MEDEMAP

Political Participation through and in the Media in Ten European Countries – Country Reports

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INTRODUCTION

The Deliverable 4.5. brings together results of a broader analysis of political participation in and through the media based on the Task 4.3. Participation *through* the media refers to various forms of users' participation facilitated by the media, while participation *in* the media includes direct involvement of users in the media production be that through the selection of topics, investigation or direct production (Carpentier, 2011; Day, 2009). The data for the analysis were collected through the surveys conducted in 10 MeDeMAP countries among media managers, chief editors and journalists representing news media outlets of various categories. The design of the survey questionnaire followed previous research steps and in particular, outcomes of the work described in the Deliverable 4.3 (Klimkiewicz, Szafrańska, Vanevska, 2025). A pilot study conducted by the Polish team preceded the implementation of the final research design applied to all MeDeMAP countries. Country teams translated and distributed the questionnaire in national languages in months 23–28. Country reports were accomplished in months 29–32, and the final report was completed in months 32–33.

Data collection proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of this task. On average, national teams were collecting data for 3–4, and in some cases 5 months. This effort required repetitive steps in all cases: composing a sample of selected media outlets, distributing the survey invitation, and conducting repetitive emailing campaigns in several rounds. In most cases, sent invitations significantly outnumbered the replies. Many targeted media workers were reluctant to respond mainly due to overtasking in their everyday journalistic work and the overwhelming number of emails received daily to deal with. Despite intensive efforts, certain categories of media remain underrepresented in MeDeMAP countries (e.g. community media in Poland; tabloid, private radio and TV in France, etc.).

At the same time, despite limitations concerning representativeness and completeness of the sample, the findings show certain patterns that resonate across MeDeMAP countries. Most importantly, these point to strong recognition of practices offering audiences opportunities for basic participation across all sectors, such as commenting on content or expressing opinions. Conversely, there has been much less recognition of a more direct involvement and participation of users in scheduling, production or strategic planning, or management.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Deliverable 4.5. offers further examination of political participation *in* and *through* the media, focusing on cognitive, deliberative and, action-related dimensions. The objective of the survey was to collect data that would extend the understanding of journalistic practices that encourage political participation of users (direct, active participation and indirect, mediated participation) in different media types (e.g. PSM and digital natives). The survey was conducted in all 10 MeDeMAP countries in national languages. The questions were grouped in three categories that are linked with theoretical framework and previous tasks of the project: providing a voice in the debate and representation; participation in the production; and electoral participation and activism. While the first group is associated with participation through the media, the second is linked with participation in the media, the last may reflect both types of participation.

Country reports reveal a clear professional dichotomy where strong support for democratic political participation is universally high, yet institutional practice integrating audience input with core newsroom functions remains low, particularly in some types of the news media.

As regards the first aspect of this study – *providing a voice in the debate and representation* – respondents broadly confirmed that newsrooms frequently offer opportunities for basic audience's participation, such as commenting on content or expressing opinions. In their views, the organisation of debates involving the public proved much less frequent. Interestingly though, commenting and debates take place in less organized and institutional forms, often via social media, where it has a more spontaneous and less moderated character. However, it also brings risks, particularly related to misinformation, which might potentially draw newsrooms' attention away from interaction with the public and force them to focus more on fact-checking and raising internal standards.

Regarding the second aspect of the study – *participation of audience in production* – the data reveal a clear contrast between media organizations' aspirations and their limited willingness to share control over production and strategic processes. Particularly, *commitment to audience participation in strategic planning and management* seemed to be the least mentioned practice ranging from 29.6% in Ireland to 1.5% in Slovenia. Also, respondents seem to give a relatively low degree of agency to the audience in terms of participation in production (with some exceptions, e.g. Ireland). Interestingly, overall participation in production seems to be highest in the sector of commercial radio (where direct talks with audiences are a common practice) and the community/non-profit media sector. PSM in most countries performed surprisingly low.

Finally, respondents from most of the media across MeDeMAP countries show openness to actively support different forms of *electoral participation*. This seems evident, particularly, when it comes to encouraging the audiences to participate in national and local elections. In a few countries (Czechia, Italy) the rate of positive answers is similar for national and European elections, in others, commitment to the national election or local election prevails. Media coverage of democratic processes beyond the act of voting (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations, and citizens' initiatives) is much less common.

PART I:
A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

1. AN OBJECTIVE: ASSESSING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH AND IN THE MEDIA

The Deliverable 4.3. (Klimkiewicz, Szafrańska, Vanevska, 2025) described the role of the news media in political participation as complex and multidimensional, potentially facilitating citizens' involvement in political and democratic life and offering a space for both criticism and trust. The Deliverable 4.5. further examines three aspects of political participation *in* and *through* the media: cognitive, deliberative and action-related. A cognitive dimension refers mainly to the capacity of the news media to create spaces, where news users can engage in an everyday practice of "being informed", form orientation, values, collective interests, and identities. A deliberative dimension reflects involvement in commenting and discussion; building collective fronts around common interests, issues, and problems. An action-related dimension stands for users' contribution to news production and engagement in various forms of activism, including protests, creating alliances, self-governing forms, and practical aspects concerning elections at various levels (European, national, local).

The project description in the Grant Agreement Participation differentiates between participation *through* the media and *in* the media in order to point to two different qualities of political participation (Grant Agreement, 2022). Participation *through* the media or mediated/indirect participation refers to a wide array of activities that enable users to interact with the news produced by journalists and newsrooms contributors. In principle, these would provide opportunities "for mediated participation in public debate and for self-representation in the variety of public spaces that characterize the social" (Carpentier, 2011: 67-68). In other words, this can include reactive participation (when users react to content presented), controlled access (when users are allowed to share their views on air) or controlled participation (when users are invited as guests in various programme spots) (Day, 2009: 138–140). Hence, participation *through* the media would embrace not only participation in deliberation but also in political processes. In practice, these might include commenting and discussion, engagement in various forms of activism promoted or mediated by the media, creation of alliances inspired by media coverage or cooperating closely with the media, electoral participation, and others.

Participation *in* the media or full and active or direct participation on the other hand, refers to the direct involvement in the media production be that through the selection of topics to be covered, investigation, or direct production. This would reflect "the production of media output (content-related participation)", as well as "media organizational decision-making (structural participation)" (Carpentier, 2011: 67–68). Accordingly, direct participation can include selection of schedule or programme planning, management and self-management decision-making as well as autonomous production (Day, 2009: 125).

While the first form of participation builds on news content available in the media, the second takes place through the creation of autonomous content and representation. Some of these two qualities of participation were reflected in the Task 4.2, however deeper

examination enables to map the scale of usage of these practices in various media types and outlets.

It should also be added that the news media have long been perceived as a separate functional system with a high degree of professionalization, thus being relatively self-sustaining without the participation of external non-professional actors (e.g. Luhmann, 2000). Yet, there are actually media's pro-democratic functions that make them instrumental for maintaining democratic societies, thus participatory practices such as contribution of audiences to strategic planning or to the management of the media organization or production, can be seen as, in general, a feasible and sensible measure for democratizing the whole media landscape.

For this purpose, a survey (CAWI) was designed to collect opinions among representatives (managers, journalists, media content producers) of various kinds of media organizations (including public service, commercial, and non-profit organizations) to explore organizational and editorial practices that support both forms of participation. The survey was outlined to involve respondents from various social groups including women.

The objective of the survey was to collect data that would shed light on the use of journalistic practices that encourage political participation of users and determine what is the extent of different types of participation (direct, active participation and indirect, mediated participation), what are differences between different media types (e.g. PSM and digital natives) and what are differences between the countries.

The survey was conducted in all 10 EU countries in national languages. The questions were grouped in three categories that are linked with theoretical framework and previous tasks of the project. These include: providing a voice in the debate and representation; participation in the production; and electoral participation and activism. While the first group is associated with participation through the media, second participation in the media, the last may reflect both types of participation.

Table 1: Three categories of the survey questionnaire.

	ASSOCIATED QUESTIONS
PROVIDING A VOICE IN THE DEBATE AND REPRESENTATION	1. Letting an audience express their views 2. Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience 3. Taking some steps in order to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom
PARTICIPATION IN THE PRODUCTION	1. Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production 2. Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization 3. Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom
ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVISM	Encouraging to participate in: 1. European politics and elections 2. National politics, elections and referenda 3. local politics, elections and referenda 4. Democratic processes beyond the act of voting (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations and citizens' initiatives) 5. Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Sampling and Selection of Respondents

The survey used non-probability quota sampling. It relied on the non-random selection of a predetermined number of news organisations (17) and respondents (6 for each organization). The survey followed three basic steps: selection of media outlets and respondents, distribution of the survey questionnaire, and completing country reports. Media outlets and respondents were selected according to a template below.

Media outlets:

1. Public service media (PSM) (TV, radio or online news services – all three should be represented);

2. Commercial TV channels (two leading commercial TV news channels);

3. Commercial radio channels (two leading radio news channels);

4. Quality Press (two leading daily, one leading news weekly);

5. Tabloid Press (one leading daily);

6. Digital native news media (two leading news portals);

7. Local/regional press (one leading network);

8. Local/regional radio or TV (one leading network);

9. Community, non-profit or minority media (two outlets with news provision, e.g., one community-oriented, one in minority language or minority-oriented).

In each country, 17 outlets were contacted, each with a manager/editor-in-chief and minimum 6 journalists taking part in the survey. In a targeted group, if possible, journalists represented different cultural/minority backgrounds. In cases, where 6 journalists could not be reached because of newsroom's size or other reasons, a maximum available number was contacted.

2.2. The Survey Questionnaire

Please tell us how often in your coverage, you:

1. Let your audience express their views (let them speak on air or comment published content)
2. Organise public debates by your newsroom with participation of your audience
3. Take some steps in order to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in your newsroom

(by people, we do not mean experts or public officials)

Please tell us how often in your coverage, you:

1. Enable your audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production
2. Enable your audience to participate in strategic planning or management of your media organization
3. Enable your audience to autonomously produce media content for your newsroom

Please tell us how often in your coverage, you encourage your audience to participate in:

1. European politics and elections
2. national politics, elections and referenda
3. local politics, elections and referenda

4. democratic processes beyond the act of voting (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations and citizens' initiatives)

5. activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures

     Use the following coding for your answers:

     1. Very often
     2. Sometimes
     3. Rarely
     4. Never
     5. I do not know

Gender:

1. Female
2. Male
3. Non-binary
4. I do not want to answer

Age:

1. 18-25

2. 26-35
3. 36-45
4. 46-55
5. 56 – 65
6. 66+

Nationality:

1. [Country where the survey is conducted]
2. Other

Do you belong to any minority (based on ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.)?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I do not want to answer

Type of media outlet you represent:

1. Public service medium
2. Commercial TV station
3. Commercial radio station
4. Daily national newspaper
5. Weekly national newspaper
6. National tabloid
7. News portal
8. Local/regional newspaper
9. Community/non-profit/minority medium
10. Other (please, specify …)

Newsroom position:

1. Journalist
2. Editor-in-Chief
3. Deputy Editor-in-Chief
4. Manager
5. Other (please specify …)

Newsroom location [please, adjust the answers to your country context]:

1. [The capital city of the country where the survey is conducted]
2. Other big city (more than 250,000 inhabitants)
3. Medium-sized town (50,000 – 250,000 inhabitants)
4. Small town (up to 50,000 inhabitants)
5. Village

PART II:
COUNTRY REPORTS

COUNTRY REPORT: AUSTRIA

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in collaboration with Josef Seethaler and Ernest Thaqi

1. Introduction

Data collection in Austria took place between April 1 and July 18, 2025. At the beginning , personalized e-mails were distributed to media outlets, journalists, and media managers. These communications were carefully drafted to introduce the research team, articulate the goals of the MeDeMAP project, and extend an invitation for recipients to participate in an online questionnaire. The initial outreach utilized a polite and encouraging tone, aiming to establish trust and underscore the significance of the recipients' professional input for the ongoing research.

To mitigate the challenge of the low initial response rate, a first reminder e-mail was disseminated to all targeted media outlets and professionals within the established time frame. While this action resulted in a slight improvement in visibility, it was determined that supplementary efforts were necessary to achieve the required number of responses. Consequently, a second reminder email was distributed among the target group. Nonetheless, the response rate remained below expectations, thereby necessitating a change in the outreach strategy.

Recognizing the limitations of e-mail outreach, the approach was adjusted by directly contacting media personalities, journalists, chief editors, and managers via LinkedIn. This strategy proved to be significantly more effective. Additionally, the platform X was utilized to disseminate the survey link and solicit participation from journalists and media personalities. Another valuable resource during this process was the "Journalisten-, Medien- & PR-Index" for Austria. This index provided a comprehensive listing of Austrian media outlets, including relevant editorial contact details. Leveraging this resource allowed for direct contact with editorial offices, which subsequently forwarded the survey link and invitation internally to their newsroom staff. This step significantly increased participation, as entire editorial teams became aware of the project, with some offices further disseminating the invitation to colleagues or partner journalists.

The engagement of the researchers facilitated the collection of a total of 84 responses from the analysed group.

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	17
Commercial TV stations	6
Commercial radio stations	15
National daily newspapers	10
National weeklies	2
National tabloids	4
News portals	12
Local / regional newspapers	11
Community / non-profit / minority media	6
Other / mixed responses	1
Total	84

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The task that proved to be particularly problematic was the collection of data from the representatives of national weeklies , and eventually, only two responses were obtained from this category. Noteworthy is also the presence of merely one respondent in the "Other/mixed responses" group. In the context of the results from other countries studied, this constitutes an extremely low value and may indicate a low level of fragmentation within the Austrian media market and its sustainable character, where journalists concentrate fully on assignments within a single newsroom.

Ensuring a balanced representation of newsrooms in the context of the position held within the team also proved to be problematic. Out of 84 respondents, 53 (63%) were journalists, while 28 (33%) were editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chiefs, or managers, and 4 (4.7%) performed other functions. Representation of persons in decision-making and managerial positions was successfully secured across all categories. Interestingly, in the cases of both weekly national newspapers and the "Other/mixed responses" category, respondents performing managing functions were the sole individuals representing the respective category (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 84)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
		Number of responses		
Public service media	17	12	4	1
Commercial TV stations	6	4	2	0
Commercial radio stations	15	10	4	1
Daily national newspapers	10	5	4	1
National weeklies	2	0	2	0
National tabloids	4	3	1	0
News portals	12	9	3	0
Local / regional newspapers	11	6	5	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	6	4	2	0
Other / mixed responses	1	0	1	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

In terms of gender, the sample was dominated by females (55%), males constituted 37%, and a small representation of non-binary individuals (4%) also appeared, which certainly

influences diversity of the sample (see: Figure 1). In the context of age, the sample is relatively representative. The largest cumulative group comprises individuals between 26 and 55 years old (70%), and the elder cohort, aged 56–65, was also reflected in the study (11%). Regrettably, the oldest age group remained unrepresented.

In terms of nationality, the sample proved to be much less homogeneous than in the case of other countries analysed. Although Austrians dominate (76%), as much as 20% of respondents declared a different nationality. With respect to minority affiliation, 73% of the sample responded negatively, contrasted with 11% who responded positively. Interestingly, a significant 16% of the surveyed individuals declined to answer this question, suggesting potential sensitivity and possibly obscuring the true distribution of minority affiliation.

