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Global Forum for Media Development
**Mapping of media assistance
and journalism support
programmes in the
Western Balkans region**

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PURPOSE

This mapping of media development and journalism support projects in the Western Balkans was conducted in preparation for [the GFMD Regional Meeting for the wider European region](#), held on May 24, 2024, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as an official side event of the International Press Institute (IPI) World Congress. The mapping seeks to provide an overview of programmes as a basis for discussion among donors, media support organisations, media outlets and journalists about the experience and lessons learned from implementing media assistance in the Western Balkans as well as for initiating conversations on strategies for future interventions.

This information intends to assist donors, implementers and media communities in the region in their efforts to effectively coordinate media support, avoid overlap and duplication, and identify gaps in funding.

What did the mapping examine: The mapping focused on media development and journalism support programmes implemented in individual countries, as well as across the Western Balkans, between 2020 and May 2024. It is therefore a snapshot in a specific moment in time of the current and recently closed programmes funded by donors and implemented by GFMD members and other implementing organisations operating in this region.

METHODOLOGY

How did we collect the data: The mapping was a collective and collaborative effort; information was gathered by a GFMD consultant, the GFMD Secretariat, partners, members and donor organisations working in the Western Balkans.

Information sources used: Sources included the websites and databases of multilateral institutions, bilateral and philanthropic donors and implementing partners ([USAID](#), [GIZ](#), [EU funding and tenders portal](#), [Internews](#), [NED](#) and others), regional and national organisations implementing media assistance and journalism support programmes ([BIRN](#), [MDIF](#) and others) and [D-portal](#) to compare and validate the data collected collaboratively.¹

Limitations: The mapping is an attempt to provide a broad overview of media support funding in the region. However, this information is not exhaustive, as it depends on the public data available, as well as contributions from partner organisations.² It may thus inadvertently exclude or limit information related to organisations that do not work directly with GFMD or our partners and/

or overrepresent programmes implemented by them. Overlap might also be possible in cases where smaller calls for sub-grants could have been parts of larger multi-annual media support programmes.

Our research was able to identify and include grants provided by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the year 2020 (the most recent data publicly available in their online database), and reference support provided by the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). This report does not analyse the NED and EED information in depth as the type of support is different than the other donors mapped and have not included in some cumulative conclusions and overviews

Philanthropic funders - which globally have often been more inclined to provide core and more flexible funding - have also supported media and journalism in the region. We searched the websites of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Open Society Foundations and other publicly available data and were unable to identify current programmes for media assistance and journalism support. However, it is highly likely that such funds have been available.

¹d-portal.org is an open source platform containing the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data as well as the most recent year's data available in the OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Platform provides a search function and information by country or by organisation on development activities and budgets published to the platform.

² In an increasingly competitive environment some organisations are understandably less than willing to share information on funders for fear of others 'poaching' their funding sources.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In preparing the summary of mapped programmes dedicated to supporting media in the Western Balkans, the GFMD team aimed to identify the following:

- **Geographical distribution of the funding** - whether the funding was allocated to individual countries or distributed across multiple countries in the region and what countries were the largest recipients of funding.
- **Programme descriptions** - the main themes and problems such programmes seek to address.
- **Type of funding** - is it core funding to be used for all organisational expenses and building capacity or is it defined by programme objectives, goals and needs to be implemented within a certain thematic area and with strict budgetary lines.
- **Amounts of funding** allocated for media assistance programmes. We also provided an overall budget estimate.
- **Sources of funding** - who are the donors providing support and how many programmes they fund.
- **Implementing organisations** - who are the organisations implementing the programmes and/or distributing funds to media organisations and journalists.

Geographical distribution of the funding

The countries of the Western Balkans region include: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, the Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia.

A third of the programmes identified - 19 out of 58 - are regional programmes (that is, covering more than one country). Several regional programmes include activities implemented in Western Balkan countries and other countries outside of the region (such as Turkey and Moldova). We mapped 39 single-country programmes: 10 programmes implemented in Albania, 9 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7 in Serbia, 5 in Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia and 3 in Montenegro.

³All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, are in line with the relevant United Nations documents and resolutions.

