

Executive summary:

ALBANIA



Key Country Facts

Population	2,886,026
% of unemployed	13.5 %
Net income per person (average) EUR	310.2 EUR
Number of local communities (municipalities/cities)	61
Number of local media	104 (radio, television and print) + up to 70 relevant local online media
Annual advertising revenue in media sector	37 million EUR (Monitor, 2018 est.)

Context

Number: There are 7 national TV channels, 3 national radios, 48 local TV channels, and 56 local radios in Albania, according to the Audio-Visual Media Authority (AMA). With the transformation from analogue to digital, all TV channels will be viewed across the country, thus expanding their audiences. Based on a raw estimation, the number of relevant local online media is up to 70.

Problems: The major challenge for local media is financial sustainability and, as result, media ownership and transparency of media funding are controversial issues. Second challenge relates to clientelism and polarization among pro-government and pro-oppositional media. Finally, the quality of programming, application of ethics and self-regulation, represents another challenge.

Sources of funding: The primary sources of revenue are advertising, funds by owner, funds from businesses and funds provided by public bodies.

Supply side

Mission: The majority of the media outlets in local communities predominantly report on local issues, with some interest in national topics.

Capacity: Numbers of staff range from 3 to 30. The percentage of women employed is generally at or slightly above one-half, but women managers are in the minority. However, there are relatively few executive positions in local media outlets due to the small size and their limited organizational structures. Local media staff are multifunctional and poses different production skills which quality is pretty limited and moderate. The majority of journalists of these local media outlets had two or three jobs in order to make up a decent salary. Television journalists usually act as local correspondent for national media. Others produce content for online media. The relatively limited competences of media staff at local level couples with shortage of resources and incentives restrict the quality of content that is produced by the local media outlets.

Content: Most of the outlets cover a variety of topics relevant to their communities (such as local politics, business, tourism, culture, the environment, sports, local services and utilities, agriculture, health, security and others). Most highlight news, focusing on political developments and current affairs in their respective cities. Bigger media produces most of their programming in-house but from time to time re-broadcast content produced by someone else (from other local media, national media, or foreign media such as Voice of America or DW) or rely on other sources (Albanian Telegraphic Agency).

Business model: The media representatives are reluctant to discuss their finances in detail. In general, annual budgets vary widely across media outlets but also within media outlet. Most media rely on a mix of sources of revenue such as advertising, funds by owner, sponsorship from businesses with limited public funding provided through public communication revenues. Donor funding is not used to any appreciable extent. There is limited consistency in the terms of annual budgets. For instance, general or local elections affect local media budgets due to the numerous political advertising and campaigning activities.

Interaction with audience: Nearly all media use e-mail and telephone for communication. All are presented on social networks but use them differently. Some outlets communicate via Facebook Messenger. Other have dedicated session for audiences phoning in morning shows. Only rare media (for example, Star Plus TV) systematically collect audience information mainly through questionnaire or focus groups. Other media report limited audience information. Online media collect audience information through Google analytics and other online tools.

Demand side

Key observations: Online media become an increased source of information for local audience, especially young. The data from the focus groups points to a limited use of mainstream television, radio and print as sources of information. Local communities in Vlora, Shkodra, Kavaja, and Durres Region, are generally dissatisfied with the quality of local media content. The issue of lack of media reliability and news trustworthiness is highly concerning. Both male and female argue that they need more quality from their local media so as to build trust.

Main trends and habits: 59% of participants consume local media because of the local information that they provide. 31% of local media audience stated that they do not watch TV or that there is no local television channel to their knowledge. 68% of citizens living in local communities state that they do not visit any online news website, but that they obtain information through online social media. Participants rely on online social media as it is easy to receive information, it is more frequent, fast and up to date. Also, it is provided in the form of entertainment. While the radio is listed as third and only for men primarily while driving. The radio is preferred in this case due to the musical programmes and the phone-in sessions they provide for audiences

Key problems of local media: Relatively poor-quality content that do not respond to contemporary media trends and audiences' demands. Bias and linkages to politics. Lack of in-depth coverage and analysis of local issues of public interest.

Key shortcomings of local media: Politicisation, centralisation, insufficient freedom of speech, and political pressures. Lack of funds, and insufficiently competent, imaginative, and creative staff.

Preferences: The participants declare that they prefer local television and online social media the most. People pertaining to older generation prefer primarily local television because it covers local news and to a certain extent is closer to their daily realities. Youth claim that they watch local television only when they broadcast movies. As far as topics are concerned, local media audience prefer to read or consume content related to citizens' concern, monitoring of local government activities, tourism and business, agriculture, education and culture. The vast majority is interested in more specific and targeted information provided by local media related to their community issues, local developments and priorities for the future.

