisbon newspaper *Mensagem***, which offers journalism in English and Creole in partnership with the blog *Lisboa Criola*. Other digital experiences such as *Afrolink*, *Revista Gerador*, *Buala*, *Revista Mulher Africana* focus on Afro-descendant communities.

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