

Media Plurality Report – 2024: Cyprus, Greece & Malta

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Abstract	This report presents and assesses the plurality and diversity of news media ecosystems in 2024 in the three countries comprising the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (MedDMO) Hub.

Keywords	Media plurality, Media diversity, Media industry, Media market, Media systems, Journalism, Greece, Cyprus, Malta.

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Glossary

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
CRTA	Cyprus Radio Television Authority
DNR	Digital News Report
EFJ	European Federation of Journalists
EU	European Union
FOI	Freedom of Information
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
IĠM	Institute of Maltese Journalists
IMME	Institute for Mass Media
IPI	International Press Institute
MedDMO	Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory
MFRR	Media Freedom Rapid Response
MPM	Media Pluralism Monitor
NCRTV	National Council for Radio and Television
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OSIS	Open Society Institute - Sofia
PSM	Public Service Media
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
SLAPP	Strategic lawsuit against public participation
UCJ	Union of Cyprus Journalists
VLOPs	Very Large Online Platforms

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1 Executive Summary

In this report, we present the work conducted under Work Package 5 (Monitoring of media ecosystem-Task 5.3) regarding the monitoring of media plurality in the region of Greece, Cyprus and Malta. The report examines the plurality and diversity of the news media ecosystem in 2024 in the three countries comprising the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (MedDMO) Hub. Its structure follows last year's Media Plurality Report (Giomelakis and Maniou, 2024) and is the third release in the annual series published by MedDMO.

The report delves into three key dimensions for each country: a) media market characteristics and general information, b) the level of fundamental protection and market plurality within their local media systems, and c) the extent of political independence and social inclusiveness observed in their media landscapes. By analyzing these aspects, the report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the media dynamics in these countries. The conclusions drawn from the analysis shed light on the current state of media in Cyprus, Greece and Malta, highlighting similarities and differences across the overall media landscape in the three countries.

This year's report is once again supplemented by commentaries from local media experts in the three countries. We would like to thank them for their contributions: Christophoros Christophorou, responsible for coordinating and authoring the Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) reports for the European University Institute for Cyprus, and Nicholas Karides, Director of the Institute for Mass Media (IMME) at the Universitas Foundation, and MPM researcher; Lambrini Papadopoulou, Assistant Professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, responsible for coordinating and authoring the MPM reports for Greece; and, Daiva Repeckaite, Investigative Journalist at Amphora Media, responsible for authoring the 2024 MPM report for Malta.

2 Introduction

Greece, Cyprus, and Malta are three countries located in Southern Europe and are also among the smallest EU member states. They share similar socio-political experiences shaped by their complex and turbulent political histories. As such, they serve as typical examples of the so-called Mediterranean Polarized/pluralist media system model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Maniou, 2017; Vella, Borg and Lauri, 2023), which is characterized by intense political polarization (Vassallo, 2023; Maniou and Moutselos, 2024), high levels of political parallelism (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Papathanassopoulos, 2007), and low levels of professionalization (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

This report aims to present and assess the plurality and diversity of news media in 2024 in the three countries comprising the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory (MedDMO) Hub, namely Greece, Cyprus, and Malta.

3 The Case of Cyprus

3.1 Media Market and General Information

Despite its relatively small market, the media landscape in Cyprus can be characterized by intense competition and growing media concentration. Other key features include limited transparency (eg., in areas such as media ownership), a tight advertising market, and a media environment vulnerable to influences from political and business interests (Price et al., 2024; RSF, 2025a). It is worth noting that Cyprus ranked 77th in the latest Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2025a), down from 65th the previous year. The shift towards online media consumption, which accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, seems to have stabilized in recent years. While print newspaper readership continues to decline, traditional newspapers have successfully maintained a strong digital presence through their websites and online platforms, competing with a range of digital-native news outlets (Christophorou and Karides, 2024). Within this media landscape, multiple TV and radio stations operate alongside daily and weekly newspapers, with some major publications maintaining ties to political parties (RSF, 2025a). A recent Eurobarometer survey on Media and News (Eurobarometer, 2023) revealed that social media is the most common way through which Cypriots access news, with 70% using it as their primary channel, compared to an EU average of 37%. Television follows at 62%, then online press and news platforms at 52%, radio at 30%, and the printed press at 10%. Similarly, another Eurobarometer survey on young people (aged 16–30) found that social media was the main source of information on political and social issues for 44% of young Cypriots (Eurobarometer, 2025). Finally, a survey conducted for the Cyprus Union of Journalists (2024) confirmed the dominance of television and social media as the primary platforms used by Cypriots to access information. Television ranked first (79%) as a source of information on topics of interest, followed by social media (73%). However, when asked which medium they mainly prefer for information, social media ranked the highest (38%).