Considering the amounts of funding available per country or regionally, and taking into account the limitations in collecting information as indicated above, the findings are as follows:

Country/Region	USD
Serbia	\$19,693,603
Western Balkans	\$14,524,944
Albania	\$8,585,195
Republic of N. Macedonia	\$7,207,073
Kosovo	\$5,533,615
Bosnia and Herzegovina	\$1,644,962
Montenegro	\$327,198
Total	\$57,516,590

Data collected by GFMD, members and partners

Country/Region	USD
Serbia	\$30 million
Bosnia and Herzegovina	\$25,8 million
Republic of N. Macedonia	\$10,4 million
Albania	\$8,4 million
Montenegro	\$1,4 million
Kosovo	\$1,36 million
Total	\$77.3 million

d-portal.org data

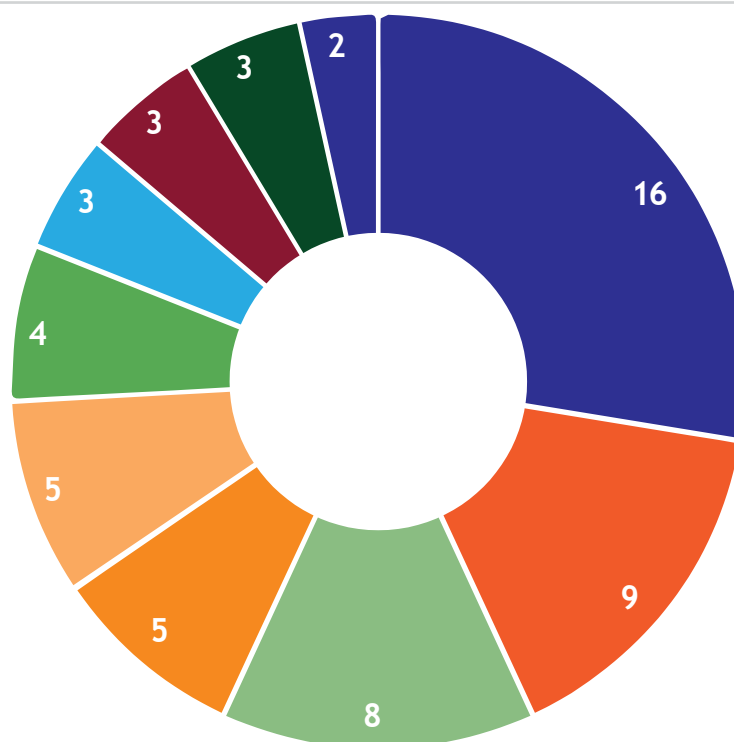
Based on the data available in GFMD's mapping and data from d-portal.org on funding in the region, Serbia emerges as the largest recipient of funds.

A comparison between the GFMD's mapping data and the information available on d-portal.org reveals a discrepancy concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina. The GFMD mapping did not identify the amounts for some of the significant USAID funds directed towards Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is also likely that a substantial portion of regional programme funds was allocated to this country.

The main themes

- democracy, human rights and freedom of expression
- disinformation, media literacy, fact checking
- financial sustainability, (digital) innovation, investments in media
- investigative journalism and anti-corruption reporting
- thematic reporting
- safety of journalists
- advocacy
- trainings
- n/a; other
- support for local media and production of content relevant for local communities



The main themes on which programmes are focusing

Themes for the mapping were determined by examining programme names and descriptions. Sub-themes, such as gender, diversity and similar donor priorities, which are commonly included in programme requirements, were not included.

Nearly 28% of the listed projects are implemented under the broad definition of democracy, human rights and freedom of expression. Several factors contribute to the large number of programmes in this category, namely:

- some donors use this broad general description to classify their support for media in their official databases
- EU donors use this type of description to indicate that the programmes are situated within the EU accession agenda under the overall objective of freedom of expression.

The second largest group consists of programmes aimed at building trust and focusing on disinformation, media literacy and fact-checking initiatives. In the third group are

programmes addressing media sustainability, capacity and resilience building, investments in media, and innovation, which, in many cases, include an emphasis on digital tools.

Five mapped programmes support investigative journalism and anti-corruption reporting.

The same number of programmes (5) are designed to fund media reporting on other development issues, such as the environment, culture, energy and human trafficking.