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.
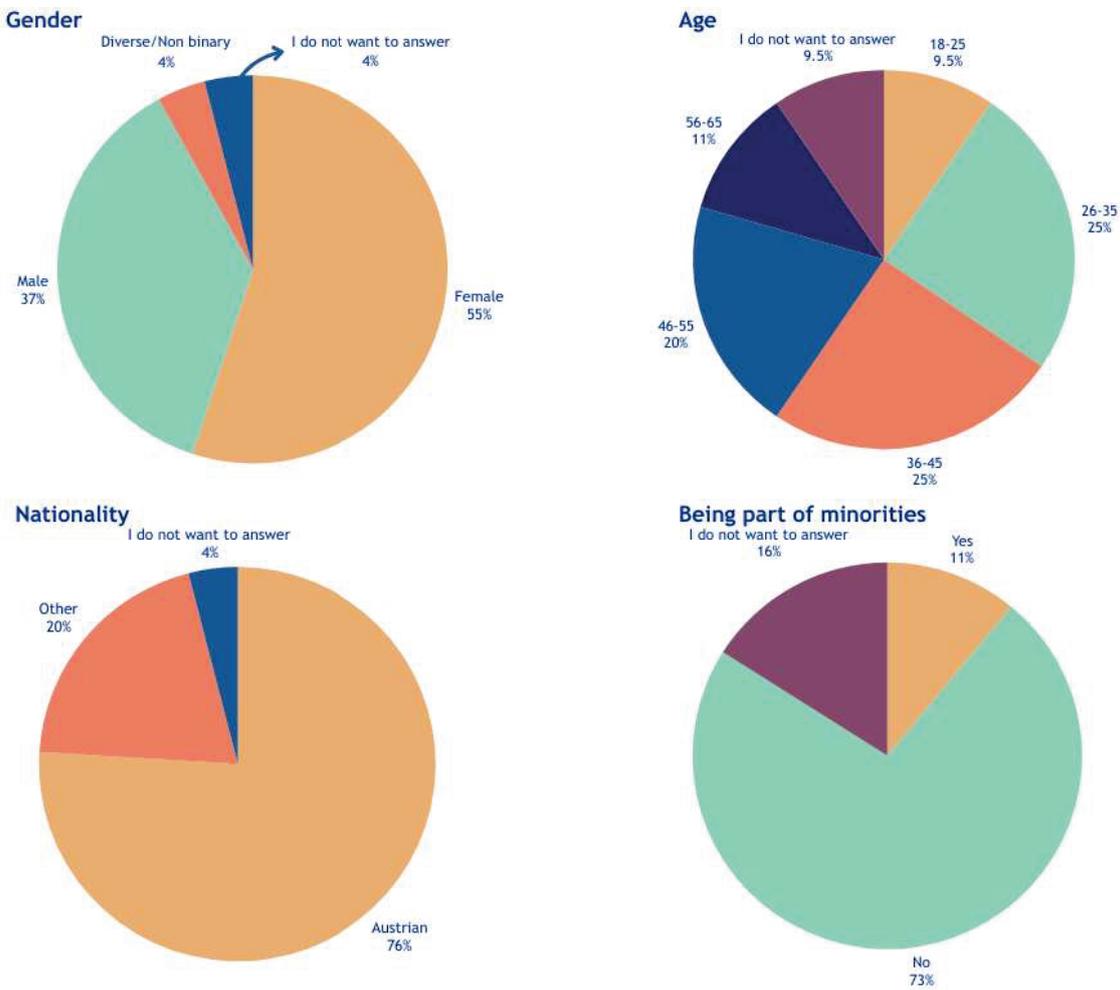
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

Out of 84 responders, 52 (62%) said that their newsroom is located in Vienna; 19 (23%) pointed to other big city; 13 (15%) chose a medium-sized town; no responder represented a newsroom located in a small town or in the countryside.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

Representatives of Austrian media declare a high degree of commitment regarding providing their audience with a voice in the debate and representation. A total of 71.4% allow their audience to express their views "very often" or "sometimes". Although 25% of respondents offer this activity "rarely", it should be noted that the responses of "never" constitute only 3.6%, and the responses of "I do not know" were not recorded at all. A slightly smaller group of respondents reported activity in the organisation of public debates with the participation of the audience: 55.9% stated doing it "sometimes" or "very often", while 41.7% "rarely" or "never". In contrast, a very large accumulation of positive responses was noted when respondents declared to take some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in their newsrooms. In this case, the responses of "sometimes" or "very often" amounted to as much as 82.2%, while "rarely" or "never" constituted 16.7% (see: Figure 2).

The level of "I do not know" responses in the context of this question category is particularly noteworthy, with the value for each question being 0%, 2.4%, and 1.2%, respectively. This also constitutes an impressively low result in broader comparison with media representatives in other analysed countries and may indicate that Austrian journalists do not perceive a lack of clarity or uncertainty regarding their newsroom's policy or their personal activities in this area.

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
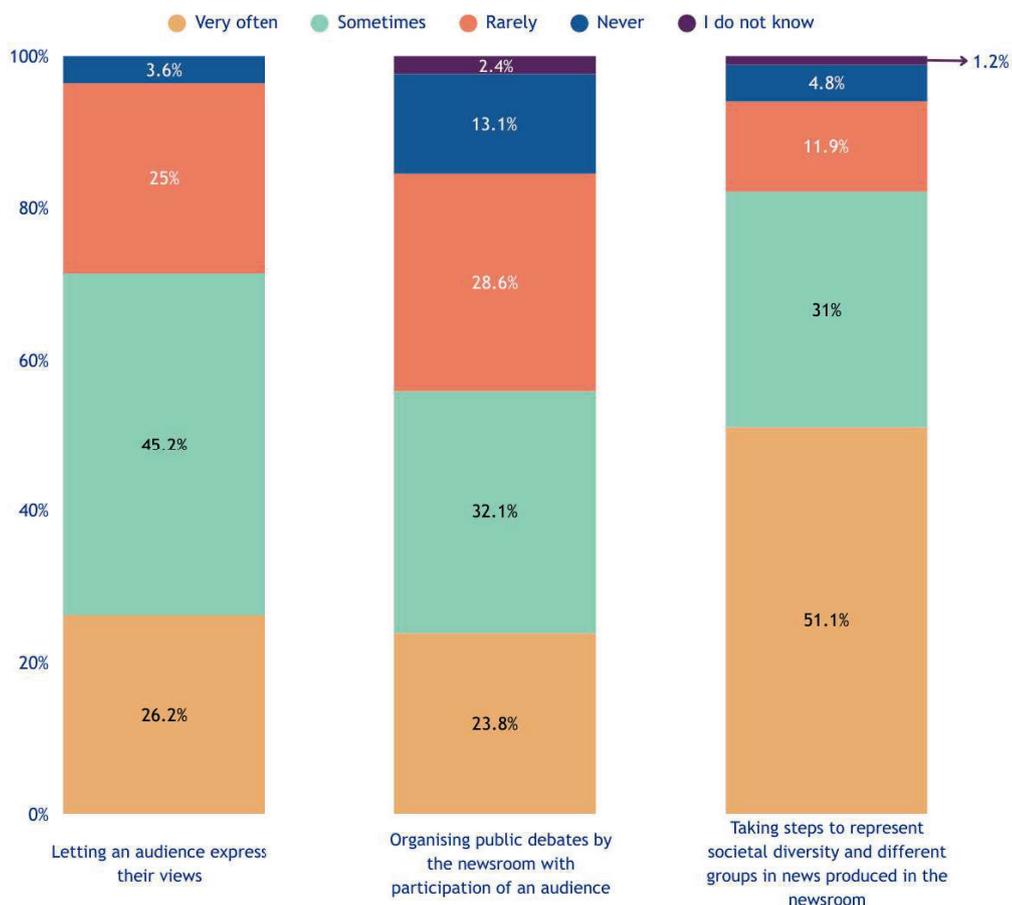
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The correlation between the type of medium and the frequency of letting an audience express their views, reveals significant heterogeneity across the Austrian media landscape (see: Table 3).

Commercial radio stations (86.7% of positive answers) and public service media (PSM) (82.4% of positive answers) demonstrate the highest reported frequency of providing an audience voice. Community/ non-profit/ minority media (83.3% of active engagement) also show a very high commitment, consistent with its mandate to actively represent and engage specific, often underrepresented, groups. Conversely, commercially-driven audiovisual and print formats (commercial TV, tabloid) report substantially lower frequencies of giving the audience a direct voice (negative answers amounted to 4 out of 6 for TV, and 3 out of 4 for tabloid respectively). The total absence of "I do not know" declarations within the responses to this question category is, once again, a source of positive indication (see: Table 3).

However, as shown by the answers to the following question regarding the organization of actual debates involving audience participation, despite the level of positive assertions remaining high, a notable decrease in respondent enthusiasm for this activity is observed (see: Table 3). The leaders of engagement proved to be local / regional newspapers (72.7% of active engagement), community / non-profit / minority media (66.7%) similarly to the news portals (66.7% of active engagement). Particularly concerning might seem a rather low interest in such activities presented by the public media: 6 out of 17 respondents chose either "rarely" or "never", which constitutes a significant percentage, even considering the fact that 10 out of 17 respondents indicated positive answers. Commercial broadcast media are less engaged in organizing debates (50% for commercial TV and 53.3% for commercial radio – for "rarely" and "never" answers) compared to their non-commercial and print/digital counterparts. This aligns with the high production cost and time constraints associated with live, multi-participant debate events in broadcast formats.

Table 3: Number of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 84)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Public service media	17	3	11	1	2	0	5	5	5	1	1	13	4	0	0	0
Commercial TV stations	6	1	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	3	1	1	1
Commercial radio stations	15	7	6	2	0	0	5	2	3	5	0	9	5	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	10	3	4	3	0	0	2	4	4	0	0	3	4	3	0	0
National weeklies	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
National tabloids	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	1	1	0
News portals	12	4	4	4	0	0	3	5	4	0	0	6	4	2	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	11	2	6	3	0	0	3	5	3	0	0	4	5	1	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	6	2	3	1	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	4	1	1	0	0
Other / mixed responses	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

Regarding the question on representing diversity, the results reveal a generally high level of perceived commitment across the Austrian media landscape. As anticipated, the public service media (PSM) open the field of leaders, presenting fully positive responses (100% indications of "often" and "sometimes"). This strong consensus suggests that the active representation of diverse societal groups is a firmly established and frequently implemented practice across this sector. Nevertheless, the findings for commercial radio are similarly encouraging, reporting a high active engagement rate of 93.3%. These are followed by news portals and community/non-profit/minority media, both of which registered a result of 83.3%, as well as local/regional newspapers at 81.8% (see: Table 3).

3. Participation in the Production

An audience participation in the management of Austrian media, as declared by respondents, appears rather pessimistic. The question regarding scheduling, programming planning, or participation in content production decision-making processes registered a "very often" response rate of a mere 9.5%. Interestingly, the level of "sometimes" and

"rarely" responses was highly comparable (36.9% and 39.3%, respectively), yet 11.9% of respondents indicated "never". Audience participation in strategic planning or management, as declared by respondents, seems to be even lower, with only 3.6% of respondents reporting their newsrooms take such steps "very often", and a significant 61.9% giving negative indications. As for enabling audiences to autonomously produce media content for newsrooms, the distribution of responses is even more polarized: 15.5% of respondents chose "very often" or "sometimes"; 39.3% report doing so "rarely"; while a substantial 38.1% never allow for content produced by the public (see: Figure 3).

Compared to the *Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation* section, one notices a much higher rate of responses "I do not know", regardless of the question (respectively: 2.4%, 4.8%, and 7.1%). It is worth noting that a group of responders where this answer was recorded consisted only of people in journalistic positions.

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production.*
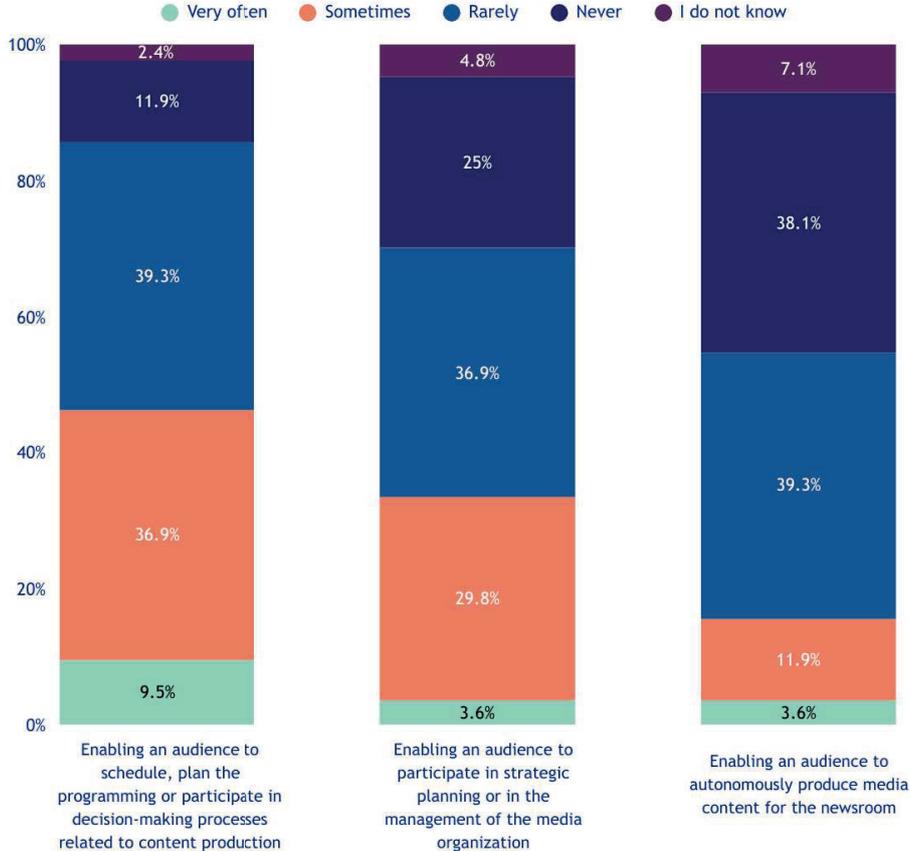
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The representatives of national weeklies and tabloids were most likely to admit that their newsrooms rarely allow their audiences to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes (100% and 75% respectively). The fact that the highest number of "never" responses came from the public service media (6 out of 17) and its rate of "rarely" indications amounted to 41% is, however, surprising. Community/non-profit media and news portals are, however, the most likely to include the audience in production decisions, reporting the highest rates of "sometimes" or "very often" participation (respectively 83.3% of positive answers and 75% of positive answers with zero "never" responses) (see: Table 4).

Similarly, when it comes to enabling the audiences to take part in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization, the data reveals a strong pattern of centralized strategic control within traditional and national media. The most restrictive environment is shown by dailies, weeklies, and tabloids: the daily national newspapers report a low engagement (90% of "rarely" or "never" responses), and the weekly national newspapers and tabloids both report 100% of negative responses. The community / non-profit / minority media is the clear outlier, showing the highest rate of strategic audience involvement (5 out of 6 responses). Despite a public mandate, the public service media reports low participation, with 10 out of 17 responses falling into the "rarely" or "never" categories, and zero "very often" responses (see: Table 4).

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 84)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	17	1	3	7	6	0	0	5	5	5	2	0	1	8	7	1
Commercial TV stations	6	1	2	2	0	1	0	2	2	1	1	1	0	2	2	1
Commercial radio stations	15	2	6	6	1	0	1	3	6	4	1	0	4	3	6	2
National daily ational newspapers	10	1	3	5	0	1	1	0	5	4	0	0	1	6	3	0
National weeklies	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
National tabloids	4	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	3	0
News portals	12	0	9	3	0	0	0	6	5	1	0	0	1	4	7	0
Local / regional newspapers	11	1	5	4	1	0	0	5	3	3	0	0	1	8	1	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	6	2	3	1	0	0	1	4	1	0	0	2	2	0	1	1
Other / mixed responses	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

As mentioned above, an even more pessimistic picture emerges from respondents' accounts on autonomous production of media content by the audiences. For the majority of media types, negative responses constitute the overwhelming majority of all answers. The news portals report the highest number of "never" responses (58.3%), despite their technical capacity for user-generated content, suggesting editorial quality or control is

prioritized. The public media sector once again surprises negatively, reporting the highest combined "rarely" and "never" total (88.2%). The community/non-profit/minority media break the positive trend, with 66.7% responses in the "very often" or "sometimes" categories, and zero "rarely" responses. It is also worth noting that commercial radio stations report the highest number of "sometimes" responses (26.7%), suggesting some limited acceptance of autonomously produced content (see: Table 4).

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

The Austrian media appear to actively support different forms of electoral participation and activism, focusing particularly on national and local electoral processes. Interestingly, the first four questions were dominated by "very often" and "sometimes" responses, while regarding activating forms of associations, self-organisation, and collective structures, the level of "rarely" declarations significantly increased. The strongest positive responses are expressed in relation to national politics and elections (75% of "very often" and 20.2% of "sometimes" responses), followed by the category of local politics and elections (respectively 60.7% and 27.4%), and finally also European politics and elections (respectively 36.9% and 54.8%). It is worth noting that in the case of the local level, not a single "never" response appears (see: Figure 4).

In terms of encouraging other than voting activities (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations, and citizens' initiatives), the level of positive declarations remains impressive (a total of 80.9% "very often" and "sometimes" responses). The disparity between the previous positive declarations and the "rarely" rate regarding support for activating forms of associations and self-organisation proves to be surprising, however. In the latter case, "very often" (11.9%) and "sometimes" (47.6%) responses still constitute the majority, yet 33.3% of "rarely" responses draw attention (see: Figure 4).

The rate of "I do not know" responses proved to be impressively low, constituting zero answers in the first four questions, and representing merely 2.4% in the final question.