3.2 Fundamental Protection and Market Plurality in the Cypriot Media System

Based on the latest Media Pluralism Monitor report (Christophorou and Karides, 2025), the domain of Fundamental protection in the media landscape in Cyprus appears overall to be at medium to low risk levels. However, different parameters within this domain, mainly related to the protection of information integrity and the protection of the right to information, raise significant concerns. Regarding the former, a major issue concerns the regulation and implementation of policies on online platforms, while the lack of a policy framework to tackle disinformation remains another point of concern (Giomelakis et al., 2024). It should be noted that the Cypriot Parliament's proposal to criminalize the spread of "fake news" has been widely criticized by the international journalism community as a serious threat to press freedom (IFJ, 2024; EFJ, 2024). According to a critical "urgent opinion" by OSCE-ODIHR (2024), the draft law included provisions that violated freedom of expression and media freedom. In the same context, the absence of a comprehensive framework covering all media creates significant gaps in media regulation. Regarding the latter, serious issues and gaps in the law on access to information, along with its implementation, create numerous obstacles and highlight the need for further amendments (GRECO, 2023; Christophorou and Karides, 2025). Additionally, the lack of mechanisms and safeguards to ensure the protection and recognition of whistleblowers presents another challenge. The overall situation in this category is further affected by additional challenges impacting media pluralism. For instance, SLAPP (Strategic lawsuits against public participation) cases persist and there is still no legislation in place to address them (Shkurko, 2024; UCJ, 2024; Papadopoulou and Maniou, 2025). However, it should be noted that, in February 2025, the Ministry of Justice submitted a draft law on SLAPPs for public consultation (Philenews, 2025). Finally, the absence of adequate legislation to safeguard media outlets, journalists and their news work persists. In this environment, media professionals often face serious challenges related to low salaries and financial instability, employment uncertainty, increased workloads, and editorial autonomy, while also being frequently targeted by political actors (Vatikiotis et al., 2024; Christophorou and Karides, 2025; Papadopoulou and Maniou, 2025).

Market Plurality in Cyprus continues to be the domain with the highest risk scores, facing significant challenges across all areas: transparency of media ownership, plurality of media providers and digital markets, media viability, as well as editorial independence from commercial and ownership influence (Giomelakis and Maniou, 2024; Philenews, 2024; Christophorou and Karides, 2025; RSF, 2025a; Maniou, 2025). Rules aimed at ensuring transparency in media ownership and financial reporting obligations apply only to TV and radio organizations, as outlined in the relevant legislation. However, there is little to no easily accessible or publicly available information, and the implementation of these regulations often raises serious concerns. The lack of ownership regulation and financial reporting requirements for print and digital media also poses serious challenges to ensuring transparency and media pluralism (RSF, 2025a; Christophorou and Karides, 2025). Regarding the plurality of media providers, the high level of market concentration in both the press and audiovisual sectors is a notable feature and, at the same time, another major concern (RSF, 2025). Furthermore, the removal of nearly all restrictions on media ownership and control in 2023 has facilitated the emergence of oligopolies across the entire media sector (Christophorou, 2023). Plurality in digital markets is also highly problematic, marked by a very high level of risk. This is particularly worrying due to the lack of relevant data, transparency, regulation, and a policy framework, especially in a landscape dominated by big tech companies and Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs). In terms of media viability, financial difficulties remain a persistent challenge, affecting the quality of journalism, while the financial status of media organizations is largely opaque, with limited transparency regarding their actual income (Christophorou and Karides, 2025;

Philenews, 2024). Finally, editorial independence from commercial and ownership influence remains a significant challenge. Journalists often work under constant pressure, facing threats to their editorial independence, job security, and benefits, while media owners tend to prioritize their own agendas and the interests of their business partners (Vatikiotis et al., 2024; Christophorou and Karides, 2025; RSF, 2025a; Maniou, 2025). According to a 2024 survey by the Cyprus Union of Journalists (Philenews, 2024), nearly half of the country's journalists considered the behavior of media owners (toward journalists) to be bad. Additionally, 61% reported feeling job insecurity, and one out of three reported receiving warnings or threats related to the news content they published.