Other themes include journalist safety, advocacy for legal reform and trainings for journalists.

Type of funding

Though not always clear from publicly available data, the majority of programmes appear to provide funds conditionally for specific types of activities, with only three programmes (5,2%) providing core support (funding that can be used for operations and core activities). This finding does not include NED and EED programmes as the type of support is different than the other donors mapped.

Amounts of funding

Looking at funding amounts, in some cases, we identified the total budget of a media support programme and in other cases solely the amounts⁴ available for subgranting. With a budget of more than \$13 million, the largest programme is the Media Innovation Activity in Serbia, implemented by IREX and funded by USAID and SIDA.

The amounts available for sub-grants range from \$500 for grants in the regional “Cultivating Local Independent Media in the Balkans (CLIMB) innovative products and approaches to increase media literacy programme” to \$70,000 for Independent Media Program grants in Kosovo and grants awarded by 2024 Media Professionalization Assistance Program in Montenegro.

Overall budget

The methodology for the mapping focused on programmes that were initiated, concluded, or were in some phase of implementation during the 2020-2024 period. Out of the 58 mapped programmes, we identified the total budgets awarded for 33 of them.

By converting the amounts to USD and summing them, we calculated a total of \$57,516,590, with an average annual amount of approximately \$13.38 million.

This figure does not include amounts awarded via sub-granting, funding provided by NED and EED and from other sources not identified in this mapping. If we added NED and EED budgets based on estimates and projections using the data available, the total amount for the 2020-2024 period would be close to \$90 million with an annual average of \$20.1 million.

When cross-referencing the data collected in this mapping with information from other sources, including d-portal.org, the estimates aligned closely with the total amounts. By selecting relevant categories on d-portal.org, such as Free Flow of Information, Media and Free Flow of Information, and Radio/Television/Print/Media, for the period 2020–2024, the funding amounted to a total of \$77.3 million. USAID was identified as the largest donor in the region, contributing over \$52 million (approximately

70% of the total support), followed by Sweden with close to \$10 million, the EU with \$8.1 million, and other countries collectively contributing up to \$5 million.

Sources of funding

Based on the mapped information⁵, the EU (through the European Commission or the EU delegation in the host country) funds the largest number of programmes in the region (18 out of 58). The US funds 14 programmes (two through USAID/Washington and the remaining via US Embassies and USAID Missions in the region), followed by Sweden with 12 programmes. Other funders include UNESCO, the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and others. Four programmes are funded from joint funds provided by two donors.

Comparing this data with the funding amounts and overall budget section above, as well as information from d-portal.org, it can be concluded that USAID tends to award fewer larger grants, while the EU provides media assistance either through more smaller programmes or as part of larger ones, such as those from the European Commission's Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations grants.

Implementing organisations

In terms of implementing organisations⁶ six out of 41 programmes are delivered by implementing organisations based in the same country as the donor. Adding up programmes implemented by national NGOs and media based in the region reveals that these account for 43.9% of the programmes. In some cases where we were not able to identify implementers, the calls for funding suggest that donors may also be providing direct funding to national organisations for discrete projects or activities.

Regarding the amount of project funding allocated to implementing organisations, the available data shows that locally-based organisations receive 34% of donor funding.

⁴ more details available in Appendix, Table 1, below.

⁵ more information available in Annex, Table 2 below.

⁶ or more information please see Annex, Tables 3 and 4

CONCLUSIONS

This mapping was conducted in preparation for [the GFMD Regional Meeting for the wider European region](#), where one of the main focuses of discussion were the [OECD Development Cooperation Principles on Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment](#). These Principles aspire to encourage development cooperation providers and other actors to improve the relevance and effectiveness of their support and policies in preserving, protecting, and promoting public interest media and information integrity in the following ways:

1. Ensure that assistance does no harm to public interest media.
2. Increase financial and other forms of support.
3. Take a whole-of-system perspective.
4. Strengthen local leadership and ownership.
5. Improve coordination of support.
6. Invest in knowledge, research, and learning.

In analysing the mapping, and in preparing its conclusions, we examined how the current snapshot of media assistance in the Western Balkans compares with the OECD Principles as a framework, and if the existing themes and modalities of support are in line with these guidelines.