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism.*

Legend: ● Very often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never ● I do not know

	European politics and elections	National politics, elections and referenda	Local politics, elections and referenda	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting	Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures
I do not know	2.4%	1.2%			2.4%
Never				3.6%	4.8%
Rarely	6%	3.6%	11.9%	15.5%	33.3%
Sometimes	54.7%	20.2%	27.4%	36.9%	47.6%
Very often	36.9%	75%	60.7%	44%	11.9%
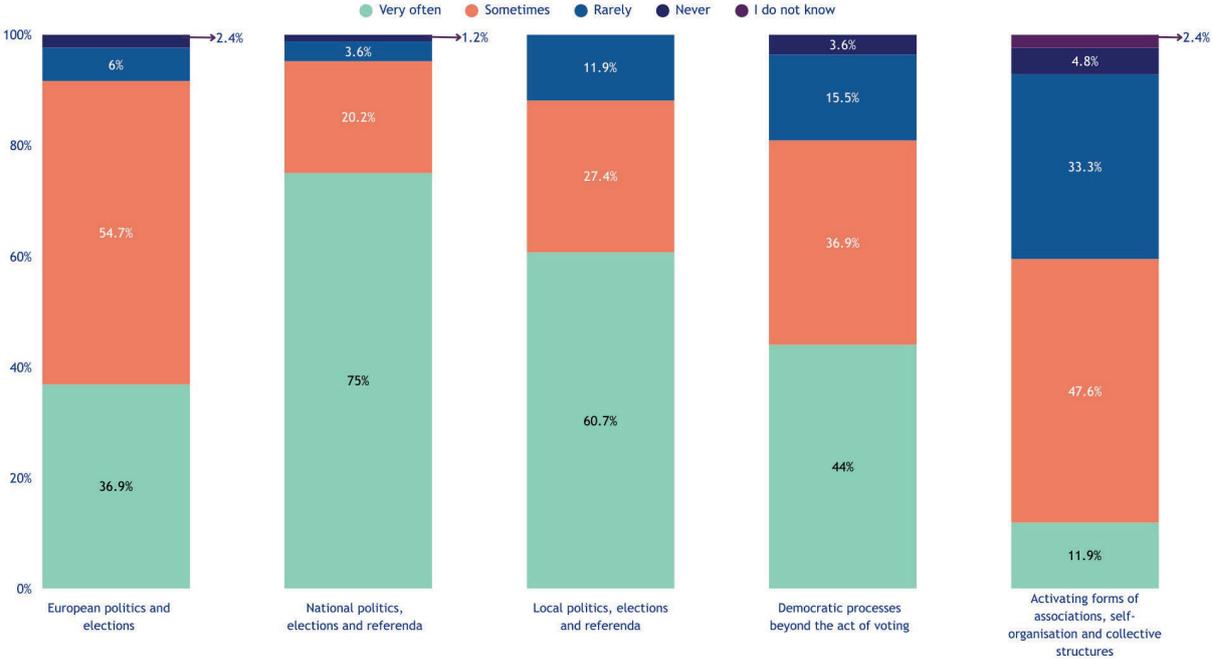
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Support for European-level participation is high, though engagement is slightly more often reported as "sometimes" rather than "very often" when compared to national politics (see: Table 6). Public service media is the biggest driver of "very often" responses (11 out of 17), while tabloids reported the highest number of "never" responses (3 out of 4). National-level encouragement is the most strongly supported across most media organizations. The highest scores are noticeable in the responses from daily national newspapers: (9 out of 10 were "very often" responses) and news portals (11 out of 12). Commercial radio stations and public service media also showed overwhelming engagement, with 86.6% and 64.7% of "very often" responses, respectively. Local engagement also shows very strong support, though it is slightly more diffused than at the national level. Particular attention is drawn in this context to the negative responses reported by public service media (4 "rarely" responses) and commercial TV stations (33.3% "rarely" responses) (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation	Total (n = 84)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
Frequency / Type of media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	17	11	5	0	1	0	11	5	0	1	0	8	5	4	0	0
Commercial TV stations	6	3	3	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0
Commercial radio stations	15	4	10	0	1	0	13	1	1	0	0	11	3	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	10	5	5	0	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	7	2	1	0	0
National weeklies	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
National tabloids	4	0	1	0	3	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
News portals	12	7	5	0	0	0	11	0	1	0	0	8	4	0	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	11	1	9	1	0	0	8	3	0	0	0	9	2	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	6	0	6	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0
Other / mixed responses	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of encouraging non-electoral activities, the overall level of support is also high (see: Table 6). The highest proponents are in this case: the commercial radio stations (reporting 93.3% positive engagement), public service media (76.5%), and news portals (91.7%). In the case of activating forms of associations, a significant decline in high engagement can be observed. Local/regional newspapers demonstrated the strongest positive commitment, recording 63.6% positive engagement and, simultaneously, no low engagement. However, the result presented by public service media is particularly noteworthy: 5 "rarely" and 2 "never" responses (out of 17 total). This constitutes a high value even when compared with its relatively good positive response rate of (58.8%). Viewing the last discussed aspect of activism holistically, it can be concluded that media organizations are more hesitant to directly foster the formation of new collective power structures, preferring to maintain editorial distance from organizational efforts.

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of Media	Total (n = 84)	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
Frequency		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	17	9	4	2	2	0	3	7	5	2	0
Commercial TV stations	6	1	3	2	0	0	1	3	1	0	1
Commercial radio stations	15	9	5	1	0	0	2	7	4	2	0
National dailynewspapers	10	6	1	3	0	0	1	5	4	0	0
National weeklies	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
National tabloids	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
News portals	12	4	7	1	0	0	1	5	5	0	1
Local / regional newspapers	11	5	3	2	1	0	0	7	4	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	6	3	3	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	0
Other / mixed responses	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

5. Conclusions

The analysis reveals a significant dichotomy in the Austrian media landscape: while there is a strong declared commitment to engagement, actual practice shows high caution regarding ceding control. Media outlets display a high degree of confidence and clarity regarding their policies for audience voice and electoral support, evidenced by the scarcity of "I do not know" responses in these areas. Specifically, the commitment to representing societal diversity is robust, with public service media (PSM) leading the charge, confirming it as an established, cross-sector practice. However, this high engagement commitment decreases significantly when moving from providing a simple platform for audience views to actively organizing time-consuming public debates.

The most critical finding is the pervasive pattern of centralized control. Traditional and national media maintain firm editorial distance, showing low willingness to involve the audience in strategic planning or content production decisions. The PSM sector exhibits this tendency as well, often restricting audience participation in scheduling and content creation, a situation which appears to originate from the institutional structure: PSM law provides for a separate audience council, which possesses no inherent authority, but which serves as the perfect alibi for not actually having to involve the audience, as that would necessitate altering the decision-making structures – with uncertain consequences. As

organisational sociology attests, large institutions such as PSM are resistant to structural change.

Finally, while media outlets strongly encourage formal electoral participation, they show greater hesitation in directly fostering the formation of new grassroots collective structures or self-organisation.

Community media are typically leaders when it comes to involving their audiences. Nevertheless, journalists at commercial radio stations, national and local newspapers, and news portals are also working to increase audience participation, though the methods and extent of these efforts vary. Generally, commercial television and tabloid outlets showed the lowest levels of audience involvement. It should also be noted that a relatively low number of professionals surveyed in these categories means these particular results are not very representative of the whole segment of commercial media.

COUNTRY REPORT: CZECHIA

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in collaboration with Karolína Šimková and Jeffrey Wimmer

1. Introduction

Data collection in the Czech Republic took place between May 7 and September 18, 2025. The survey distribution was conducted in several phases and through different strategies. Initially, journalists who had participated in interviews a year earlier were contacted via e-mail. Out of eleven such contacts, six responded positively and agreed to complete the questionnaire (several also distributed it further within their newsrooms), while five did not reply at all.

To improve participation, outreach was broadened by contacting journalists using the Institute's media lists and contacts from the event presenting the outcomes of the Citizen Parliament (WP6). The personal networks of institute colleagues with connections in the Czech media were also utilized.

These efforts brought only a few additional responses. After about a month of low uptake, it was determined that Czech journalists were generally reluctant to respond. The most likely reasons were identified as the overwhelming number of e-mails journalists receive daily, coupled with their limited time and preference to focus only on tasks directly tied to their work.

Consequently, a large-scale e-mail campaign was launched. E-mail addresses available online were collected, and where not listed, they were generated using the standard newsroom format (usually name.surname@media.cz). Hundreds of emails were sent, mostly via blind copy but sometimes personally addressed. This strategy finally brought results: by the initial deadline, 65 responses were collected.

While all media types are present in the sample (see: Table 1), the varying response numbers mean that some groups are too small for drawing representative conclusions. News portals provided the highest number of replies (18).

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	12
Commercial TV stations	10
Commercial radio stations	1
National daily newspapers	2
National Weeklies	4
National tabloids	1
News portals	18
Local / regional newspapers	2
Community / non-profit / minority media	3
Other / mixed responses	12
Total	**65**

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

It proved very difficult to obtain responses from tabloid journalists (1) and commercial radio (1). Contacts for these groups were harder to find, as many newsrooms do not list staff details. In addition, these journalists may feel less integrated into the Czech media community and less motivated to participate in research. Their absence is a limitation of the Czech survey.

Crucially, the study successfully engaged several journalists affiliated with regional, local, and non-commercial media outlets. According to the research team, this represents a notable achievement, considering the inherent constraints associated with such organizations, namely smaller organizational size, weaker financial underpinning, and generally challenging working conditions.

It should be noted that the "mixed" group of responses is significant, indicating that the participating journalists are professionally active in multiple newsrooms or media types. A detailed analysis of the survey structure reveals that the news portal is the medium most frequently indicated by respondents as their "second" newsroom or media type.

Balancing the diversity of respondents' roles within the newsrooms presented a further difficulty. Out of 65 respondents, 38 (58%) were journalists; a total of 24 people (36.9%) were editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers and as many as 3 people (4.6%) performed other functions. In the case of daily national and weekly national newspapers, as well as national tabloid, no responses from persons in decision-making and managerial positions were obtained. It is essential to note, however, that the 'mixed' category includes individuals representing daily and weekly newspaper formats who hold decision-making positions, yet simultaneously identified their affiliation with multiple distinct media categories. Community/non-profit/minority media was the only category where management functions were reported more frequently than journalistic positions (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 65)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
		Number of responses		
Public service media	12	9	2	1
Commercial TV stations	10	8	1	1
Commercial radio stations	1	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	2	2	0	0
National weeklies	4	4	0	0
National tabloids	1	1	0	0
News portals	18	9	8	1
Local / regional newspapers	2	1	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	1	2	0
Other / mixed responses	12	3	9	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

In terms of gender and the sample is relatively representative (see: Figure 1). As regards nationality, the sample was dominated by native Czechs. In the case of age individuals aged 26 to 55 constitute the largest cohort (75.5%), the underrepresentation of responders at the age of 56 years and more is visible (no responder chose an option "66+ years old").

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.

Gender
- I do not want to answer 5%
- Male 43%
- Female 52%

Age
- I do not want to answer 5%
- 18-25 12%
- 26-35 30.5%
- 36-45 20%
- 46-55 25%
- 56-65 7.5%

Nationality
- I do not want to answer 3%
- Other 2%
- Czech 95%

Being part of minorities
- I do not want to answer 6%
- Yes 9%
- No 85%
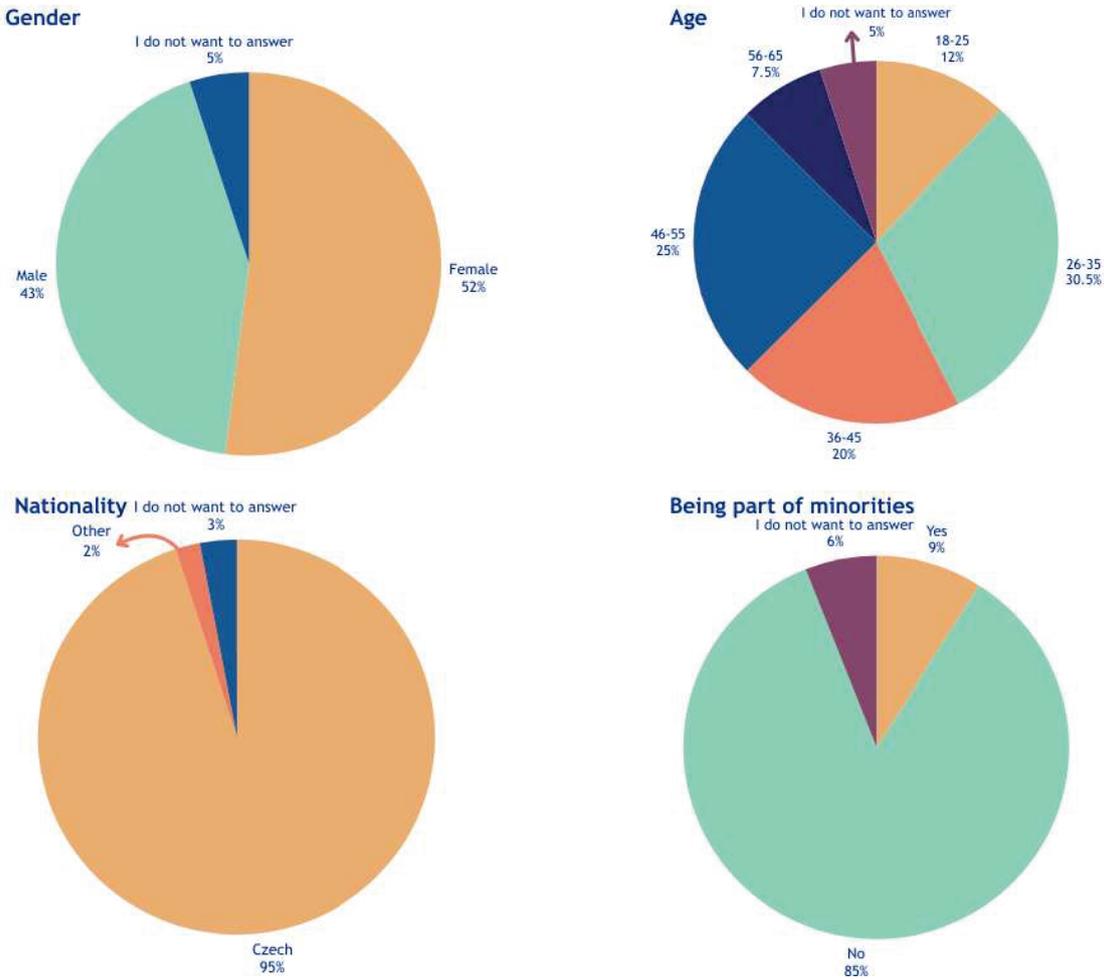
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

A positive outcome was achieved regarding geographic representation: 16 out of the 65 respondents were located outside of Prague. This finding is particularly significant considering the highly Prague-centric nature of the Czech media landscape. It should be noted, however, that still out of 65 respondents, 49 (75%) indicated that their newsroom is located in Prague.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

In response to the questions presented, respondents declare a rather active approach to involving their recipients in various forms of participation through the media. A total of 69.2% let their audience express their views "very often" or "sometimes", however, over 10% of respondents "never" allow their audience to do this. Similarly, 72.3% claim to take some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in their

newsrooms. Interestingly, over 13% have no knowledge about such activities being taken in their newsrooms; in this group, 6 are journalists, but as many as 2 remain in decision-making positions.

In terms of organizing public debates with the participation of the audience, we observe a surprisingly even distribution of responses: 50.8% admit doing it "sometimes" or "very often", whereas almost 48% do it "rarely" or "never" (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
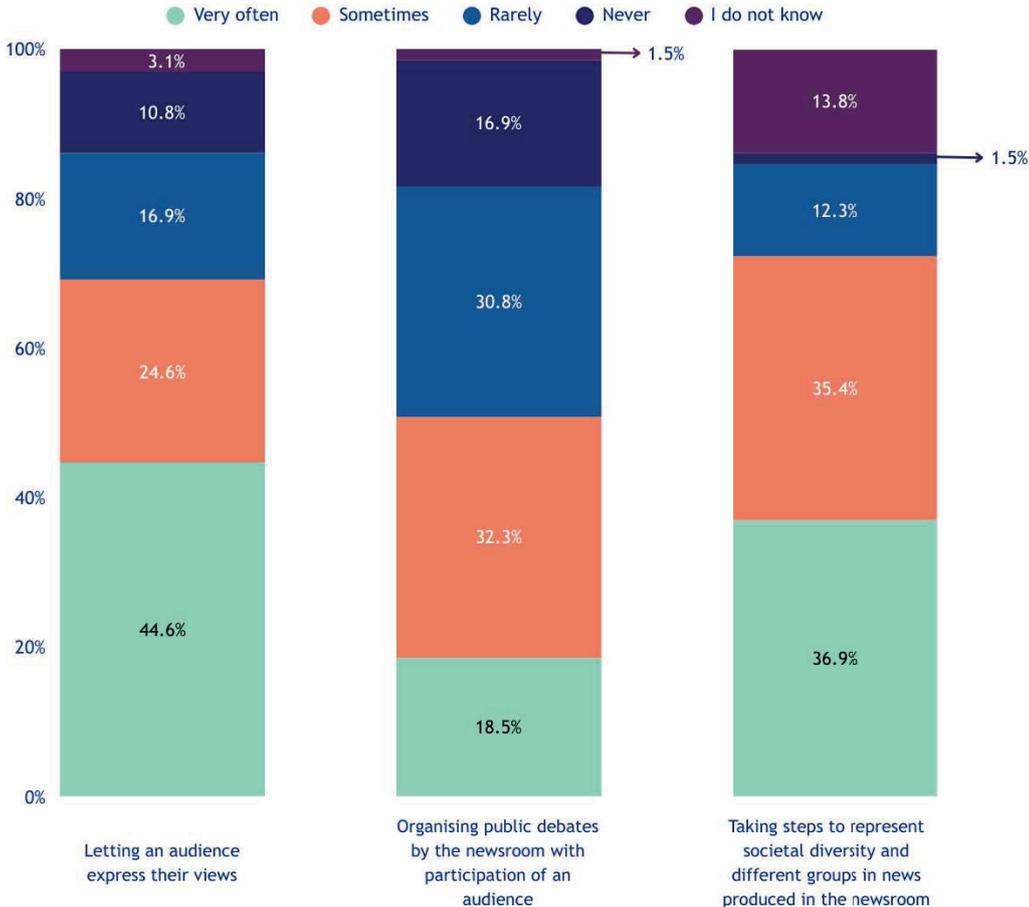
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

A distinct pattern is evident across the media groups regarding allowing audiences to express their views on air or by commenting on the published content (see: Table 3).

There is a clear trend showing that commercial TV stations and news portals demonstrate the highest and most consistent commitment to frequently allowing the audience to express their views. Commercial TV stations lead the "very often" category, with 70% of respondents (7 out of 10) selecting this option. News portals also show high levels of engagement, with 66.7% of respondents rating their participation as "very often" or "sometimes". It can therefore be noted that media outlets whose models rely on dynamic interaction and high traffic generation (commercial broadcast and digital news) tend to prioritize frequent audience expression as a core operational practice.