3.3 Political Independence and Social Inclusiveness in the Media Landscape

The domain of political independence in the media landscape in Cyprus presents its own challenges and issues (Giomelakis and Maniou, 2024; Price et al., 2024; Christophorou and Karides, 2025). One of the key challenges lies in the absence of effective regulations that prevent political figures and parties from exerting control and influence over the media through ownership structures or other means. Additionally, weak or insufficient regulations addressing conflicts of interest, along with political involvement in the leadership of the Cyprus News Agency, further exacerbate concerns over political control. Regarding editorial autonomy, the lack of internal mechanisms and codes of conduct to strengthen and safeguard editorial independence remains a significant concern, despite the relentless efforts of the Cypriot Journalistic Union (Maniou, 2025). When it comes to the integrity of political information during elections, a major issue is the absence of essential information needed to assess whether laws are being followed and whether fairness is being ensured (e.g. publication of relevant reports or coverage schedules). Although political advertising and activities by government officials that evidently favor a party or candidate should be considered to ensure fair treatment, they are typically ignored by the regulator (Christophorou and Karides, 2025). Moreover, no regulations set rules for online political activity and communication, either for political actors or for digital platforms. The absence of a regulatory framework to support the media is a serious concern with respect to the indicator on state regulation of resources and support for the media sector. In the same context, the distribution of state advertising to media outlets is also a significant challenge, characterized by a lack of transparency and difficulty in evaluating compliance with existing rules and the fairness of the process. Smaller media organizations appear to be disadvantaged, while the growing presence of VLOPs negatively affects national media. Finally, the independence of public service media (PSM), poses major issues related to political influence and interference over the managing board of the Cyprus public broadcaster (RIK), along with the existence of outdated, vague, and ineffective rules that undermine editorial independence (Maniou, 2017; Price et al., 2024; Christophorou and Karides, 2025).

The area of social inclusiveness raises significant concerns, with several elements at high-risk levels, including the representation of minorities in the media, issues related to gender equality, and media literacy (Christophorou and Karides, 2025). Regarding the former, major challenges include insufficient provisions for minority representation, as well as the infrequent (and often negative) portrayal of marginalized and unrecognized minority groups. Additionally, the lack of policies and protections against online hate speech further exacerbates the problem. Within the same area, gender equality remains a persistent challenge and a high-risk concern (Giomelakis and Maniou, 2024; Hadjigavriel, 2025). Key issues include, among others, the absence of regulations and internal policy frameworks, the continued underrepresentation of women in media leadership and executive roles, and their limited

presence as experts in media coverage. Finally, concerning media literacy in the country, despite significant efforts by various educational, research, and media institutions (e.g., the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, CRTA, universities, research institutions), a comprehensive media education policy and a state-supported strategy to further advance media literacy practices are still lacking. Media literacy exists within the Cypriot education system, though it is not yet fully integrated into the curriculum, with some educators choosing to participate voluntarily in related activities (Christophorou and Karides, 2025; Giomelakis et al., 2024). Overall, although several activities promoting media literacy and fact-checking initiatives (e.g., the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory and Fact Check Cyprus) are promising, their ability to reach both mainstream and online audiences, as well as other groups such as rural communities and the elderly, remains somewhat limited. A recent study on perceptions of disinformation in Cyprus found that one-third of the respondents consider active participation in digital and media literacy training programs a key step toward tackling disinformation (Giomelakis et al., 2024). Finally, according to the 2023 OSIS Media Literacy Index (Open Society Institute – Sofia, 2023), Cyprus ranked 28th among 41 countries classified within the cluster at risk of further decline.