For example, when considering Principle 1 ([Ensure that assistance does no harm to public interest media](#)), we note the significant number of programmes where media are used to achieve other development goals (encourage dialogue, increase environmental reporting, report on cultural heritage). The Principles encourage donors to ensure that, when implementing this type of support, it does not do harm by “endeavouring that any use of media to achieve other development goals (“media for development”) upholds journalistic standards of quality, professionalism, and independence, and supports core media resilience.”⁷

In relation to Principle 4: [Strengthen local leadership and ownership](#) we found that nearly 44% of programmes appear to be implemented via country-based NGOs and media. We would need to conduct further research and analysis to identify the level of participation of local organisations in needs assessment and programme design. Although national NGOs and media based in the region make up 43.9% of the implementing organisations,

available data suggests that international organisations are awarded larger amounts to implement programmes (66%) and locally-based organisations receive 34% of donor funding for programme implementation. That NEED awards direct grants to locally and regionally based NGOs and media demonstrates a positive trend towards empowering local ownership.

However, the majority of funding appears to support project-based programmatic activities (only 5.3% has been identified as core funding), indicating a lack of core support programmes for media and journalism.

In relation to Principle 5: [Improve coordination of support to the media and information environment](#), we note that only 4 out of 58 mapped programmes are funded by more than one donor organisation, indicating that joint or pooled funding would be a potential direction for donors to consider in order to use the available funding more effectively and efficiently.

Observing that nearly one-third of mapped projects are regional, we point out one of the comments made by a local donor representative at the GFMD [“Consultations on the principles for effective media development” meeting organised in Belgrade, Serbia on April 14, 2022](#), reflecting on the donor practise to award regional programmes:

“Determining the same priorities for the six different countries and different contexts is not efficient, some priorities can be relevant for some but not for all countries in the region. In these situations, local offices implement programmes because they were selected as regional priorities even though they are not likely to be effective”.

We would suggest that donors ensure that regional programmes are sufficiently flexible to capture the specifics of each of the countries. This would also be in alignment with Principle 4, which recommends contextualising “risks and opportunities for public interest media and information integrity, tailoring assistance to each individual context” and ensuring that assistance responses remain grounded in local realities, bottom-up, evidence-based, and demand-driven, with audiences and the public interest always at the centre.”

⁷ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/76d82856-en.pdf?expires=1718282980&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=ABC2688139F4D7F4147411A084001B15>, page 8

APPENDIX

The appendices below provide information based on the collaborative mapping gathered by the GFMD, its partners, and members working in the Western Balkans. All figures are given in the currency provided by original source.

Table 1 - Amounts of funding per country/region

Table 2 - Implementing organisations/amount of funding they administer

Table 3 - Implementing organisations/number of programmes they administer

Table 4 - Sources of funding/number of programmes

County/region/programme	Amounts of funding awarded/allocated	Funding information
Albania		
Call for Investigative Stories on Human Rights Abuses	\$1,200	available for subgranting
Cooperation Swedish Radio MDO 2023-2027	Per year \$395,738 Total \$1,978,690	total programme budget
INSPIRES Albania: Grants for countering mis- and disinformation through production of quality content	\$15,000	available for subgranting
Media Literacy Program	\$300,000	total programme budget
Media Training Program	\$100,000	total programme budget
Project funding: SI Creative Partnerships Programme	\$20,776	total programme budget
Support to BIRN Albania 2021-2025	\$640,629	total programme budget
Support to Civil Society Organisations in Albania Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2022 and Thematic Programme for Human Rights and Democracy Hr&D 2022/ 2023	€5.000.000	total programme budget
Bosnia and Herzegovina		
Center for Investigative Journalism 2020-2023 core support	\$1,085,812	total programme budget
Jurno Justice-Defending Free Speech in Journalism (2024-2025)	\$48,000	total programme budget
Law and Media - Together in Protection of Freedom of Expression	€32.000	total programme budget
Project funding: SI Creative Partnerships Programme	\$25,661	total programme budget
Social Media 4 Peace (2021-24)	\$400,000	total programme budget
The Good Story Fund	\$2,950 individuals \$15,000 media organisations	available for subgranting
U.S. Speaker and Specialist Grants Program	\$50,000	total programme budget
Montenegro		
2024 Media Professionalization Assistance Program	total funding \$305,000 Award Ceiling: \$70,000 Award Floor: \$30,000	total programme budget / available for subgranting