In contrast, the public service media show a more dispersed pattern. While 6 respondents selected "very often" and "sometimes", an equal number of respondents selected "rarely"

"never" and "I do not know" combined, suggesting an inconsistent approach to audience expression within this sector. Nevertheless, the dominant practice is characterized by a high engagement tendency in this sector. The "very often" category is the most frequent, indicating that a significant portion of public service media prioritizes and regularly implements mechanisms for audience expression.

Significantly, community/non-profit/minority media demonstrate a high commitment to facilitating audience voice, with two-thirds of respondents reporting engagement "very often". This suggests that smaller, specialized media inherently prioritize direct audience expression. However, the limited sample size (3) in this category compromises the generalizability of this finding, requiring caution in its interpretation.

The distribution of engagement among Czech media outlets in organising debates with audience participation is balanced (see: Table 3). This split shows a peculiar dominance of the middle ground, proven by the almost equal number of "sometimes" (21) and "rarely" (20) answers. This means that this media activity in the Czech Republic is neither a common rule nor a practice that is often rejected. Instead, we see a situation where over 60% of newsrooms have not made a strategic decision about consistently engaging the public.

Additionally, there is an almost identical split in the extreme responses "very often" (12) and "never" (11). This suggests a polarization within the media landscape: while some newsrooms actively engage the public (with public service media and national weekly newspapers leading the way), an almost equally large group avoids it entirely (news portals scored highest in this area).

A similar, even distribution of responses is also observed for the "other/mixed responses". This indicates that the trend identified above (the lack of a clear, consistent strategy) appears to be prevalent even among journalists working for multiple media outlets.

Regarding the question on representing diversity, the results reveal a generally positive trend where the vast majority of newsrooms (87%) are taking some steps toward diversity, with 44% of all responses falling into the "very often" category. The leaders in this proactive approach are public service media, where a remarkable 75% of responses indicate "very often", and community/non-profit/minority media, which declare 100% of their responses as "very often". These institutions form the backbone of systematic diversity inclusion in the media landscape, operating with the highest level of consistency.

Table 3: Number of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 65)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
Frequency		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	12	4	2	3	2	1	4	2	4	1	1	9	1	0	0	2
Commercial TV stations	10	7	1	2	0	0	0	4	4	2	0	3	5	1	0	1
Commercial radio stations	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
National weeklies	4	0	3	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0
National tabloids	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
News portals	18	7	5	2	3	1	1	8	5	4	0	2	8	3	1	4
Local / regional newspapers	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	12	5	3	3	1	0	3	4	3	2	0	5	4	1	0	2

Source: MeDeMAP. 2025

A concerning finding is that the results for the news portals sector reveal the greatest degree of internal confusion and strategic inconsistency across the entire sample. We observe a dominance of the "sometimes" response. This indicates that despite the digital sector's potential for rapid response and inclusion, the majority of portals treat diversity representation as an option rather than an obligation. Furthermore, this group displays the highest rate of "I do not know" responses (22%). As many as four respondents in this sector are unsure how frequently the newsroom takes steps toward diversity, strongly suggesting a lack of a clearly communicated or effectively implemented inclusion policy (see: Table 3).

## 3. Participation in the Production

The extent of audience participation in news production within Czech media outlets remains comparatively low. Specifically, fewer than 22% of the respondents reported audience involvement in scheduling, programming planning, or content-related decision-making processes. Furthermore, only a marginal 4.6% claimed to offer such participatory advantages "very often".

Audience involvement in the core strategic planning and management of Czech media remains notably weak. Only a small fraction of newsrooms reported such activity, with just 4.6% of respondents admitting their outlets take these steps "often" and 6.2% doing so "sometimes". This suggests a lacking willingness to involve the public in high-level decision-making. In contrast, audience participation in production of content, as declared by respondents, shows a much more balanced, though polarized, distribution. Nearly a quarter (24.6%) of responders chose "very often" indicating a substantial commitment from some outlets to user-generated content. However, this progress is countered by a significant hesitancy: 29.2% claim to do it "rarely" and a notable 15.4% "never" allow for content produced by the public (see: Figure 3).

It is noteworthy that the rate of "I do not know" responses remains consistently high across all questions (respectively: 12.3%, 15.4%, and 10.8%). Crucially, this group of uncertain respondents consisted almost entirely of journalists, with only one individual representing an "other" function.

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production.*
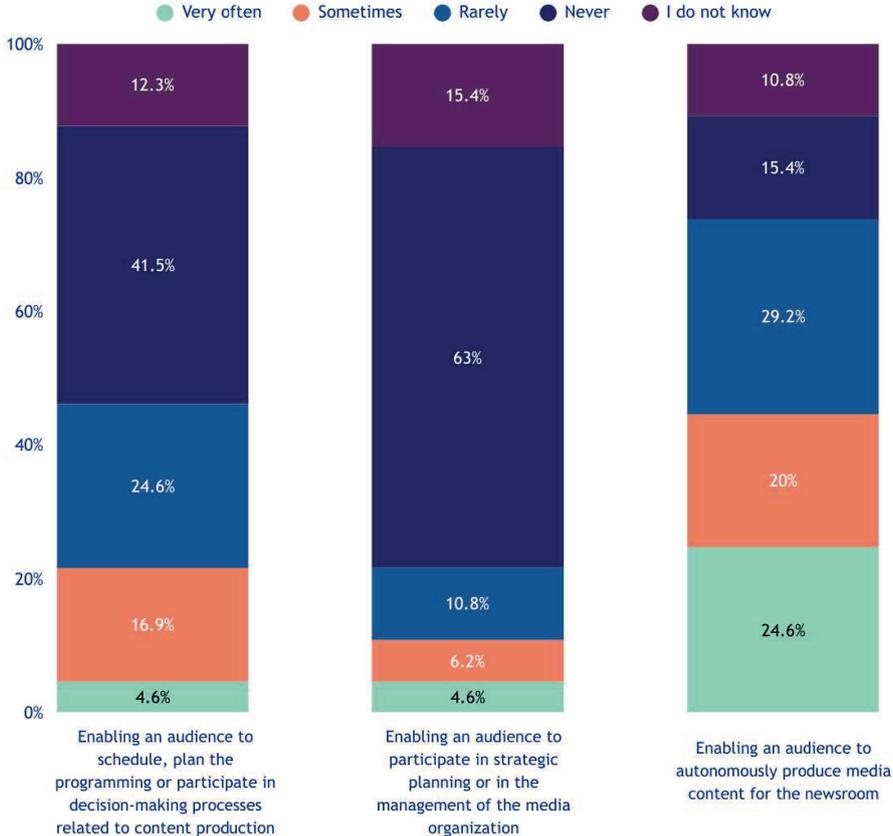
Source: MeDeMAP.

The results clearly indicate that minimal audience participation in strategic decision-making is the established norm. This exclusionary trend is most pronounced among news portals, where 44.4% of respondents reported "never" allowing such involvement, and commercial TV stations, which registered a 40% rate of "never" responses. PSM exhibit the highest level of inconsistency, registering the highest numbers for both "rarely" (4) and "never" (4), despite being the only segment to record a "very often" response.

Similarly, when it comes to enabling the audiences to take part in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization, the dominant response is "never", and it accounts for 41 out of 65 total responses. The only groups that responded with "very often" were representatives of PSM (1 response out of 12) and "other/mixed responses" (2 responses out of 12) (see: Table 4).

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 65)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Public service media	12	1	1	4	4	2	1	2	1	5	3	3	3	2	3	1
Commercial TV stations	10	0	2	3	4	1	0	0	1	8	1	0	2	5	1	2
Commercial radio stations	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
National weeklies	4	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	2	1	1	0
National tabloids	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
News portals	18	0	3	4	8	3	0	1	2	12	3	4	4	6	2	2
Local / regional newspapers	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	0
Other / mixed responses	12	2	0	2	6	2	2	0	1	7	2	3	2	3	2	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

The overall results concerning autonomous audience media production for the newsroom reveal a deeply divided media landscape, characterized by a near-perfect split between those who enable and those who discourage the practice. The highest single response is "rarely" - 19 responses (32.7%). The highest frequency of "very often" (16 total) responses comes primarily from media types that inherently rely on community input or possess flexible digital platforms: news portals are the numerical leaders, registering 4 "very often" responses; PSM and "other / mixed responses" each contribute 3 "very often" responses. The highest relative commitment comes from local / regional newspapers (2 out of 2) and community / non-profit / minority media (2 out of 3), where audience content is vital for coverage (see: Table 4).

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

Czech media outlets appear to be divided regarding the support they offer for different forms of electoral participation, with the approach depending heavily on the specific type of political activity in question. In the first two categories analyzed (encouragement to participate in European politics and elections, and encouragement to participate in national politics, elections, and referenda), the responses were dominated by the answers "very often" and, almost equally, "sometimes". The results present respectively: in the case of the European politics and elections, 52.4% of respondents claim to support public engagement "very often" or "sometimes"; in the case of the national politics, the rate reaches 55.4%. Interestingly, however, at the level of local politics, the number of "rarely" and "never" responses begins to increase, reaching a level of 40%. Furthermore, in the last two categories, negative responses significantly outweigh positive ones. For democratic processes beyond the act of voting, "rarely" and "never" responses already constitute 40%, while for activating forms of associations, this figure reaches 49.2% (see: Figure 4).

The frequency of "I do not know" responses appears to be notably high in this category, ranging from approximately 11% to nearly 20% in each of the questions. What is even more alarming is the fact that this response was repeatedly declared by four individuals holding managerial positions, which constitutes almost 16.6% of the entire decision-making position group.

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*.
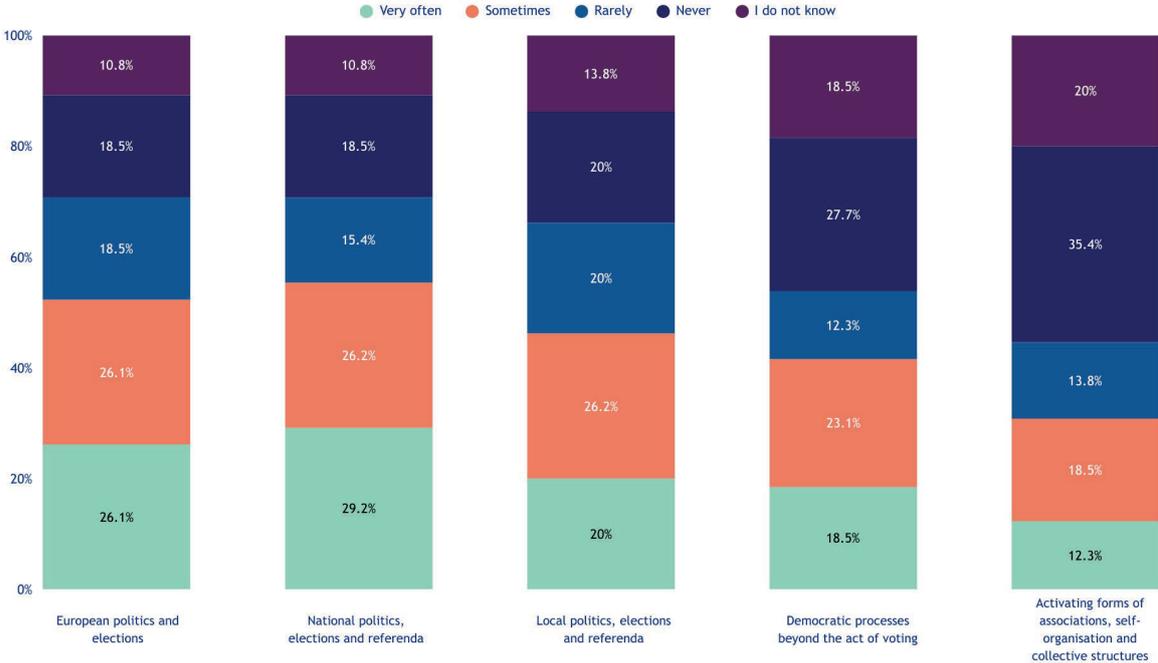
Source: MeDeMAP.

The responsibility for promoting civic engagement is clearly concentrated among traditional and public service outlets, while digital platforms exhibit strategic ambiguity. PSM serves as the most consistent proponent, with 7 out of 11 substantive responses being "very often". This commitment aligns with its public mission. Similarly, commercial TV stations maintain a strong proactive role, registering 6 out of 10 responses in the "very often" and "sometimes" categories. News portals are the single greatest source of

disengagement and across all three political levels, they consistently record the highest or joint-highest number of "I do not know" responses (3 or 4) (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Frequency / Type of media	Total (n = 65)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	12	7	1	1	2	1	7	1	1	2	1	6	1	1	2	2
Commercial TV stations	10	4	2	3	1	0	5	2	2	0	1	4	2	3	0	1
Commercial radio stations	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
National weeklies	4	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
National tabloids	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
News portals	18	2	5	3	5	3	4	2	3	6	3	0	3	4	7	4
Local / regional newspapers	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0
Other / mixed responses	12	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of encouraging other than electoral activities, the overall media engagement in promoting other democratic processes is characterized by ambivalence and significant non-participation. Public service media category shows the strongest positive commitment in this area compared to most other media types and is a clear leader in promoting other types of democratic engagement (respectively 7 and 6 "very often" and "sometimes" responses out of 12). However, the presence of "never" responses in both categories and the high number of "I do not know" responses reveal that PSM's public mission is not being uniformly implemented (see: Table 6).

News portals show high ambiguity and significant non-support in this category. The most frequent response is "never" (6). This is the highest numerical contribution of "never" responses in this category among all media types. Positive responses ("very often" and "sometimes") total (6), precisely matching the count of "never". The (3) "I do not know" responses indicate that 16.7% of respondents in this sector are unsure of their outlet's policy, contributing to the overall inconsistent approach.

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of Media	Total (n = 65)	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	12	3	4	0	3	2	3	3	1	2	3
Commercial TV stations	10	2	1	1	2	4	0	2	2	2	4
Commercial radio stations	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
National weeklies	4	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	1	0
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
News portals	18	3	3	3	6	3	1	1	3	10	3
Local / regional newspapers	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Community / non-profit / minority medium	3	2	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	12	2	5	1	2	2	2	4	1	3	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

5. Conclusions

The survey confirms that Czech media generally offer audiences opportunities for basic participation, such as commenting on content or expressing opinions. They also aim for diversity in their reporting. However, the data shows a clear and widespread refusal to support deep civic engagement in the forms of other than electoral democratic processes and in the process of a civil society activation. In these crucial categories, negative responses ("rarely" and "never") overwhelmingly dominate.

The final, overarching issue is the high and consistent rate of "I do not know" responses among both journalists and decision-makers.

While public service media (PSM) and community media act as the primary engines of positive civic engagement and diversity representation, the inconsistency of these efforts across the broader media spectrum is significant.

This tendency can be partly explained by the historical context of Czechia. Due to 20th-century experiences, there is a persistent concern among Czech media about being seen as "too activist" or politically engaged. Such involvement is often associated with a loss of credibility and neutrality. For this reason, most Czech media prefer to emphasise political independence and avoid actions that could be perceived as advocacy or activism.

COUNTRY REPORT: ESTONIA

Katarzyna Vanevska

in collaboration with Alessandro Nanì, Andres Jõesaar and Arko Olesk

1. Introduction

The data collection in Estonia took place over a period of ten weeks, running from May 22 to July 31, 2025. Approximately 400 survey invitations were initially distributed to potential participants. The initial invitation successfully generated approximately 50 responses, necessitating subsequent follow-up requests to achieve the final sample size. People contacted were selected based on an established internal list of Estonian journalists. No significant or surprising difficulties were encountered during the administration phase, aside from one specific request for clarification. This request was addressed and resolved immediately, without disruption to the data collection process.

The final sample consisted of 61 responses. Almost all media types were represented in this sample (see: Table 1), though the number of responses varied significantly. In some cases, the counts are too small to allow for statistically representative conclusions about a given group. The highest number of responses originated from the public service media (PSM) and news portals. Unfortunately, no responses were obtained from a representative of the community / non-profit / minority media sector.

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	16
Commercial TV stations	1
Commercial radio stations	2
National daily newspapers	8
National weeklies	4
National tabloids	1
News portals	15
Local / regional newspapers	7
Community / non-profit / minority media	0
Other / mixed responses	7
Total	**61**

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The relatively high number of responses in the "other/mixed responses" category is another issue hampering the extensive analysis.

Maintaining a balance in terms of respondents' positions in newsrooms presented a further challenge.

The sample offers the strongest, most balanced insight into the operations of two key groups: public service media and news portals. For both sectors, managerial responses (five each) constitute approximately one-third of the total responses (31.2%) for PSM and (33.3%) for news portals. Similarly, local/regional newspapers provide well-balanced

insight relative to their size, with managerial and journalistic roles split evenly (three responses each).

Conversely, several sectors exhibit a skewed perspective. Daily national newspapers, for example, provide insights heavily weighted toward journalistic practice, with seven journalistic responses versus only one managerial contribution.

In the case of commercial TV and weekly national newspapers, as well as national tabloid, no responses from persons in decision-making and managerial positions were obtained (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 61)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
		Number of responses		
Public service media	16	10	5	1
Commercial TV stations	1	1	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	1	1	0
National daily newspapers	8	7	1	0
National weeklies	4	3	0	1
National tabloids	1	1	0	0
News portals	15	10	5	0
Local / regional newspapers	7	3	3	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	0	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	7	7	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of gender, age, nationality and minority status, the sample is relatively representative (see: Figure 1). In terms of nationality, the sample was overwhelmingly dominated by native Estonian responders. Simultaneously, regarding self-identification as a member of a minority group (based on ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.), the vast majority (53) of respondents answered with "no". A smaller group (6) respondents answered with "yes". In the case of age, an underrepresentation of responders aged 56 years and over is visible, with only one responder selecting the "66+ years old" option. The dominant group remains journalists in the 26–55 years age bracket (40).