Table 1: Risks to media pluralism for Cyprus (Source: MPM 2025 report)

Fundamental Protection	**Market Plurality**	**Political Independence**	**Social Inclusiveness**
Protection of freedom of expression	Transparency of media ownership	Political independence of the media	Universal and inclusive access to the media
Protection of information integrity	Plurality of media providers	Editorial autonomy	Representation of minorities in the media
Protection of right to information	Plurality in digital markets	Integrity of political information during elections	Local/regional and community media
Journalistic profession, standards and protection	Media viability	State regulation of resources and support to the media sector	Gender equality in the media
Independence and effectiveness of the national regulatory authorities	Editorial independence from commercial and owners' influence	Independence of PSM	Media literacy
47% - medium-low risk	**85% - very-high risk**	**58% - medium-high risk**	**65% - medium-high risk**

4 The Case of Greece

4.1 Media Market and General Information

The Greek media system presents the typical characteristics of the Mediterranean Polarized/pluralist category (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), including high (digital) fragmentation, an oversupply of news media in different formats, and high levels of polarization. It is also marked by widespread reliance on social media for news, high concentration of media ownership, and ongoing concerns about political and business influences over media content (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Wiseman, 2023; HRW, 2025; Newman et al., 2025). These factors contribute to a persistent crisis of credibility in Greek journalism, with public trust in the media remaining at very low levels whereas perception of media bias remains high (Maniou, 2025). Notably, Greece is one of the two countries (along with Hungary) with the lowest level of trust in news media level (22% down from 23% last year), according to the latest Digital News Report (DNR) by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Newman et al., 2025). Against this background, the country has fallen to 89th out of 180 nations in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2025b), down from 88th in 2024. Regarding audience preferences, Greek news consumers tend to engage with a diverse mix of sources on a weekly basis. The vast majority of the population in the country (84%) appears to prefer getting their news from online sources (eg., news websites/apps, social media, video platforms, etc.), while social media alone holds a prominent position, with a high usage rate of 64% (with Facebook being the most popular platform). Television and print media account for lower percentages, at 48% and 11% respectively. Interestingly, podcasts are also gaining popularity among the Greeks, with 9% now accessing news weekly through online format (Newman et al., 2025).

4.2 Fundamental Protection and Market Plurality in the Greek Media System

The domain of Fundamental Protection presents various challenges across different areas, such as the protection of freedom of expression, the indicator of journalistic profession, standards and protection, as well as the independence and effectiveness of national regulatory authorities. Despite some positive developments and significant legal and regulatory changes, the media landscape continues to face several issues, showing that the basic requirements for ensuring media pluralism and freedom are frequently overlooked in practice (Papadopoulou and Maniou, 2025; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). For instance, journalists still encounter serious obstacles, threats and intimidation during their day-to-day practice, including violent attacks and legal threats (MFRR, 2024; ESIEA, 2024a, 2024b; HRW, 2025). The continued absence of anti-SLAPP legislation leaves them vulnerable and unprotected, as the current legal framework lacks adequate safeguards against lawsuits that hinder public participation, threaten freedom of expression (IPI, 2022; Papadopoulou and Maniou, 2025; HRW, 2025; Zafeiropoulos, 2025) and contributes to a general sense of impunity. A recent report indicates a widespread feeling of insecurity within the journalistic community, stemming from concerns about safety, legal risks, and challenging working conditions (MFRR, 2024). Against this background, news practitioners often work under precarious conditions, characterized by low wages, job insecurity, and limited access to social protections (Vatikiotis et al., 2024). The National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV), the country's primary regulatory body, continues to face criticism for political interference, particularly in the appointment of its members, as well as for its lack of effectiveness and overall inefficiency

(Dartzanou, 2024; RSF, 2025b). At the same time, the Greek government faced strong criticism for interfering in the investigation of the Predator spyware scandal (RSF, 2023; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025).

Market Plurality in Greece has seen an overall increase in risk compared to the previous year, retaining its position as the worst-performing sector among the ones examined. Key concerns include the plurality of media providers, plurality in digital markets, and editorial independence from commercial and owners influences (Wiseman, 2023; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). High concentration in the audiovisual media sector remains a major concern, with a small number of dominant broadcasters controlling the Greek market, while the lack of transparency in cross-media ownership continues to be a significant issue (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025; Solomon, 2024). In contrast to traditional media, current laws do not adequately regulate digital-native outlets, enabling their unchecked growth and posing growing risks to media plurality. Moreover, digital market plurality is increasingly influenced by the unregulated dominance of global tech companies and online platforms, which exert significant control over news distribution and the flow of digital advertising revenue in the country (Angelou and Veglis, 2024). At the same time, the absence of fair revenue-sharing mechanisms poses additional challenges for smaller and independent outlets, making it increasingly difficult for them to remain competitive. Editorial independence remains a major concern, as the absence (or weak enforcement) of safeguards to shield journalists enables owners and commercial (and/or political) pressures to frequently influence newsroom decisions and restrict independent reporting and investigative journalism (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Wiseman, 2023; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). Finally, the ongoing decline of print media, the slow adoption of innovative business models (e.g., subscription models), and the unpredictable and inconsistent financial support from the state are additional challenges in this area (Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025).

