



Presentation of the Stars4Media Initiative

Media Integrity Report



Team

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Initiative's summary

- **At Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia, we use transparency and governance as effective tools to build integrity in the media sector in Spain and the trust it needs among the general public. Thanks to the Stars4Media grant we were able to extend this work to a EU level, as a way to attain more impact.**
- **In collaboration with the Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights (CILD) in Italy and European Commons in Austria we have undertaken a preliminary analysis of the editorial integrity of a number of media companies in Spain, Italy, Austria, the US and the UK.**
- **The ideal of media integrity can be reached, as the analysis of the US and UK media companies shows. The main conclusion is that, when it comes to governance and transparency there is big room for improvement in the EU Companies analyzed.**

Initiative's results

- **A 139-page full report in English with a comparative analysis of transparency and governance practices in media companies located in Spain, Italy, Austria, the United Kingdom and the United States.**
- **In Spain we produced the ranking of media companies as in previous editions, including a detailed analysis of PRISA's governance and its impact on editorial integrity.**
- **In Italy and Austria we did the preliminary groundwork to undertake the ranking in these two jurisdictions. This groundwork includes a sample of media companies, the identification of best practices associated with the media integrity indicators developed by Fundación Compromiso y Transparencia and a reflection on the applicability of these indicators in their respective jurisdictions and ultimately across the EU.**
- **We completed the report with an analysis of the transparency and governance of the five major media companies in the US and UK.**

Initiative's key findings

- Editorial integrity is built around three areas: ownership and governance; funding; and editorial standards. In this equation, ownership plays a pivotal role in the success of a journalism project.
- However, none of the EU companies analyzed reach the ideal of editorial integrity, and there is big room for improvement. They are mainly characterized by the dependence of media companies on property and commercial interests.
- By contrast, ownership and governance in the US/UK companies analyzed show great levels of integrity, with an immediate effect in trust in these brands as providers of reliable, high-quality content, as well as, in some cases, great financial success.
- The EU media companies analyzed, whose influence in shaping society's values is unquestionable, but constitute one of the most opaque sectors. The seriousness of this fact cannot be lessened at a time when the credibility of institutions and individuals is under constant siege by the rise of fake news.

Initiative's key recommendations

- **The mission of this work is to provide some guidelines to news media companies so that they can build trust with their readers and main stakeholders.**
- **Now more than any other time in our democratic history, editorial integrity is becoming the news media's main asset, which will guarantee its success, both in terms of credibility and profitability.**
- **Media companies in the EU markets explored should begin to adopt and make public a set of practices and policies aimed at defending and strengthening their editorial credibility and independence.**

Challenges

- **The fact that we needed to carry out the work in the summer presented some difficulties. For e.g., it was harder to access experts for qualitative interviews. Our internal coordination suffered slightly as it was harder to schedule our biweekly calls.**
- **Time management was the only challenge at the end of the project, specially when we realized that we needed more time than planned to translate into English a big part of the text.**
- **One of the original partners, based in Finland, decided to disengage in the middle of the project when he was diagnosed with Covid-19.**

Lessons learnt

- **The partnership worked great. We all understood the project's mission, purpose and goals. We undertook it with great work ethic and collaborative spirit. It was a real pleasure to work with all the partners in this project.**
- **In terms of team multidisciplinary, it was an enriching experience to work with the mentality of a consultant, who focuses on the technical detail; of two lawyers, who approach both the research and writing in a normative way; and of two journalists, who pay more attention to the political and general picture.**
- **The ambition of this project is to become a sort of observatory of media integrity, a new entity in the European context. Through this grant we started thinking about the main elements we would need, both in terms of the development of the new entity and the funding needed to undertake such a project.**