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.
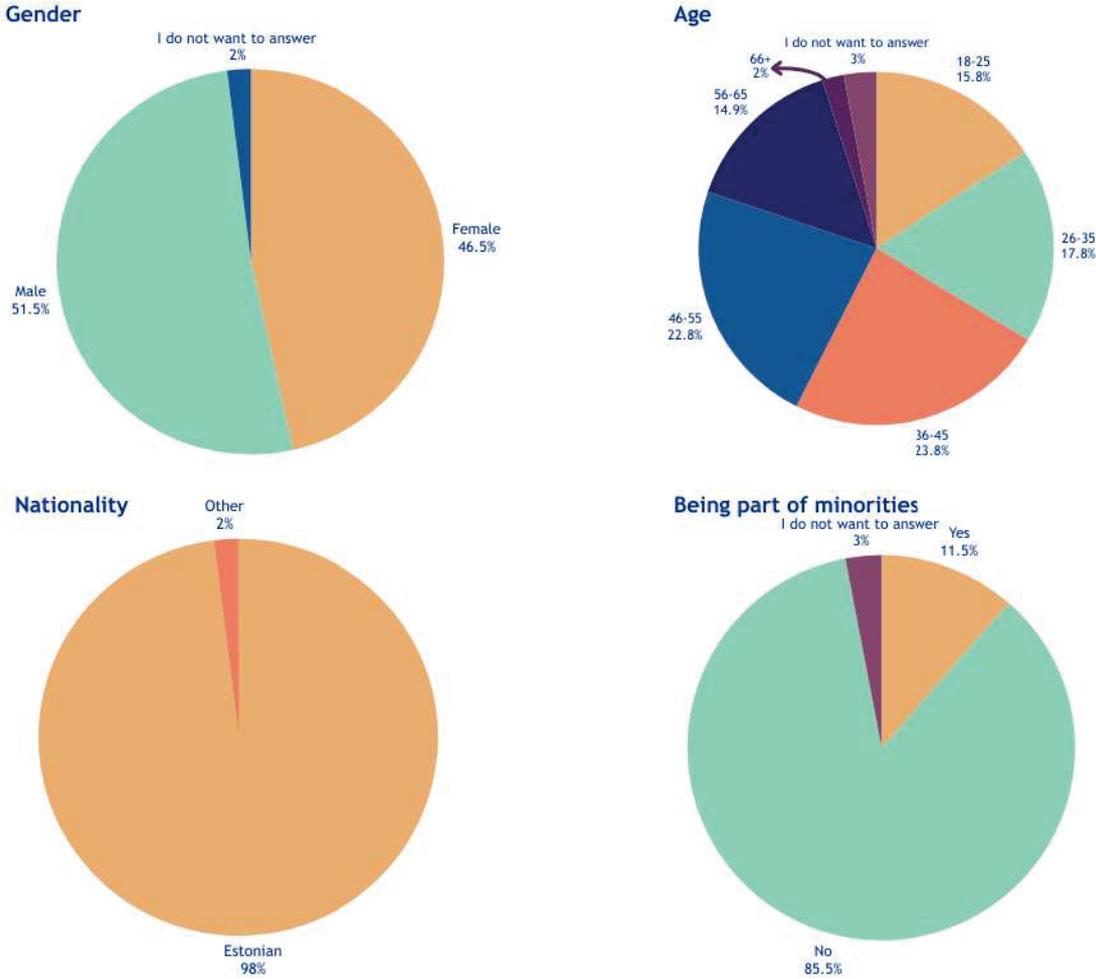
Source: MeDeMAP.

Out of 61 responders, 54 (88.5%) said that their newsroom is located in Tallinn; 9 (14.7%) chose a medium-sized town; 1 person marked a small town.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

Respondents report taking active steps to integrate their recipients into various participatory activities across their media platforms, reflecting a strong commitment to audience involvement. The data suggests a strong emphasis on letting the audience express their views, with a combined majority of 82.3% doing so either "very often" (56.5%) or "sometimes" (25.8%). Similarly, journalists prioritize social diversity representation, as a substantial 95.2% report doing this "very often" (62.9%) or "sometimes" (32.3%).

In contrast, the organization of public debates appears to be a much less frequent activity. The overwhelming majority reports engaging in this activity "rarely" (40.3%) or "never" (30.6%), totaling 70.9% (see: Figure 2).

Across all three metrics, the level of "I don't know" responses is relatively low (ranging from 1.6% to 6.5%). It is noteworthy that these uncertain responses were reported solely by journalists, excluding individuals in decision-making or editorial positions.

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
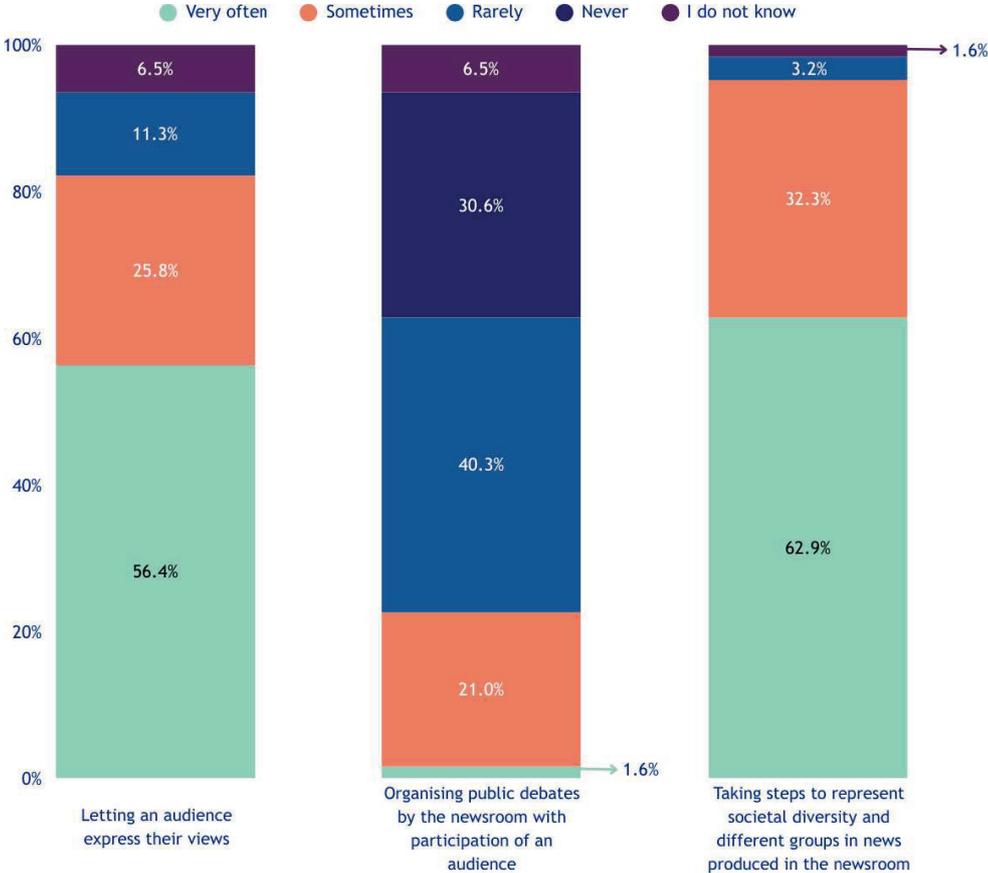
The analysis of the 'audience views' and 'social diversity' categories metrics confirms that both are treated as a high operational priority across the media landscape, although significant differences exist by medium type. The data reveals a clear and pronounced commitment among digital and local outlets. Specifically, the local / regional newspaper exhibits an extreme value, reporting that 100% of respondents "very often" facilitate audience views and 85.7% "very often" take steps to represent diversity. Similarly, news portals also demonstrate a high level of priority, with 60% of "very often" responses for both audience views and diversity (see: Table 3).

In contrast, the commitment is present but less universally "very often" among the large national and public service entities. Public service media and daily national newspapers both report 37.5% "very often" for audience views. While this figure is substantial, it is considerably lower than the rate reported by their local and digital counterparts. PSM exhibits a paradoxical high commitment to diversity 68.8% "very often" but is the most likely to "never" organize public debates (50%). This may indicate a preference for internal diversity representation over active public-facing dialogue.

The "I do not know" rate for audience views in daily national newspapers is a significant outlier and risk (37.5%).

Table 3: Number of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 61)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Public service media	16	6	5	4	0	1	1	2	3	8	2	11	4	1	0	0
Commercial TV stations	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	8	3	1	1	0	3	0	0	3	3	2	3	4	0	0	1
National weeklies	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	3	1	0	0	0
National tabloids	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
News portals	15	9	6	0	0	0	0	5	10	0	0	9	5	1	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	1	0	6	1	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	7	5	1	1	0	0	0	2	3	2	0	3	4	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Representation of social diversity stands out as the most consistently prioritized activity across the major media landscape, with no respondents in the four largest categories (PMS, national dailies, news portals, local/regional newspapers) reporting that they "never" take steps in this area (see: Table 3).

3. Participation in the Production

The extent of audience participation in production processes within the Estonian media sample is rather low. The question about scheduling, planning the programming or participating in decision-making processes related to content production was answered positively only by 25.8% of respondent (including 4.8% claiming to offer such advantage "very often"). The level of enabling the audiences to participate in strategic planning or management is almost at the same level, yet with only 6.5% of respondents admitting their newsrooms take such steps "very often". As for enabling the audiences to autonomously

produce media content for newsrooms, the distribution of responses is more balanced: 45.2% of responders chose "very often" or "sometimes"; 43.5% claim to do it "rarely" or "never" (see: Figure 3).

The consistently high Percentage of "I do not know" responses is noteworthy, regardless of the question (respectively: 16.1%, 21%, and 11.3%). Significantly, a group of responders where this answer was recorded, although dominated by journalists, included a few cases of persons in managerial positions (editors-in-chief, deputy editors-in-chief and managers).

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production.*
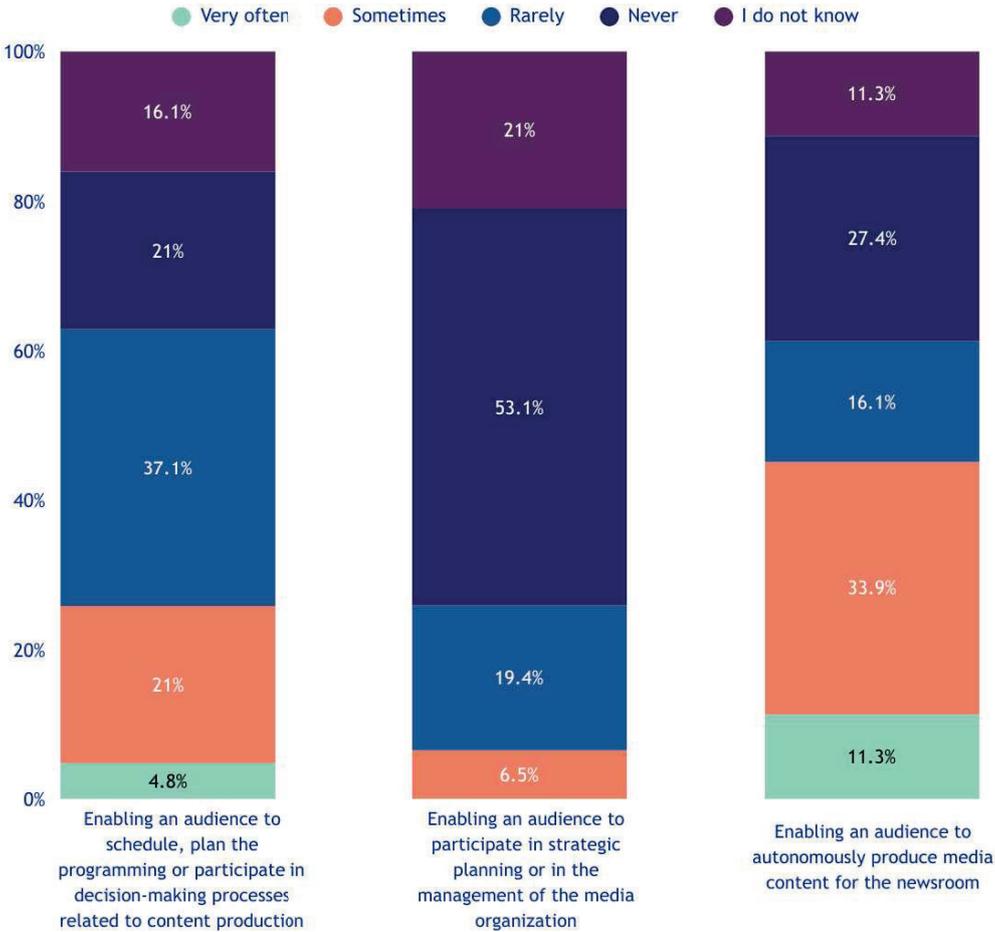
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The data reveals a stark contrast between media organizations' readiness to receive audience input and their willingness to share control over production and strategic processes. The overall pattern suggests that relinquishing editorial control to the audience remains a fringe practice, with adoption largely confined to mandated public service institutions. This control includes enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming, or participate in decision-making processes related to content production. Public service media emerge as the undisputed leader in this field": with six responses (37.5%) reporting "very often" and five (31.3%) reporting "sometimes" the majority (68.8%) actively incorporate audience input into their planning. This high procedural engagement is likely attributable to its non-commercial status and a public mandate for accountability, distinguishing them fundamentally from market-driven entities.

Outside of the PSM, the sentiment is overwhelmingly negative, confirming a general hesitancy to cede content control. Daily national newspapers reported a strong aversion: 37.5% reported "rarely" and 37.5% reported "I do not know". Commercial television and national tabloid both demonstrated a complete rejection of the practice, with all responses falling into "rarely", "never" or "I do not know", though the sample size is extremely small. The news portals category provides the most interesting exception within the commercial sphere. While the highest frequency is "rarely" (53.3%), the combination of two "very often" and four "sometimes" responses (40% in total) indicates that some degree of structured audience input does exist (see: Table 4).

Similarly, when it comes to enabling audiences to take part in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization, the dominant response is "never", with the highest absolute counts observed in the public service media, news portals, and local / regional newspapers sectors (reporting 7 out of 16, 6 out of 15, and 6 out of 7, respectively).

Overall, the results reveal a near-absolute refusal across all Estonian media types in the sample to share governance or managerial authority (see: Table 4).

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

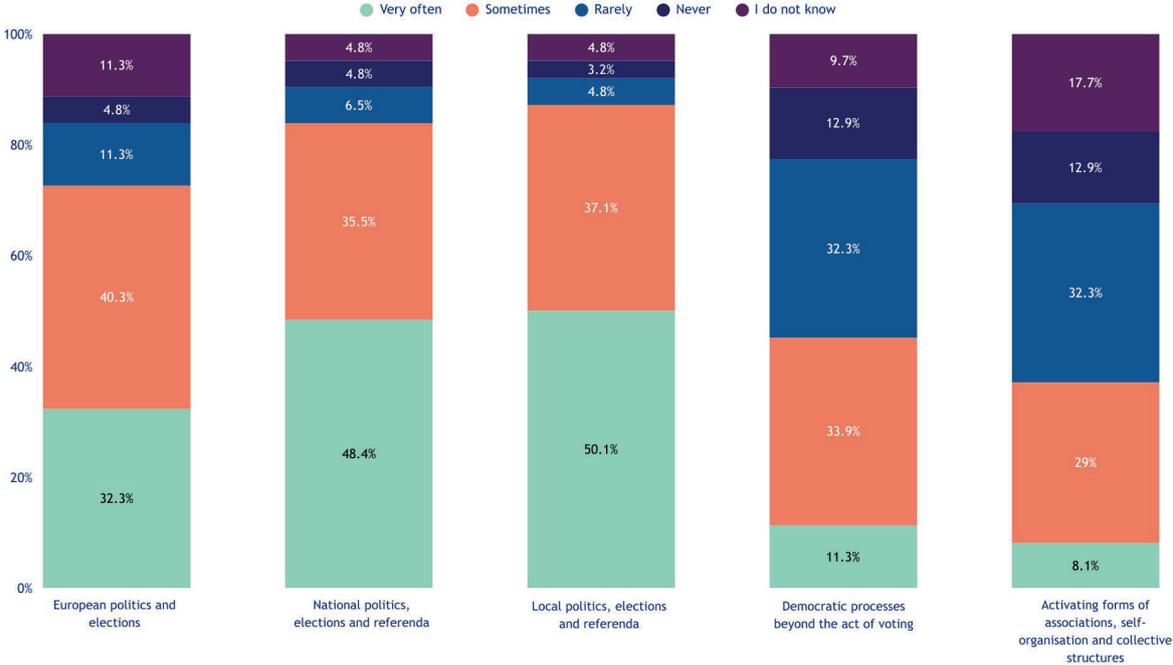| Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 61)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	16	6	5	2	1	2	0	2	4	7	3	2	5	2	6	1
Commercial TV stations	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Commercial radio stations	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
National daily newspapers	8	0	1	3	1	3	0	0	2	3	3	1	3	1	1	2
National weeklies	4	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	2	2	0	0
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	15	2	4	8	0	1	0	1	3	6	5	2	3	4	4	2
Local / regional newspapers	7	0	2	4	1	0	0	0	1	6	0	1	5	1	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	7	0	2	1	2	2	0	0	1	5	1	0	4	0	1	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

A slightly more encouraging scenario emerges concerning the enablement of autonomous audience content production for news organizations. Across all major media categories examined, the proportion reporting "very often" for facilitating such independent production is consistently modest, registering within the narrow range of 12.5% to 14.3%. The activity is generally relegated to an occasional practice, with public service media (6 out of 16 respondents answering with "never") and news portals (4 out of 15 answers "never") often outright rejecting it. The notable exceptions are local/regional newspapers, which have clearly formalized this activity as a regular practice, showing zero "never" and "I do not know" responses. This is a practice that is "sometimes" accepted (71.4% of responses) rather than "very often" enabled (14.3%) (see: Table 4).