4.3 Political Independence and Social Inclusiveness in the Media Landscape

Political independence presents a medium to high level of risk, with ongoing and significant concerns regarding editorial autonomy, the independence of PSM, and the broader political independence of the media (Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). Editorial autonomy remains highly vulnerable, with significant risks stemming from the media industry's lack of effective self-regulation. Internal mechanisms to safeguard editorial independence are generally absent, and there are no clear protections in place for staffing decisions and dismissals. In this context, journalistic unions in the country appear largely ineffective in protecting media professionals (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). Moreover, the independence of PSM remains a major concern, particularly in terms of pluralism and impartiality (HRW, 2025). Notable issues in this regard include the lack of balanced political representation in news and informational programs on the national public broadcaster (ERT), with coverage often favoring the ruling party (NCRTV, 2024), as well as persistent political control and influence over leadership changes within the institution. Although ERT underwent an administrative change last year, the process further underscored the government's influence over the broadcaster (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). Additionally, the monopolistic control of the national news agency (ANA-MPA) further undermines media independence. Finally, regarding the broader political independence of the media, despite existing legal protections, strong political figures continue to exert considerable influence over media organizations, many of which exhibit clear political bias. A major ongoing challenge is the concentration of media ownership among a

small group of families with strong political ties, which results in political interference, diminished objectivity and journalistic independence and lack of media pluralism (Papadopoulou, 2019; Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; ToVima, 2025; Solomon, 2024).

The domain of Social Inclusiveness faces several challenges, including, among others, the representation of minorities in the Greek media, issues related to local/regional, and community media, gender equality in the media, and media literacy (Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025; Katsampekis et al., 2024). Representation of minorities and social groups such as migrants, LGBTQIA individuals, and Roma people, in both public and private outlets, continues to be problematic despite legal frameworks aimed at countering hate speech and discrimination. Media attention to these groups and marginalized communities is often narrow and distorted, tending to be event- or crisis- driven, with coverage focused mainly on specific incidents, conflicts, and emergencies rather than providing regular, in-depth reporting on their social and political lives (interviews cited in Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). At the same time, the weak enforcement of hate speech regulations, particularly on social media platforms, remains a significant issue, and low public awareness of how to report such incidents further exacerbates the problem (Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). When it comes to local, regional, and community media, key challenges include the lack of official legal status for community outlets, persistent financial difficulties, and increasing political interference, all of which undermine free and independent journalism (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2024; Verza et al., 2024). Furthermore, gender equality continues to be a challenge due to the lack of safeguards and a regulatory framework, particularly in relation to leadership and executive positions, as well as newsroom representation. Women remain underrepresented in key decision-making roles, resulting in reduced influence and a limited diversity of viewpoints, while media content frequently reflects and amplifies gender stereotypes (Siapera and Papadopoulou, 2021; Papadopoulou and Angelou, 2025). Finally, regarding media literacy, the absence of a national strategy and insufficient implementation has led to lack of cohesion in efforts to address the issue, with various actors working largely independently (Giomelakis et al., 2024). This fragmentation undermines the overall effectiveness of initiatives aimed at improving media literacy. Additionally, the lack of a dedicated media literacy curriculum within the education system reflects insufficient integration, limiting its potential to strengthen the critical thinking and digital competencies of students and younger audiences. In the 2023 OSIS Media Literacy Index (Open Society Institute – Sofia, 2023), the country ranked 29th (out of 41) among a group of nations considered at risk of further decline.

Table 2: Risks to media pluralism for Greece (Source: MPM 2025 report)

Fundamental Protection	Market Plurality	Political Independence	Social Inclusiveness
Protection of freedom of expression	Transparency of media ownership	Political independence of the media	Universal and inclusive access to the media
Protection of information integrity	Plurality of media providers	Editorial autonomy	Representation of minorities in the media

Protection of right to information	Plurality in digital markets	Integrity of political information during elections	Local/regional and community media
Journalistic profession, standards and protection	Media viability	State regulation of resources and support to the media sector	Gender equality in the media
Independence and effectiveness of the national regulatory authorities	Editorial independence from commercial and owners' influence	Independence of PSM	Media literacy
62% - medium - high risk	**67% - high risk**	**57% - medium - high risk**	**66% - medium - high risk**

