

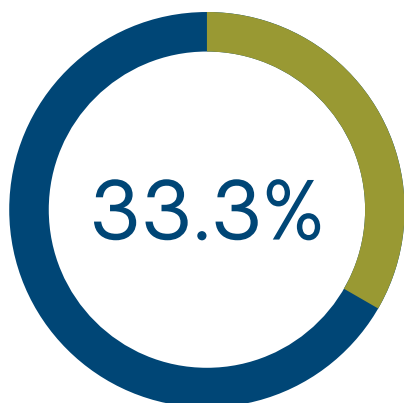


Context

- ▶▶ The public debate regarding local news deserts is almost non-existent.
- ▶▶ Both local media and community media are defined in the Slovak legal framework, even though the latter is a significantly underdeveloped sector.
- ▶▶ The occurrence of news deserts in Slovakia does not seem to be easily explained by economic deprivation or low internet penetration in the area.

Key findings:

A third of Slovakia is a print news desert



The situation in the local media sector, particularly in local print media, is challenging, with more than a third of Slovakia covered by print news deserts.

This deficiency is partially alleviated by the provision of local news by *RTVS*, the Slovak public service broadcaster, and *TASR*, the public service news agency.



Insufficient state aid

The sole indirect subsidy in place is the VAT reduction, which lowers the rate from 20% to 10% for the print press. This benefit applies exclusively to newspapers and magazines published at least four times a week. Consequently, **this measure overlooks the majority of the local press**, typically weekly periodicals, which continue to be sold at the standard VAT rate of 20%.

Key findings:

There is no anti-SLAPP legal framework in place

The lack of reports of attacks against local journalists can be attributed to the challenging conditions faced by local journalism in Slovakia, which, among other things, are not conducive to investigative journalism (a common trigger for such attacks and threats).

Political control of local media

Public officials are not prohibited from owning companies, including media companies.

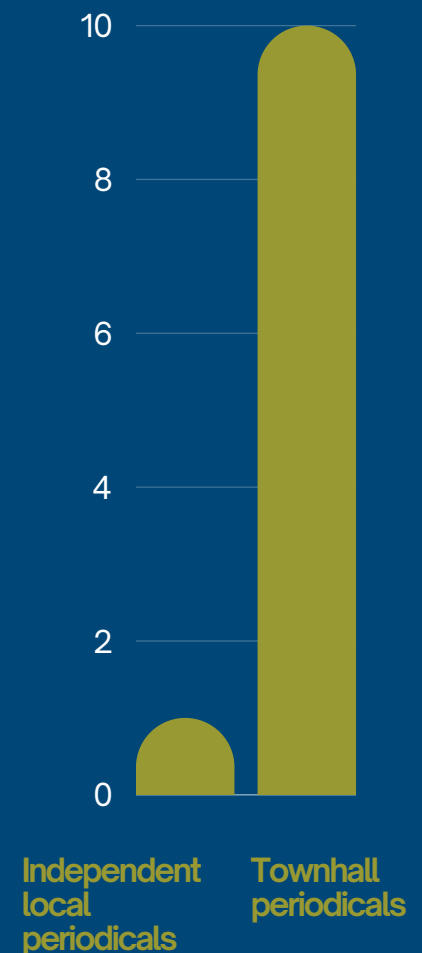
The **local media market is dominated by outlets owned by local governments**, i.e., municipalities and self-governing regions.

This applies to the print press in particular, where the number of so-called ‘townhall periodicals’, distributed free of charge, is **ten times higher than the number of independent local periodicals**.

These **periodicals are extensively used by local government leaders for self-promotion**, resulting in a low diversity of viewpoints and opinions.

Revenue decline for local publishers

An analysis of revenues of local independent publishers (35 out of 44 independent local print media outlets in Slovakia) shows a **14% decline** in publisher revenues between 2019 and 2021.



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