

Country fact sheet

Croatia



Context

The concept of news deserts has yet to be recognised in the Croatian public discourse, and as a subject in media and communication research. The national legal framework does not explicitly define local media. However, there are some special provisions in the Electronic Media Act for media that operate with a broadcasting license with a regional or local reach. Community media are labelled as non-profit media.

The local and regional press and radio stations have a rather **long tradition** in Croatia, **many local media outlets emerged in the mid-twentieth century**.

Although there is a large number of local media on the media market, **some areas are poorly covered and could be described as news deserts**, which most often overlap with weaker economic development and lower internet penetration.

Local and regional media in numbers based on the Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) and Croatian Chamber of Economy:



There are currently 19 television channels



140 radio stations, of which 14 are non-profit



Six daily regional and local newspapers



Is the media coverage diverse and truly present on the ground?

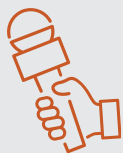
A great number of local and regional media is located in Zagreb and the towns in Zagreb County. Local urban media exhibit diversity in the quantity and variety of outlets, but there are signs suggesting a deficiency in content diversity. **Most of the local online media tend to replicate information directly from official websites of local authorities.**

Several local internet radio stations are located in rural areas. However, **local and regional radio stations broadcast mostly music** (65% local and 70% regional).



A concerning lack of market plurality

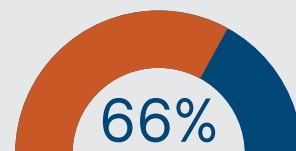
Three media companies dominate the local/regional print market. The first two have 40–60% market shares in circulation. The concentration on the online local media market is smaller but with the same media companies present online. The radio market is relatively regionally fragmented.



Alarming conditions for local journalists

The **safety of journalists represents the most significant risk for local journalism**, stemming from the inadequate working conditions of freelance journalists and the significant number of SLAPP cases.

The wages of local journalists are even lower than those of national journalists. Available data show that the **wage is between 500 to 700 euro for local journalists, and between 700 to 900 euro for editors.**



A 2022 survey by the Trade Union of Croatian Journalists demonstrated that **almost two-thirds of freelancers in media receive below the average net monthly wage.**



The problem of lawsuits

According to the data from the Croatian Journalists Association, there were **945 active lawsuits** against media and journalists for damages to reputation and honour in 2023. Lawsuits are especially dangerous for the local media because they threaten their economic viability and bring great **financial and psychological toll on local journalists**, who usually live close to the people who sued them.



Editorial independence under review

Regional and local administrative units are sometimes the only owners, or are part of the ownership structure of regional and local media companies. **There are instances of indirect political control over local media with owners having close ties to political parties.**

Moreover, there are **many cases of unfair and non-transparent allocation of subsidies and state advertising on the local level**, which allows for strong political interference in local media's editorial autonomy.



Insufficient representation of minorities and marginalised communities

The **Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities** requires that national minorities should have access to media content in their language at least once a week, but this is **not well implemented in practice**. The amount of PSM broadcasting in minority languages is **not enough to achieve interculturalism.**

People with disabilities are mostly invisible in the media, with some space granted only when they are advocating for their basic rights. Local media are not really diverse in covering different themes and actors.

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