5 The Case of Malta

5.1 Media Market and General Information

Malta's media landscape has traditionally been shaped by the strong influence of key institutions such as the state, political parties, the Catholic Church, and the country's largest trade union (Borg and Lauri, 2012; Vassallo, 2023; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025; RSF, 2025c). A defining feature of this landscape is the continued ownership of multiple media platforms by the two main political parties, which, together with the country's PSB and various independent outlets, contribute to a challenging and oversaturated media market with high political parallelism and limited advertising budgets (Vassallo, 2023; Price et al., 2024). In addition to strong political alignments and the highly polarised environment, the media system is deeply shaped by commercial interests, and economic pressures (Vella et al., 2023; Cannataci and Radu, 2023; RSF, 2025c). In the latest World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders, Malta was ranked 67th out of 180 countries, climbing six places from 73rd last year (RSF, 2025c), partly due to the deterioration of press freedom in other countries (Borg, 2025). A recent survey conducted by the European Parliament (Eurobarometer, 2023) found that social media platforms are the most popular source for accessing news, used by 70% of respondents. This was followed by television and online press and/or news platforms, both at 49%, with radio coming third (21%). These findings are in alignment with a recent survey from the national Broadcasting Authority (2024), which showed that Facebook was the most widely used platform for watching online Maltese programmes/audiovisual content, with 92% of respondents using it across all age groups. Other popular platforms included YouTube (51.9%), Instagram (38.3%), timesofmalta.com (28.1%), and lovinmalta.com (24.4%). The same survey revealed that 87% of Maltese residents watch television, while 67.1% listen to radio. Additionally, 56.9% of all residents consider television their preferred source for local news.

5.2 Fundamental Protection and Market Plurality in the Maltese Media System

Fundamental protection in Malta has seen an increased overall risk level compared to 2024, according to the latest MPM report (Repeckaite, 2024; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). Key concerns revolve around the protection of the right to information, and the independence and effectiveness of the national

regulatory authorities. The consistent refusal of public institutions to cooperate with Freedom of Information (FOI) requests is a significant concern and has also been criticized by the Information and Data Protection Commissioner (2024). Regarding national bodies, there are concerns about the independence of the Broadcasting Authority (BA), particularly the process by which its management board is appointed (Maniou, 2025). These concerns were further amplified last year following two controversial decisions: one involving a Labour Party-owned station and another concerning a Church-owned station, both of which drew additional criticism (Montebello, 2024a; Times of Malta, 2024a; Mapping Media Freedom, 2024a). In terms of the protection of freedom of expression, Malta stands out as one of the European countries with the highest number of SLAPP cases (Cannataci and Radu, 2023; CASE, 2024) and in 2024, it was named "SLAPP Country of the Year" by the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (Montebello, 2024b). Since the publication of the conclusions from the public inquiry into the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, along with several recommendations for comprehensive media reform, no concrete action has been taken to improve press freedom (Mijatović, 2023; EFJ, 2023; Engelbrecht-Bogdanov, 2024; RSF, 2025c). The transposition of the EU anti-SLAPP directive last year was a positive step; however, its implementation has faced criticism due to significant gaps and deficiencies (Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, 2024; Schembri Orland, 2025). Finally, other challenges in this area include, among others, issues related to content moderation on online platforms (Cummings, 2024; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025; MedDMO, 2025), the absence of a formal national framework to address disinformation (Mallia, 2024), and the largely unregulated working conditions of journalists (Mapping Media Freedom, 2024b; Price et al., 2024; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025; Meilak, 2025, Maniou, 2025).