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

In the case of the surveyed representatives of the Estonian media, a specific dualism is evident within the context of this category. On one hand, journalists declare a very active support for different forms of electoral participation and activism, as evidenced by the proportion of "very often" or "sometimes" responses in the first three categories (registering 72.6%, 83.9%, and 87.1% respectively). However, the enormous decline in declared engagement regarding the final two categories is surprising, where responses of "rarely", "never", and "I do not know" clearly predominate (totaling 54.9% and 62.9% respectively). Furthermore, concerning the issue of activating forms of associations, self-organisation, and collective structures, attention is also drawn to the very high percentage of "I do not know" responses (17.7%), which signifies that nearly one in five respondents lacks knowledge or experience regarding their newsroom's engagement in such activities, a group that also included one person in a managerial position.

We therefore observe a rather surprising disparity between actively encouraging participation in politics, elections, and referenda, at the European, national, and local levels, and the journalists' low awareness and poor encouragement of other than voting activities (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations, and citizens' initiatives), as well as activating forms of associations, self-organisation, and collective structures (see: Figure 4).

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*.

Legend: ● Very often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never ● I do not know

Data by category:

European politics and elections: Very often 32.3%, Sometimes 40.3%, Rarely 11.3%, Never 4.8%, I do not know 11.3%

National politics, elections and referenda: Very often 48.4%, Sometimes 35.5%, Rarely 6.5%, Never 4.8%, I do not know 4.8%

Local politics, elections and referenda: Very often 50.1%, Sometimes 37.1%, Rarely 4.8%, Never 3.2%, I do not know 4.8%

Democratic processes beyond the act of voting: Very often 11.3%, Sometimes 33.9%, Rarely 32.3%, Never 12.9%, I do not know 9.7%

Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures: Very often 8.1%, Sometimes 29%, Rarely 32.3%, Never 12.9%, I do not know 17.7%

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The majority of media organizations, regardless of their nature (public, commercial, print, digital), perceive their role as being an active promoter of civic participation.

The near-total absence of "never" responses across most columns (with only minor exceptions for the tabloid in national/local politics and PSM in European politics) indicates that actively discouraging or avoiding this topic is practically non-existent.

Local / regional newspapers exhibit the highest and most consistent level of engagement, specifically in the local context. A substantial majority of respondents in this category, specifically 6 out of 7 (85.7%) respondents report "very often" regarding encouragement for local political participation. News portals exhibit the highest rate of engagement in national and local politics (a total of 14 out of 15 responses are "very often" or "sometimes" for both categories).

Although based on a very small sample size (3 responses), all commercial stations that replied to the questionnaire (both TV and radio) reported "very often" across all three political levels (European, national, and local). This possible high concentration of commitment might underscore the local press's primary role as a direct facilitator and promoter of political participation within their immediate communities, a fact further highlighted by the 85.7% rate for local political engagement in the local / regional newspaper category.

Interestingly, across all three political levels (European, national, local), the vast majority of media categories reported zero "never" responses. This suggests that promoting civic participation is widely viewed as a fundamental or necessary function, regardless of commercial or public status. The PSM is the only major non-commercial category to report "never" responses for European politics. The national tabloid is the most significant outlier, reporting "never" for both European and local politics (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Frequency / Type of media	Total (n = 61)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	16	5	4	3	2	2	5	5	3	3	0	5	7	3	1	0
Commercial TV stations	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	8	2	3	1	0	2	4	2	0	0	2	5	1	0	0	2
National weeklies	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	15	3	9	1	0	2	7	7	0	0	1	7	7	0	0	1
Local / regional newspapers	7	3	2	2	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	7	4	3	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of encouraging activities other than electoral ones, these seem to be generally marginalized compared to traditional electoral coverage (see: Table 6). Public service media exhibit the highest formal marginalization, with 50% reporting they cover of the first category "rarely" and 43.8% reporting they cover second category "rarely".

The local/regional newspapers are the clearest outlier in covering democratic processes beyond voting, reporting the highest positive engagement 71.4%. News portals follow with a solid 53.3% active engagement.

Daily national newspapers report the highest level of ambiguity ("I do not know") at 37.5% for the second category (activating forms of associations). This might indicate that over one-third of national daily journalists are unaware of their newsroom's policy or experience regarding promoting associations.

Interestingly, the daily national newspapers and PSM both report 0% of "never" for activating forms of associations.

Consequently, it can be concluded that the Estonian media prioritize the coverage of formal electoral politics over actively encouraging sustained civic engagement.

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 61)	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	16	1	5	8	1	1	1	5	7	0	3
Commercial TV stations	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Commercial radio stations	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	8	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	0	3
National weeklies	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	1
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	15	1	7	3	2	2	0	6	5	2	2
Local / regional newspapers	7	2	3	1	1	0	2	1	2	1	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	7	1	3	0	2	1	0	4	0	2	1

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

5. Conclusions

The Estonian media sample reveals a profound dualism in audience engagement practices. Media outlets demonstrate an overwhelming commitment to facilitating audience expression and social diversity representation, with over 95% reporting active steps in the latter. Conversely, there is a near-absolute reluctance to cede editorial or managerial control; only 25.8% positively reported audience involvement in content planning, and strategic planning involvement is almost universally rejected. Public service media (PSM) serve as the primary outlier, leading in content planning input due to its public mandate, yet simultaneously showing the highest rejection of sharing managerial authority.

Furthermore, Estonian media might prioritize formal electoral participation (the local level being the most favored) over activities other than voting, such as activism or self-organization, where engagement dramatically declines. Local/regional newspapers consistently emerge as the most active participants and integrators, particularly in local politics and user-generated content.

Ultimately, the data indicates that Estonian newsrooms, in the sample, accept audiences as contributors and viewers, but not as governance partners.

COUNTRY REPORT: FRANCE

Katarzyna Vanevska

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1. Introduction

The survey's dissemination was initiated on March 19 and lasted until May 13, 2025. A total of 66 media outlets were contacted: 5 public service media outlets, 5 private radio and TV outlets, 6 daily national newspapers, 7 weekly newspapers, 18 tabloids, 18 online media, 4 local media outlets, and 3 community media outlets. The survey was sent to 137 contacts, predominantly comprising journalists, managers, and newsrooms' assistants. The total number of participants amounted to 91. Due to the limited availability of media organizations, an alternative strategy had to be adopted. Specifically, eight journalists' organizations were reached out, including three unions and four non-governmental organizations. It was indicated by one of the contacted organizations that the decision regarding the dissemination of the survey's link would be made collectively by the board. Once assistance was requested from unions and NGOs, visibility over the specific media category corresponding to the journalists who would receive the survey link was lost. For this reason, an additional question was incorporated into the questionnaire to ascertain the size of the respondents' newsrooms; the options included were "less than 6", "between 6 and 15", and "over 15". Among the total responses, 14 categories of media were classified as "other" than the original categories. Of these, seven were from newsrooms with more than six journalists: one local online medium, one weekly professional medium, three monthly professional media, one youth press medium, and one international press medium. After including newsrooms with fewer than six journalists and newsrooms with more than six journalists that align with the established media categories, a total of 77 participations were recorded.

It was necessary to make additional phone calls in addition to the e-mails that had been previously transmitted. In practice, the resending process proved to be largely ineffective if not associated by phone calls. . Initiating direct dialogue with journalists, managers, or the newsroom office proved to be a highly salient strategy, ensuring the receipt and perusal of the e-mail. Nevertheless, the efficacy of this process was mainly ensured through the multiplication of reminders, which were often issued more than three times by phone and by e-mail.

It was also noted that the majority of professionals who consented to participate in this study were introduced through pre-existing contacts and were particularly engaged with the ethical aspects of their field. Efforts were consistently made to expand the network by contacting media general offices. In most cases, assistance was provided by the newsroom secretariat (where reachable), typically by supplying e-mail addresses or forwarding the research request.

An alternative strategy involved contacting the client services of media outlets; these services were able to provide assistance in certain cases or explicitly stated their inability to facilitate contact with the newsroom (a scenario that occurred with one weekly and one

tabloid outlet). It was observed that media contacts are not equally visible. Indeed, despite the availability of newsroom information directly in print media, certain phone numbers were not answered when dialed. Furthermore, the approach of contacting each media outlet individually had its limitations.

Despite intensive efforts, certain categories of media remain underrepresented (e.g., tabloid, private radio and TV, weekly newspapers). While attempts were initially made to contact managers and editors-in-chief, the approach was progressively extended to individual journalists whose contact information was available. These individuals were asked to participate individually and to share the survey with their colleagues. This method proved to be the most effective and required replication with as many journalists as possible, as the requested internal distribution of the questionnaire link to colleagues was not assured.

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of mediua	Number of responses
Public service media	18
Commercial TV stations	5
Commercial radio stations	4
Daily national newspapers	7
National weeklies	3
National tabloids	1
News portals	10
Local / regional newspapers	14
Community / non-profit / minority media	9
Other / mixed responses	20
Total	91

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Finally, in consideration of the media's availability, it was observed that tabloids, private media outlets and weekly newspapers were the categories of media that exhibited the least level of reachability.

A high number of responses in the "other/mixed responses" category is an issue hampering the extensive analysis, just as ensuring a balance in terms of respondents' positions in newsrooms proved to be a challenge. Out of 91 respondents, 59 (64.8%) were journalists; only 24 (26.4%) were editors-in-chief, deputy-editors-in-chief or managers; and 8 (8.8%) performed other functions. It must be emphasized, however, that responses were successfully acquired from persons in decision-making and managerial positions across all types of media. The only type of media where the number of respondents performing managing functions equaled those in journalistic positions were news portals (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 91)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
		Number of responses		
Public service media	18	13	3	2
Commercial TV stations	5	3	2	0
Commercial radio stations	4	3	1	0
National daily newspapers	7	6	1	0
National weeklies	3	2	1	0
National tabloids	1	0	1	0
News portals	10	5	5	0
Local / regional newspapers	14	8	4	2
Community / non-profit / minority medium	9	5	2	2
Other / mixed responses	20	14	4	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of gender and age, the sample is relatively representative (see: Figure 1). Regarding nationality, the sample was dominated by respondents of French nationality; however, as many as 15% of respondents declared themselves to be representatives of a minority, which positively contributes to the sample's representativeness. In the case of age, an underrepresentation of responders aged 66 years and over is visible (it should be noted, however, that 2.5% of respondents belong to this oldest age group).

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.
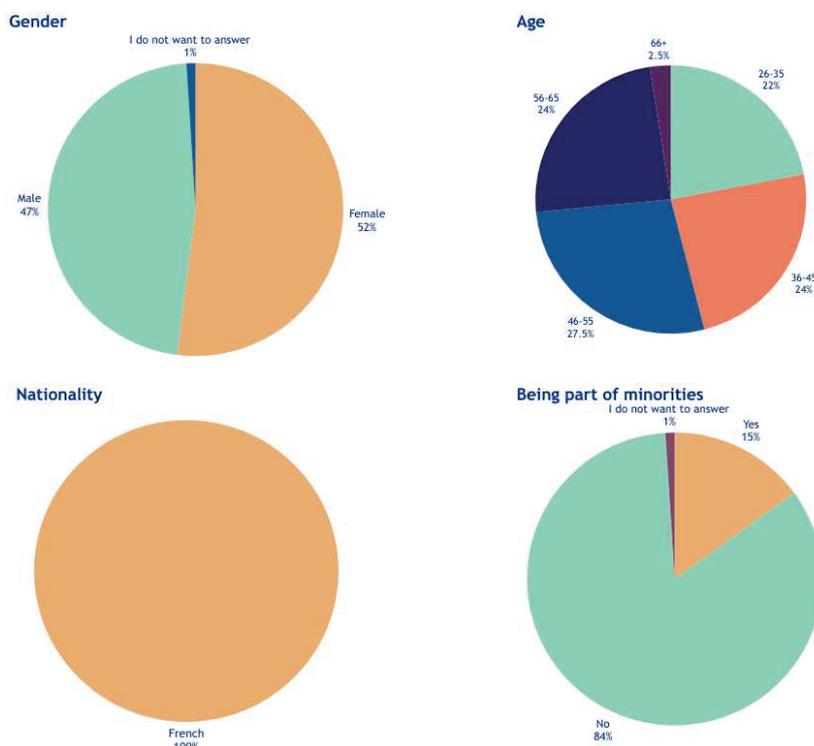
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Out of 91 respondents, 48 (53%) stated that their newsroom is located in Paris; 17 (19%) indicated another major city; 8 (9%) chose a medium-sized town; 15 individuals (16%) marked a small town; and 3 respondents represented a newsroom located in the countryside.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

Respondents declare a commitment to undertaking fairly extensive measures aimed at integrating their audiences into various participatory practices across media. A total of 73.7% let their audience express their views "very often" or "sometimes".

The comparatively lowest level of engagement is observed in the case of organising public debates with the participation of the audience. The cumulative proportion of positive responses indeed reaches 40.7%, but only 8.8% of these constitute indications of "very often". Responses in the negative context account for as much as 59.4%, with 29.7% of this figure being indications of "never".

In the context of taking steps to represent diversity in news production, the level of positive responses stands at 59.4% of respondents admit to doing this "sometimes" or "very often", while 36.3% do it "rarely" or "never".

Interestingly, the answer "I do not know" about such activities being taken in newsrooms (from all three categories) proves to be very low (amounting to 3.3%; 2.2%; and 4.4% respectively), which suggests that participatory and diversity measures are routinely embedded in professionals' practices (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
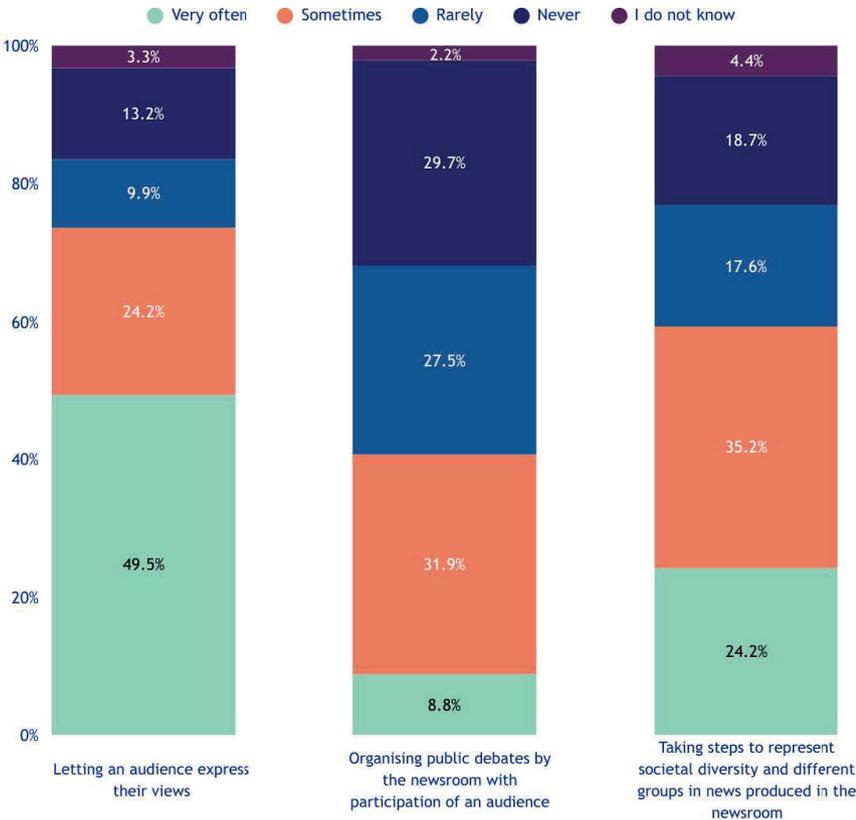
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

When it comes to enabling audiences to express their views on air or by commenting on published content, the overall rate of positive responses dominates (67 out of 91 in total). However, this commitment varies across media platforms. Three categories show a 100% positive response rate: daily national newspapers, the national tabloid, and news portals. A large share of traditional media also reports strong engagement opportunities, including local and regional newspapers and public service media (PSM). The lowest levels of audience participation are found among specific broadcast outlets and less frequent print media (see: Table 3).

However, as shown by the responses to the second question, French newsrooms, in our sample, tend to be less inclined to organise actual debates with participation of an audience (see: Table 3). Among the media showing the highest commitment in this dimension are daily national newspapers (positive response rate at 85.7%) and community / non-profit / minority media (strong commitment with 77.7% positive responses).