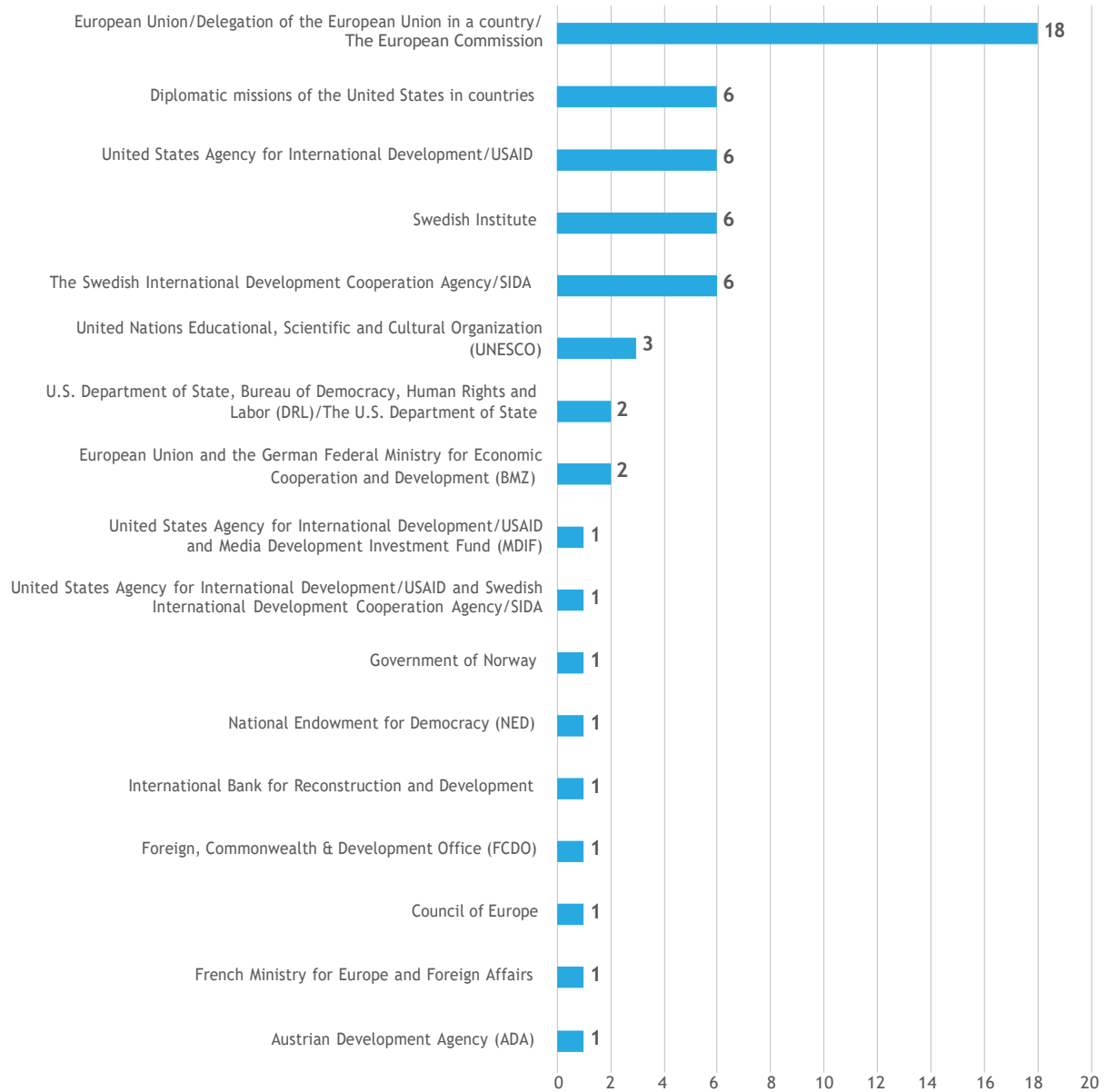
County/region/programme	Amounts of funding awarded/allocated	Funding information
Open Call for Proposals - Society Against Corruption in Montenegro	Maximum grant amount \$12,430	available for subgranting
Project funding: SI Creative Partnerships Programme	\$22,198	total programme budget
Kosovo		
Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for Kosovo	€4.420.000	total programme budget
Diversifying Voices in Journalism	up to €11,000	available for subgranting
Independent Media Program	total \$500,000 award ceiling \$70,000	total programme budget / available for subgranting
Project funding: SI Creative Partnerships Programme	\$131,747	total programme budget
Republic of North Macedonia		
BIRN Support to investigative journalism 2022-2025	\$1,309,892	total programme budget
EU Support to Civil Society and Media Networks/Platforms for advancing the sector reforms and EU accession of the Republic of North Macedonia	€1.600.000	total programme budget
EU Support to Civil Society and Media Organisations in the Republic of North Macedonia	€3.690.000	total programme budget
Horizontal Facility II Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in North Macedonia	Total of €12.000 max. €2.000 per project proposal	available for subgranting
Project funding: SI Creative Partnerships Programme	\$17,157	total programme budget
Serbia		
BOS programme for youth and media CS for EU	\$2,331,845	total programme budget
BOS Serbia 2023-2026 CS for democracy and EU	\$2,077,624	total programme budget
Media Innovation Activity	\$13,902,274	total programme budget
Poziv za prijavljivanje za Program malih medijskih grantova (call for small media grants)	\$2,000-15,000	available for subgranting
Project funding: SI Creative Partnerships Programme	\$225,840	total programme budget
Strengthening mechanisms for providing legal assistance to journalists in Vojvodina (2024-2025)	\$47,000	available for subgranting
Support to the independent media sector in Serbia	€1.000.000	total programme budget

