

AUSTRIA'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Challenges, Changes, and Future Directions

Not all political actors and companies have understood that independence from political and economic influences is an indispensable prerequisite for credible, high-quality journalism.

The media market's viability is at risk. While legacy media in Austria is (still) highly valued in an international comparison, the **change in media usage habits** brought about by the Internet and its permanent availability, mainly via smartphones, has had just as drastic an impact as the entry of global digital platforms into the national media landscape. Around **one-third of the total Austrian advertising budget goes to global platforms.**

However, the major media houses, most of which were founded when Austria was still considered a “**newspaper-centric society**”, have only reacted timidly to technological change and the emergence of global intermediaries and started reflecting their business models and journalistic practices only in recent times. This is partly because a wide range of media subsidies and exorbitantly high state advertising expenditures long helped conceal the **increasingly precarious economic situation.**

Now it has become clear: The ongoing **decline of print** will continue, and television will have to fight for its market position. The existence of **local media offerings** is **threatened.** The number of **community TV and radio stations** has been **stagnating** for years. Several large editorial offices have **cut salaries and jobs** in these troubled times.

The number of **people employed** in journalism has been **declining for years**, and this decline is primarily due to the print sector, where most journalists have traditionally worked. Around a **third**, mainly women, are only **employed part-time**; around a **quarter** have **additional jobs outside of journalism** and an estimated **ten percent work as freelancers** and are therefore faced with particularly uncertain social conditions.

Not all political actors and companies have understood that independence from political and economic influences is an indispensable prerequisite for credible, high-quality journalism. In contrast, there is a **growing number of openly or covertly operating party-affiliated media outlets** – most of which are supported by the state. On the other hand, digital native media start-ups and entrepreneurial journalism initiatives, which help **broaden diversity and inclusion** and adhere to investigative practices, are usually **not eligible for media subsidies.** One of the most essential tasks of the future government's media policy would, therefore, be to **reform the state subsidies** in order to **promote democratically relevant quality and innovation.**

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