The domain of market plurality constitutes the worst-performing sector overall, marked by various challenges and threats, and four indicators falling within the high or very-high risk category, specifically: plurality of media providers, plurality in digital markets, editorial independence from commercial and owners' influence, and media viability (Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). It should be noted that existing regulations on media concentration apply solely to radio and television services, leaving out other types of media. Additionally, there are no mechanisms allowing regulatory bodies to apply competition rules in a way that considers the unique characteristics of the media sector (Cannataci and Radu, 2023). In this context, the broadcasting audience is highly concentrated, and the absence of relevant data on market shares (e.g., revenues across different sectors) makes it challenging to assess the current situation and identify effective measures to enhance media pluralism (Cannataci and Radu, 2023; Broadcasting Authority, 2024; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). With regard to plurality in digital markets, the main challenge lies in the dominance of online platforms and the lack of sufficient effort and measures to balance market power between major tech companies, which act as intermediaries, and publishers (Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). When it comes to editorial independence, influence from commercial interests and media owners remains a major challenge, along with frequent instances of conflicts of interest. In fact, there are no safeguards in place, and journalists lack protection in cases of ownership or editorial changes, as well as against interference or pressure from owners or management (Vella et al., 2023; Cannataci and Radu, 2023; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). On a positive note, the recent transformation of the Maltese Institute for Journalists (IĠM) into a registered trade union is intended to strengthen efforts to improve journalists' working conditions and establish clearer regulations governing the relationship between news practitioners and their employers (Azzopardi, 2025; Meilak, 2025). Finally, media viability remains a significant area of concern, with major risks linked to unsustainable revenue sources, the financial difficulties faced by many outlets, and the lack of transparency in the

allocation and management of state subsidies (De Gaetano, 2022; 2024a; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025; RSF, 2025c).

5.3 Political Independence and Social Inclusiveness in the Media Landscape

Political independence in the media landscape remains a high-risk area, with persistent and notable concerns in areas such as the political independence of the media, the independence of PSM, and editorial autonomy (Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). A key feature of the country's media environment is the extensive presence of politically owned media outlets, which enhances political control over a large portion of the media sector and raises serious concerns about the overall political independence of the media, its influence on news content, management, and regulatory processes, and the increasing risks of polarization and partisanship (Vella et al., 2023; Cannataci and Radu, 2023; Maniou, 2025). In this context, the absence of regulatory frameworks and protective measures against conflicts of interest is evident. Political parties in the country are permitted to own broadcast media entities and, as such, the major parties operate a wide range of outlets, including television and radio stations, newspapers, and news websites. All of the above, combined with the absence of robust self-regulation, has a significant impact and raises serious concerns regarding political interference and editorial autonomy (Vella et al., 2023). Regarding the independence of PSM, it is widely perceived as state-controlled and lacking independence from the government, often facing criticism from the Broadcasting Authority. The latter, however, is also criticized for failing to adequately address the imbalance and bias in the public service broadcaster (Vella et al., 2023; Times of Malta, 2024b, 2024c; Brincat, 2024; Delia, 2024; Carabott, 2024). Finally, additional concerns in this area involve uneven and biased coverage of election campaigns, along with the lack of effective regulatory frameworks and issues related to the allocation and oversight of state advertising (Taylor, 2023; Azzopardi, 2024; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025).

Social inclusiveness in Malta presents its own risks and challenges, particularly in areas related to the representation of minorities and gender equality in the media, and media literacy (Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). The limited representation of minorities and marginalised groups highlights ongoing issues of inequality and lack of diversity in the media sector, where these communities are largely excluded from coverage and visibility. The Integration Strategy and Action Plan (2025 - 2030) is a positive step, although significant concerns persist, especially in relation to efforts to combat hate speech (Bonanno, 2025; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). Moreover, gender equality also remains a major challenge, as there is no dedicated gender equality policy in place, limited data and monitoring mechanisms, and women continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles, including management and editor-in-chief positions (Repeckaite, 2024; Palmer and Bleyer-Simon, 2025). In terms of media literacy, the country lacks both a comprehensive policy and a national strategy. In fact, media literacy is primarily driven by non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), non-profit organisations, the University of Malta, and a few media outlets. Although the government established a Media Literacy Development Board in early 2021, its impact has been minimal, and no significant progress has been made to support the development of media literacy among the population. Additionally, media literacy is not a mandatory component of the national educational curriculum at any level (Giomelakis et al, 2024; De Gaetano, 2024b). Notably, the country was ranked 26th out of 41 in the 2023 OSIS Media Literacy Index (Open Society Institute – Sofia, 2023), placing it, along with Cyprus and Greece, among the group of nations considered at risk of further decline. Finally, difficulties and limited access to media for individuals with disabilities remain another significant challenge in this area.