Conversely, a substantial segment of the media landscape reports no positive engagement (0% of "very often" or "sometimes" responses) in organising public debates. This includes commercial TV stations, commercial radio stations, weekly national newspapers and the only national tabloid included in the study.

This highlights a tendency among commercial, broadcast, and less-frequent print media to make less use of this resource-intensive form of audience engagement. In reference to PSM, 33.3% of respondents report engaging "very often" or "sometimes". Local / regional newspapers report a relatively low positive rate of 28.5%, and a high negative rate of 71.4%, suggesting that local print media, rarely execute this specific type of high-effort participation.

Regarding the question on representing diversity, the results reveal a varied landscape regarding media commitment to representing societal diversity, with public service media and digital newsrooms generally showing higher positive engagement than traditional print or commercial TV. The "other / mixed responses" category shows a moderate but varied commitment to representing societal diversity and different groups in the newsroom's output. The majority of respondents in this category report engaging in steps to represent diversity (60%) "very often" (6) or "sometimes" (6) (see: Table 3).

Table 3: Number of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 91)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
Frequency		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	18	11	2	1	4	0	1	5	5	7	0	5	8	3	2	0
Commercial TV stations	5	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	2	0	0	2	1
Commercial radio stations	4	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	3	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	7	6	1	0	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	1	2	3	1	0
National weeklies	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	0
National tabloids	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
News portal	10	7	3	0	0	0	2	4	3	1	0	3	4	3	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	14	6	5	3	0	1	0	4	5	5	0	2	5	3	3	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	4	2	1	2	0	3	4	1	1	0	3	2	2	2	0
Other / mixed responses	20	7	7	0	3	3	1	7	3	7	2	6	6	2	4	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Simultaneously, a substantial minority reports low or no engagement (30%): this finding highlights a clear split in the expressed views. The results declared by this group of respondents are significant as they frequently reflect the working style of several diverse media outlets they represent; consequently, the conclusions drawn from these responses are multiplied extensively across different media types.

3. Participation in the Production

Audience's participation in media production, as declared by surveyed respondents, remains relatively low. The question about scheduling, planning the programming or participating in decision-making processes related to content production was answered positively by 22% of respondents (including 5.5% claiming to offer this possibility "very often"). The level of enabling audiences to participate in strategic planning or management is lower, with 11% of respondents admitting their newsrooms take such steps "very often" or "sometimes", compared to an overwhelming majority of "never" responses (63.7%). As for enabling the audiences to autonomously produce media content for

newsrooms, the distribution of responses also confirms the negative trend: 18.7% of respondents chose "very often" or "sometimes"; 19.8% claim to do it "rarely"; while 57.1% never allow for content produced by the public (see: Figure 3).

The level of "I do not know" responses, regardless of the question, reaches relatively insignificant values (2.2%, 5.5%, and 4.4%, respectively); furthermore, a substantial portion of these are declarations from individuals belonging to the "other" category as opposed to journalists and managers.

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production*.
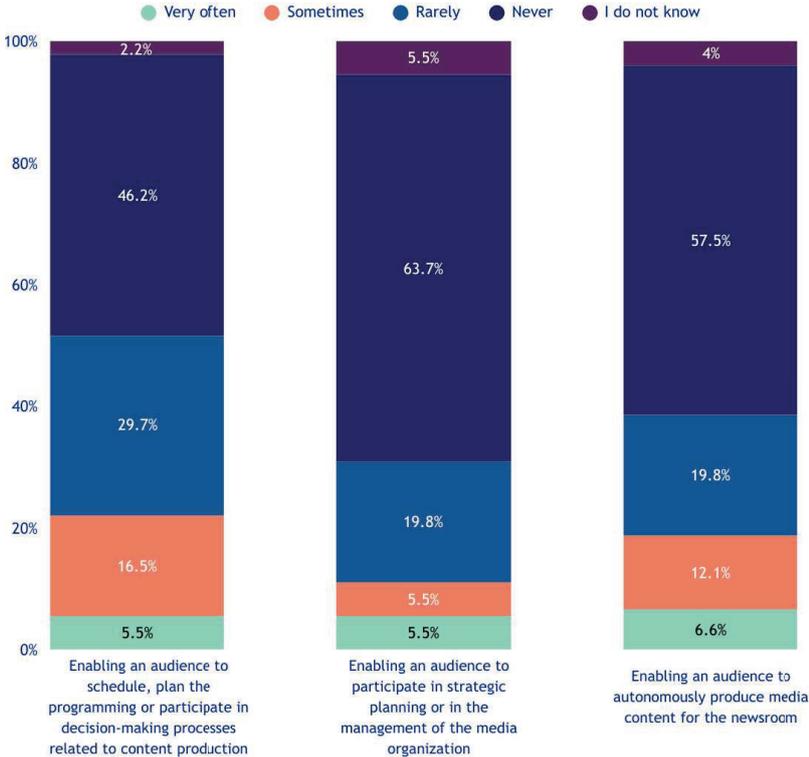
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

As for enabling audiences to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes, the overall positive rate (responding "very often" or "sometimes") across all media types is remarkably low (21.9%). These results suggest that French media outlets rarely include the audience in the intern scheduling and production of the information. Only a few specific media types show a notable commitment (relative to the overall low base) to this form of participation, i.e., community / non-profit / minority media (44.4% positive rate). Crucially, this group accounts for 80% of all "very often" responses, underscoring its unique mission to integrate audiences directly into content steering. Public service media show low engagement with a 16.67% positive rate (3 out of 18). A majority of respondents (55.5%) stated they "never" allow this level of participation. This might be related to the fact that in France, PSM are not clearly mandated to encourage audience participation in media content. Their four core missions are information, culture, representation, and the promotion of democratic values (see: Table 4).

Similarly, when it comes to enabling the audiences to take part in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization, the dominant response is "never" (58 out of 91). Public service media report an extremely low positive rate (5.8%). This category registers the highest number of "never" responses in the entire sample. Again, the official mission of France's PSM does not explicitly mention any objective related to audience participation. However, a *Conseil consultatif des programmes* – composed of television viewers – has been established. As for Radio France (public radio), the existence of an audience mediation service can also be seen as a form of participatory initiative. The responses provided by PSM to the second part of the survey suggest that the proposed options do not align with how they conceive of their mission.

Only representatives of community/non-profit/minority media act as the primary outlier, though its commitment is still limited. This category reports the highest positive rate at 44.4%. This is particularly relevant, as community, non-profit, and minority media often work closely with local populations and rely heavily on volunteers. Crucially, this single group is responsible for almost all "very often" responses in the entire (with 1 additional respondent from a news portal), reinforcing the idea that this level of audience integration is exclusive to mission-driven, non-commercial organizations.

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

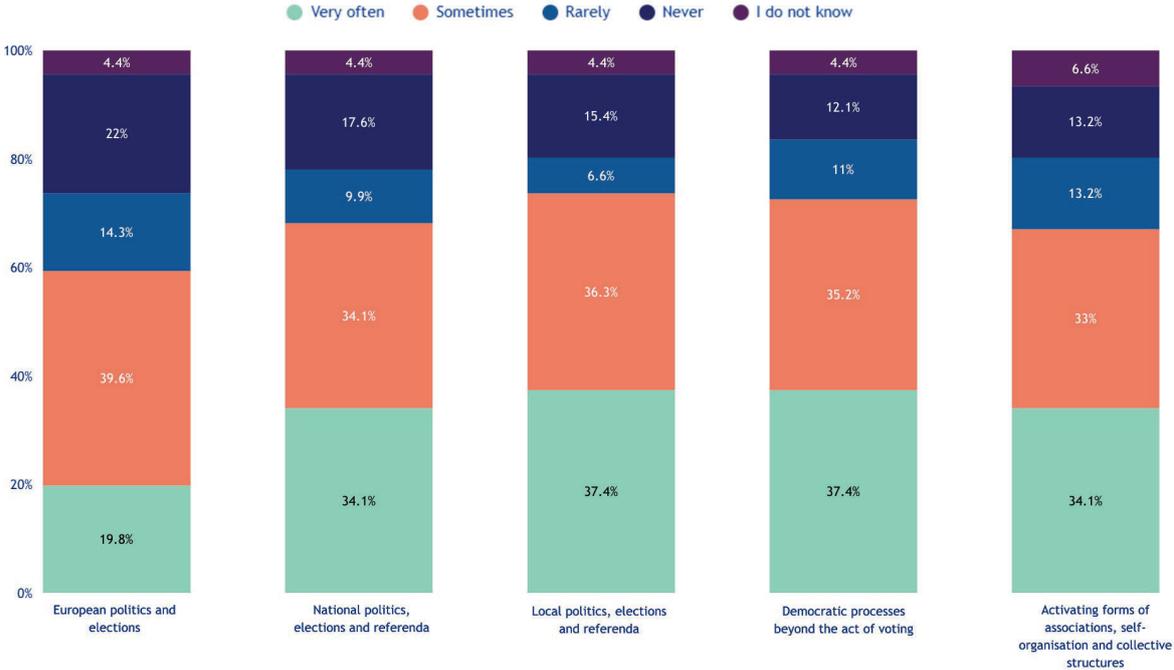| Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 91)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Public service media	18	0	3	5	10	0	0	1	2	14	1	0	1	3	13	1
Commercial TV stations	5	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	3	2	0
Commercial radio stations	4	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	3	0
National daily newspapers	7	0	3	3	1	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	1	0	6	0
National weeklies	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	1
National tabloids	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	10	0	1	7	2	0	1	1	2	6	0	2	1	1	6	0
Local / regional newspapers	14	0	2	5	6	1	0	1	2	10	1	0	0	5	8	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	4	0	1	4	0	4	0	1	4	0	3	1	1	4	0
Other / mixed responses	20	1	5	3	10	1	0	2	5	10	3	1	7	4	7	1

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The data confirms that the practice of allowing audiences to autonomously produce content for newsrooms is highly restricted, suggesting a protective stance regarding editorial quality and control. Also in this case, community/non-profit/minority media remain the positive exception; this group leads the sample with a 44.4% positive rate (4 out of 9 respondents). The fact that the "other / mixed responses" category shows a surprisingly high positive rate of 42.1% is noteworthy, suggesting that journalists combining activities across diverse media are more open to such practice. Public service media report a minimal positive rate of 5.8%, with a substantial 76.4% (13 responses) indicating "never" (see: Table 4).

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

At the stage of distributing the survey research, some participants commented that ethical considerations prevent journalists from attempting to influence the audience. Consequently, the question had to be clarified, specifying that it was not intended to suggest that journalists should actively solicit public participation, but rather to capture their professional perception. This feedback testifies to the importance of professional standards in shaping professionals' practices and perceptions. The French media appear to actively support different forms of electoral participation and activism. All five questions were dominated by responses "very often" and, with similar frequency, "sometimes". In the case of electoral engagement, the results remain high, significantly exceeding half of the responses provided and present respectively: in case of the European politics and elections, 59.4% of respondents claim to support public engagement "very often" or "sometimes"; in the case of the national politics, the rate reaches nearly 68.2%; and in the case of the local politics, it is 73.7%.

In terms of encouraging other than voting activities (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations and citizens' initiatives), as well as activating forms of associations, self-organisation, and collective structures, the level of support is also very high, and their distribution is very similar to the respondents' previous indications (respectively: 72.6% and 67.1%) (see: Figure 4). The rate of "I do not know" responses was once again low and limited to journalists and other respondents in non-managerial positions.

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*.

● Very often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never ● I do not know

	European politics and elections	National politics, elections and referenda	Local politics, elections and referenda	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting	Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures
I do not know	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%	6.6%
Never	22%	17.6%	15.4%	12.1%	13.2%
Rarely	14.3%	9.9%	6.6%	11%	13.2%
Sometimes	39.6%	34.1%	36.3%	35.2%	33%
Very often	19.8%	34.1%	37.4%	37.4%	34.1%

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The positive trend is clear: 100% of local / regional media and weekly national newspapers report positive rates for encouraging local political participation, confirming that local political mobilization is a core editorial mission for print media with a geographically defined audience (in the case of local media). Daily national newspapers and public service media maintain consistently high positive rates (above 75% in all three categories), while commercial TV shows 100% positive rates for both national and local politics, yet only 60% for European politics.

Interestingly, commercial radio consistently displays the highest definitive refusal rates across the board, with 50% "never" rates for European and national politics. Community / non-profit / minority media show a trend: high engagement for local politics (75% of positive responses) but significantly lower rates for European and national politics (37.5%). Their mission is clearly localized, and they rarely have the means to cover broader political spheres. It should be emphasized that PSM consistently shows high engagement in encouraging political participation, aligning with its public mission mandate, reporting strong positive rates across all political levels: European (76.4%), national (82.3%), and local (70.5%) (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 91)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	18	5	8	1	3	1	9	5	0	3	1	6	6	1	4	1
Commercial TV stations	5	0	3	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0
Commercial radio stations	4	1	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	7	2	4	0	1	0	5	1	0	1	0	2	4	0	1	0
National weeklies	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portal	10	1	5	3	1	0	4	4	0	2	0	5	3	0	2	0
Local / regional newspapers	14	4	4	2	4	0	6	5	2	1	0	10	4	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	4	1	1	1
Other / mixed responses	20	3	8	2	6	1	5	6	4	4	1	6	6	3	4	1

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

In terms of encouraging non-electoral activities, the overall level of support is also high (see: Table 6). The high engagement leaders in this dimension are news portals (90%) and community/non-profit/minority media (88.9%), thereby confirming the commitment of digital-native and community-focused outlets to civic action. Public service media maintain a very strong positive rate (15 out of 18 responses), aligning with its public mission mandate to foster democratic engagement. The tabloid (100% of negative responses) indicates a complete lack of interest in encouraging non-voting democratic participation.

While engagement remains high for many in encouraging for activating forms of associations, this category shows a greater variability, suggesting media are slightly less willing to actively promote self-organisation compared to general democratic participation. Community/non-profit/minority media (7 positive responses out of 9) and public service media (14 positive responses out of 18) lead the sample, demonstrating that outlets with a focus on community or a public mission prioritize activating collective structures. Daily national newspapers (71.4%) and local/regional newspapers (71.4%) show a particularly high positive rate in this dimension, whereas a major drop-off is observed in commercial TV in commercial TV (2 positive, 3 negative responses) and commercial radio (1 positive, 2 negative responses) (see: Table 6).

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

| Level of participation | Total (n = 91) | Democratic processes beyond the act of voting | | | | | Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures | | | | |
Type of medium		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	18	8	7	0	3	0	7	7	1	3	0
Commercial TV stations	5	0	3	0	2	0	0	2	1	2	0
Commercial radio stations	4	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	1
National daily newspapers	7	2	3	1	1	0	1	4	0	1	1
National weeklies	3	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	10	5	4	0	1	0	4	3	2	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	14	5	4	4	1	0	5	5	3	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	5	3	0	0	1	4	3	0	1	1
Other / mixed responses	20	8	7	2	2	1	8	6	2	2	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

5. Conclusions

French media organizations from the sample exhibit a pronounced dichotomy in audience engagement: they readily support low-effort audience activities while simultaneously demonstrating strong resistance to ceding authority over core professional functions. The commitment to allowing audiences to express their views is high (73.7% positive), and engagement in encouraging electoral participation is strong, particularly for local politics (73.7% positive), aligning with a democratic mandate. However, this commitment falls dramatically for activities that involve giving up more control: only 22% positively responded to participation in programming decisions, and a mere 11% supported involvement in strategic planning, with 63.7% of all respondents definitively replying "never" to the latter. This institutional model confirms a strong system of professional gatekeeping. The data also highlights a peculiar paradox regarding public service media: while the PSM actively encourages political participation, it simultaneously reports the highest "never" rates for strategic management and autonomous content production, suggesting that the integration of the public into strategic management does not fall within the scope of their mission. In contrast, community/non-profit/minority media are the consistent high engagement leaders across all categories because of their close connection with the public and their local anchoring. Conversely, commercial broadcast media show the strongest overall resistance to complex participation.

COUNTRY REPORT: GERMANY

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in collaboration with Ernest Thaqi, Barbabara Thomass and Josef Seethaler

1. Introduction

The survey's dissemination was initiated on April 7 and lasted until September 9, 2025. The recruitment process began with the identification of relevant media professionals across Germany, including representatives from public service broadcasters, private media, online portals, newspapers, and community/non-profit media. The initial step involved drafting and sending personalized e-mail invitations that explained the goals of the MeDeMAP project and encouraged participation in the survey.

As the initial response rate was low, follow-up e-mails and reminder messages were sent within the planned time frame. Additionally, alternative strategies were explored to strengthen engagement. These included targeted outreach through professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter), where journalists and editors were contacted directly or informed about the survey via posts.

Despite these efforts, engaging German journalists and media representatives proved particularly challenging. Many contacts did not respond to e-mails or social media messages, and several editorial offices indicated limited availability or hesitation to participate in research surveys. In some cases, gatekeeping structures within media organizations hindered access to relevant professionals, and a high workload among journalists further contributed to the low participation rate.

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of medium	Number of responses
Public service media	10
Commercial TV stations	2
Commercial radio stations	2
National daily newspapers	2
National weeklie	0
National tabloids	2
News portals	2
Local / regional newspapers	3
Community / non-profit / minority medis	3
Other / mixed responses	1
Total	**27**

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The research task proved to be highly problematic in the context of obtaining a representative sample from the target group. The extremely low response rate across various media types significantly limited the overall generalizability of the research findings. Public service media (PSM) was the only media sector to achieve a level of response sufficient for drawing broader inferences, with its representatives accounting for 37% of the total responses collected (10 out of 27). However, no responses were received

from any representative of weekly national newspapers. Furthermore, the volume of responses in the "other/mixed responses" category remains notably small.