County/region/programme	Amounts of funding awarded/allocated	Funding information
Western Balkans		
Balkan Productions	€ 625.000	total programme budget
BMAP FORWARD Joint Advocacy Grants	up to \$10,000	available for subgranting
Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey - Phase 2 (2019-2023)	€ 2.000.000	total programme budget
Building Trust in Media in South-East Europe: Support to Journalism as a Public Good (2023-2026)	€ 3.000.000	total programme budget
CLIMB Innovative products and approaches to increase media literacy	\$500 to \$3,000	available for subgranting
Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans - CC4WBs	up to €25.000	available for subgranting
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor DRL Balkans Media and Civil Society	\$2,550,000	total programme budget
Media for Change: Strengthening an Independent Media Environment in the Western Balkans	£4,900,000	total programme budget
SafeJournalists Network	€ 1.444.000	total programme budget
SustainMedia Programme	up to €20,000	available for subgranting

Implementing organisation (for programmes where total funding amounts are available)	USD
International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX)	\$13,902,274
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (3 projects)	\$5,945,100
Belgrade Open School (2 projects)	\$4,409,469
British Council; Thomson Foundation; Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN); INTRAC	\$4,135,281,5
Other public entities in donor country	\$1,978,690
BIRN (2 projects)	\$1,950,521
regional journalists associations	\$1,601,424,88
CIN	\$1,085,812
Canal France International (CFI)	\$693,137,5
Donor country-based NGO (6 projects)	\$443,379
Vasa Prava Association	\$48,000
Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina	\$47,000
Press and Online Media Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina	\$35,488,64

Implementing organisation	Number of programmes
Donor country-based NGO	6
Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)	5
Internews	4
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	3
Belgrade Open School	2
National and regional NGOs	2
German Development Agency (GIZ); DW Akademie; Internews	2
Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN); Civic Alliance (CA)	1
British Council; Thomson Foundation; Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN); INTRAC	1
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)	1
Canal France International (CFI)	1
Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN)	1
Consortium of fact-checking organisations, SEECheck Network	1
Internews / FHI 360	1
International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX)	1
Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF)	1
Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina	1
Vasa Prava Association	1
Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia	1
Other public entities in donor country	1
Press and Online Media Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
regional journalists associations	1
UNESCO; British Council; Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)	1
Centar za promociju civilnog društva - CPCD; Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM); Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM)	1

Number of programmes



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