Table 3: Risks to media pluralism for Malta (Source: MPM 2025 report)

Fundamental Protection	Market Plurality	Political Independence	Social Inclusiveness
Protection of freedom of expression	Transparency of media ownership	Political independence of the media	Universal and inclusive access to the media
Protection of information integrity	Plurality of media providers	Editorial autonomy	Representation of minorities in the media
Protection of right to information	Plurality in digital markets	Integrity of political information during elections	Local/regional and community media
Journalistic profession, standards and protection	Media viability	State regulation of resources and support to the media sector	Gender equality in the media
Independence and effectiveness of the national regulatory authorities	Editorial independence from commercial and owners' influence	Independence of PSM	Media literacy
55% - medium-high risk	**76% - high risk**	**75% - high risk**	**57% - medium-high risk**

6 Conclusions – Remarks from experts

Despite some improvements across different areas of the media landscapes in Cyprus, Greece, and Malta over the past year, these three countries continue to face several and often common challenges across sectors and key elements that affect pluralism in their media ecosystems.

In Cyprus, the domain of market plurality remains the area with the highest risk level for another year, but other important areas, such as social inclusiveness and political independence, also face significant challenges. According to Nicholas Karides, director of IMME and member of the MPM team for Cyprus, beyond the very specific findings of the Media Pluralism Monitor and the risks that it identifies, from weaknesses regarding the political independence of media, their plurality and viability, the deficiencies in public service broadcasting, the media environment's vulnerability to disinformation and the absence of media literacy, there is one important and overarching point that needs to be made about Cyprus. As he points out, the state has consistently not fulfilled its own positive obligation to provide, promote and safeguard a healthy pluralistic media environment so that all of the aforementioned weaknesses and deficiencies can begin to be addressed. Crucially, he noted, the state has dragged its feet in terms of updating the desperately needed media regulatory framework, with online media remaining completely unregulated; it has often sought to intervene legislatively against the interests of media freedom and of

journalists themselves and it has not even begun to contemplate strategies on media literacy and on combating disinformation.

In the view of Christophoros Christophorou, another expert in the field and coordinator of the MPM team for Cyprus, the media landscape suffers from various problems which are the result of the way the government and political parties view the role and place of media and journalism. The media sector is neglected, regulation is deficient or non-existent and politicians seek to control and influence media in various ways. As he underlines, the most recent phenomenon is attempts by the government and deputies to introduce laws, the letter and the spirit of which are indicative of an approach which is a direct threat to the fundamental rights of free expression and freedom of the media. Regarding media themselves, Christophorou notes that pluralism in mainstream media suffers from a chronic entrenchment in polarised views on the Cyprus problem which influences the presentation of facts and views as well as the representation of persons. While free expression of views by individual columnists is visible in almost all media, we can trace dominant mainstream selection routines and editorial lines, mostly biased in connection to the Cyprus problem, owners' interests and business influences.

In Greece, the domains of market plurality and social inclusiveness appear to be the areas with the highest risk levels. However, several challenges also exist in other key areas. According to Lambrini Papadopoulou, Assistant Professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and coordinator of the MPM team for Greece, in 2024 media pluralism and press freedom in Greece continued to face significant challenges. Although the EU's 2024 Media Freedom Act aimed to enhance transparency and reduce state influence, persistent issues remain, including concentrated media ownership, weak regulatory enforcement, limited pluralism, and a lack of transparency in both digital media and public funding. Political influence over editorial content and regulatory bodies was an ongoing concern, while public trust in news media remained low. Finally, regarding digital transformation, Papadopoulou points out that progress has been slow, with limited adoption of paywalls and weak audience engagement on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Overall, she adds that despite isolated instances of innovation, the Greek media landscape remains highly polarized, commercially fragile, and lacking in diversity.

In Malta, media pluralism has seen little progress over the past year, with the media environment facing significant challenges and risks, and several issues remaining unresolved or requiring further attention. Risks in domains such as market plurality and political independence remain at high levels for another year, while challenges in other areas continue to raise concerns. According to Daiva Repeckaite, investigative journalist at Amphora Media and author of the 2024 MPM Report for Malta, for such a small and social media-reliant society, the country has a vibrant and diverse media landscape, with numerous newspapers, magazines, websites, radio and TV stations to choose from. Debate podcasts enjoy immense popularity. However, Repeckaite points out that media ownership by political parties and an opaque framework for awarding public funds to media companies distort the media market. Malta does not have regionally defined news deserts, but the lack of technology to automate transcription of Maltese-language content and insufficient investment to do it manually perpetuate inaccessibility of many audiovisual media products to people with hearing disabilities.

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