Despite the overall limited number of responses, a satisfactory proportionality was achieved regarding the representation of respondents' positions within newsrooms. Out of 27 respondents, 18 (66.7%) were journalists, whereas 9 (33.3%) held positions as editors-in-chief, deputy editors-in-chief, or managers. Notably, in the case of community/non-profit/minority media and national tabloids, no responses were obtained from individuals in decision-making or managerial roles. Conversely, the number of respondents performing managing functions exceeded those in journalistic positions in two media types: news portals and local/regional newspapers (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 27)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
			Number of responses	
Public service media	10	8	2	0
Commercial TV stations	2	1	1	0
Commercial radio stations	2	1	1	0
National daily newspapers	2	1	1	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	2	2	0	0
News portals	2	0	2	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	1	2	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	3	0	0
Other / mixed responses	1	1	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of gender, female respondents slightly outnumber (52%) male respondents (41%). The age profile of the studied group proves to be diversified and consistent with demographic expectations : while young individuals aged 18 to 25 constitute merely 3.5%, and the largest share is represented by the 26 to 45 age bracket (totaling 56%), the representation of older cohorts, 44–55 and 56-65 years, is also relatively evenly distributed (11% and 15%, respectively), and there is also a presence of the oldest group, 66+ (3.5%) (see: Figure 1).

Regarding nationality, the sample was dominated by responders being native German (85%), although the group of representatives from other nations is substantial (11%), especially when compared to groups analyzed in other national reports. Declarations concerning being part of minorities indicate that, despite the dominant negative response (74%), still every tenth respondent declares a minority identity (11%) (see: Figure 1).

A fact that is particularly noteworthy, which is highly unusual when compared to findings in other national reports, is the very high percentage of "I do not want to answer" responses within this category of questions characterizing the respondents. This figure reached 7% for gender, 11% for age, 4% for nationality, and as high as 15% in the context of

minority representation. The high non-response rate points to a specific issue of sensitivity or privacy among the media professionals being studied and is a finding in itself, even as it limits the demographic analysis.

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.
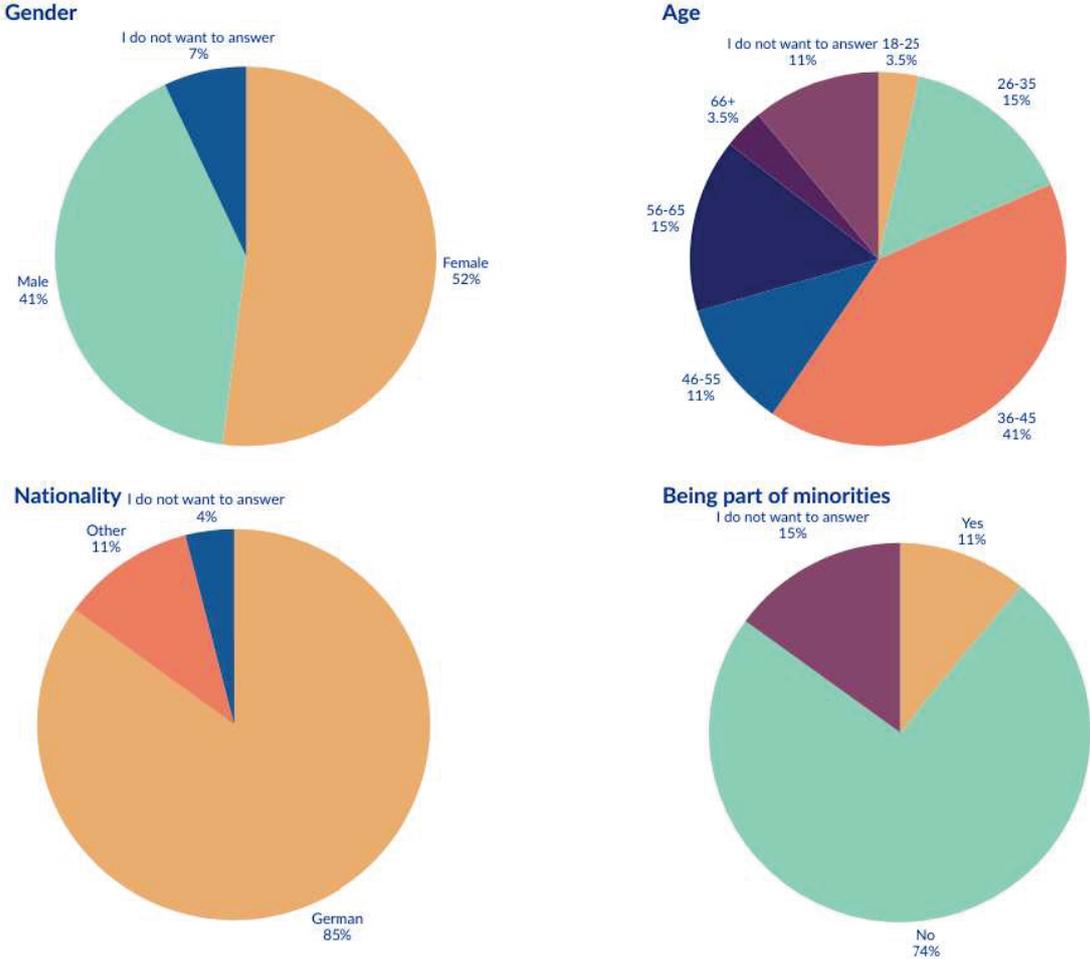
Out of 27 responders, 10 (37%) said that their newsroom is located in Berlin; 9 (33%) pointed to other big city; 7 (26%) chose a medium-sized town; 1 person marked a small town; no responder represented a newsroom located in the countryside.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

The degree of involvement among representatives of the studied media in providing a voice in the debate and representation through their editorial offices remains varied according to the forms of activity supported; however, the indications obtained are generally very strongly characterized by positive sentiment. A total of 77.7% let their audience express their views "very often" or "sometimes", which is not the highest result when compared to other analyzed countries, but constitutes an exception due to zero percent of "never" responses. The level of declarations referring to taking steps to

represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in newsrooms resonates even more positively (88.8% positive responses). A certain decline in positive indications, however, is evident in terms of organising public debates with participation of the audience: in this instance, 62.9% admit doing it "sometimes" or "very often", while 37% do it "rarely" or "never" (see: Figure 2).

In a favorable development, mirrored by results in countries such as Austria, it is highlighted that the volume of "I do not know" responses is minimal; such response was confined solely to the domain of taking steps to represent societal diversity and constituted just one instance (provided by a journalist-level staff member).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
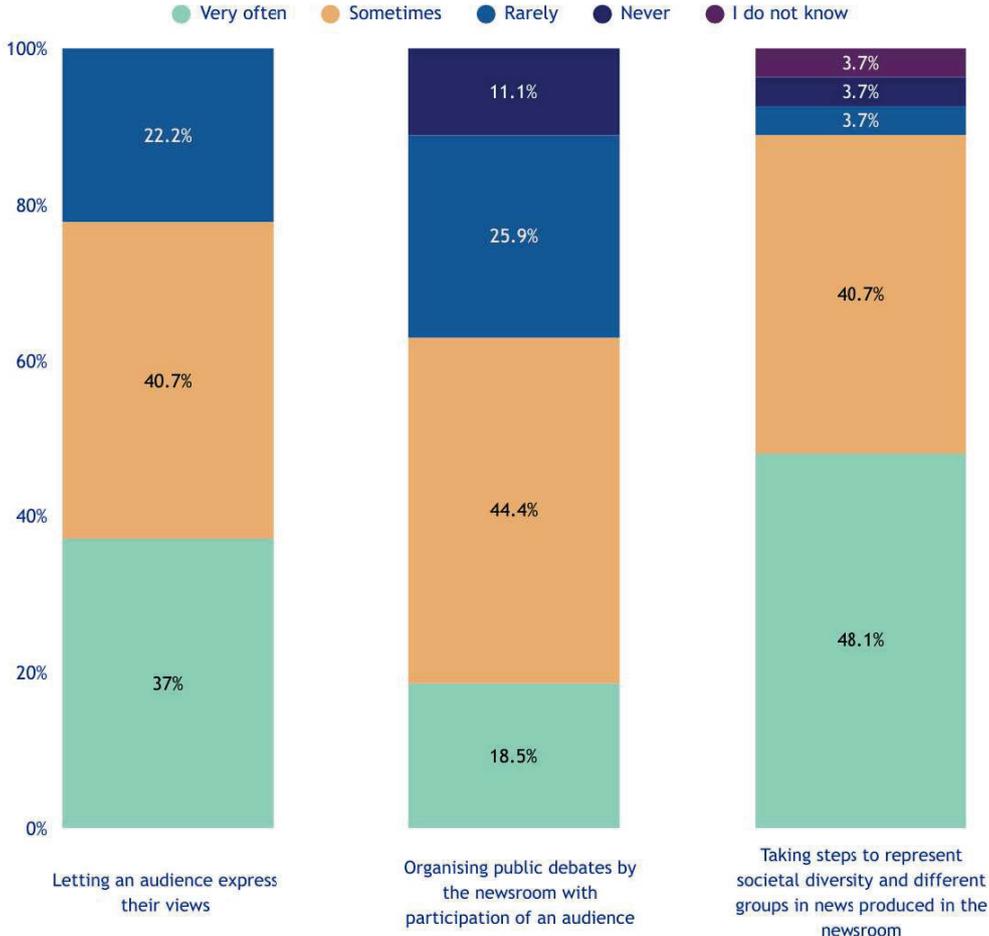
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Regarding the provision for audiences to express their views no significant variation is discernible across different media types (see: Table 3). The most significant conclusion is that across almost the entire spectrum of media surveyed (in all categories except commercial TV stations) report engaging their audience at least "sometimes" or "very often". The public service media, which constitute the largest sample (10 responses), has the highest share of "rarely" responses (40%). Although 60% of PSM outlets engage their audience often, this 40% figure suggests that a significant segment of this influential sector prioritizes audience voice less frequently than other media types. The absence of "I do not know" responses across the entire category may be interpreted as an indication of the high level of awareness among journalists and the clarity of newsroom policies.

As shown by the responses to the second question, German newsrooms seem less willing to stage actual debates involving an audience (see: Table 3). The data reveal a visible polarization: commercial radio, news portals, local/regional newspapers and community/non-profit media show a full commitment to organizing public debates (100% of positive responses), conversely, commercial TV stations, national tabloids report minimal involvement in this context (100% of "rarely" responses). The public service media sector returns results that are perfectly balanced (50% of positive responses, 50% of negative responses). This notable even split, especially given the PSM's public mandate, points toward an inconsistent policy framework.

Table 3: Number of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 27)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	10	5	1	4	0	0	3	2	2	3	0	5	2	1	1	1
Commercial TV stations	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
News portals	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Regarding the question of diversity representation, the results yield the dominant conclusion of an almost universal positive commitment to the implementation of diversity initiatives across nearly all media categories. Notably, the PSM is the only category that does not exhibit the 100% rate of positive commitment observed in the other media types, registering one "rarely", one "never", and one "I do not know" response (see: Table 3).

3. Participation in the Production

The stated commitment to enabling audience participation in German media management is generally low. However, responses within the first question category are surprisingly balanced. Responses regarding the scheduling, programming, or participation in content production decision-making processes were evenly split, with 48.1% of positive and a similar rate of negative responses (53.6%). The level of enabling the audiences to participate in strategic planning or management is, however, decidedly lower, with only 18.5% "sometimes" declarations and a complete absence of "very often" responses. Simultaneously, 77.7% of the total responses constitute negative answers (see: Figure 3).

The data regarding the enablement of autonomous audience content production for newsrooms is heavily negatively skewed: a mere 18.5% of respondents reported "very often" or "sometimes", contrasting sharply with the 81.4% that selected "rarely" or "never" (see: Figure 3).

Once again, we observe an extremely low level of "I do not know" declarations; this time, it appeared only in the matter of participation in strategic planning, provided by a PSM representative holding a journalist position.

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production*.
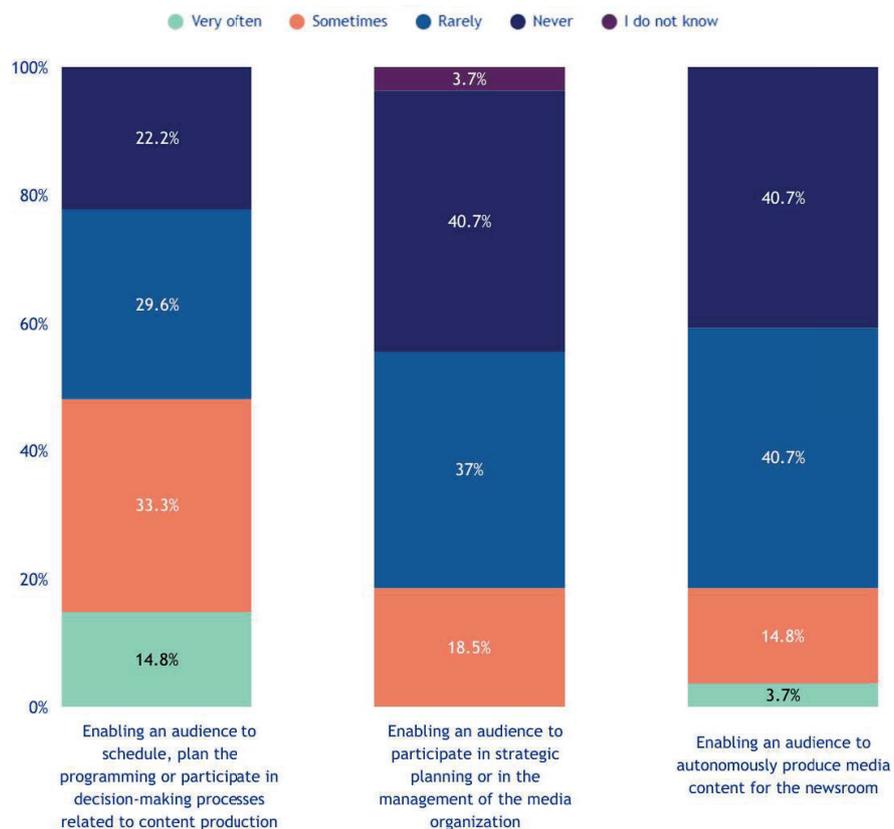
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The overall data reveals that audience involvement in core production and planning decisions is generally rejected, but we can observe a distinct polarization across media types. High acceptance of this type of audience activity is noted only in commercial radio and community/non-profit/minority media (100% of positive indications). Simultaneously,

we observe full rejection from the majority of categories: commercial TV, tabloids, news portals, and local/regional newspapers (100% of negative indications) (see: Table 4). The public service media is the only category that successfully maintains a positive majority (60%) while being large and subject to traditional broadcasting constraints. Furthermore, it is the only category to report "very often" responses other than the community media, indicating that PSM is the leading institutional advocate for audience participation at the management level, despite facing significant internal opposition (4 out of 10 negative answers).

Similarly, when it comes to enabling the audiences to take part in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization, the responses of "rarely" or "never" are overwhelming (21 out of 27). All major categories - including commercial TV, commercial radio, dailies, tabloids, and local/regional newspapers – reported no positive engagement, signaling a uniform consensus that audience input is not relevant or desirable at the management level. While the PSM sector is the most accepting category, the majority of its responses remain negative (60%). Similarly, and contrary to its mandate, the community/non-profit/minority media category demonstrates a surprisingly high rejection rate: 66.7% negative versus 33.3% positive responses (see: Table 4).

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

| Level of participation	Total (n = 27)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
Type of media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	10	3	3	1	3	0	0	3	2	4	1	0	1	4	5	0
Commercial TV stations	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Commercial radio stations	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
National daily newspapers	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
News portals	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Other / mixed responses	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

When it comes to enabling the audiences to autonomously produce media content for the newsrooms the 81.5% rejection rate highlights that the autonomous production of content is considered a violation of editorial sovereignty and quality control. As was the case with the previous category, almost all major, traditional, and commercial categories, including commercial TV, commercial radio, daily newspapers, and tabloids, show a 100% negative response. The public service media, despite showing some acceptance in previous questions, is the most restrictive in this context, reporting a 9 out of 10 negative rate, with half of all respondents in this group choosing "never" (see: Table 4).

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

The German media appear to actively support different forms of electoral participation and activism. All questions were dominated by positive responses, with an overwhelming prevalence of "very often" across four questions and, less frequently, "sometimes" (which dominates only in the context of activating forms of participation). Positive engagement is dominant, particularly when it comes to encouraging audiences to participate in elections at all levels. The results present respectively: in the case of European politics and elections, 77.7% of respondents claim to support public engagement "very often" or "sometimes"; in the case of national politics, the rate reaches an impressive 85.2%; and in the case of local politics, it is 74% (see: Figure 4).

In terms of encouraging other than voting activities (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations, and citizens' initiatives), as well as activating forms of associations, self-organization, and collective structures, the level of support is also very high (respectively: 81.4% and 59.3%), although – in the last question – the level of "very often" responses proves to be surprisingly small (3.7%) (see: Figure 4). The rate of "I do not know" responses proved to be surprisingly evenly distributed, and in the first four questions, it was exactly 3.7% across the board, while in the context of activating forms of associations, it reached a significant 7.4% – 2 responses (both were provided by individuals holding journalist positions).

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism.*
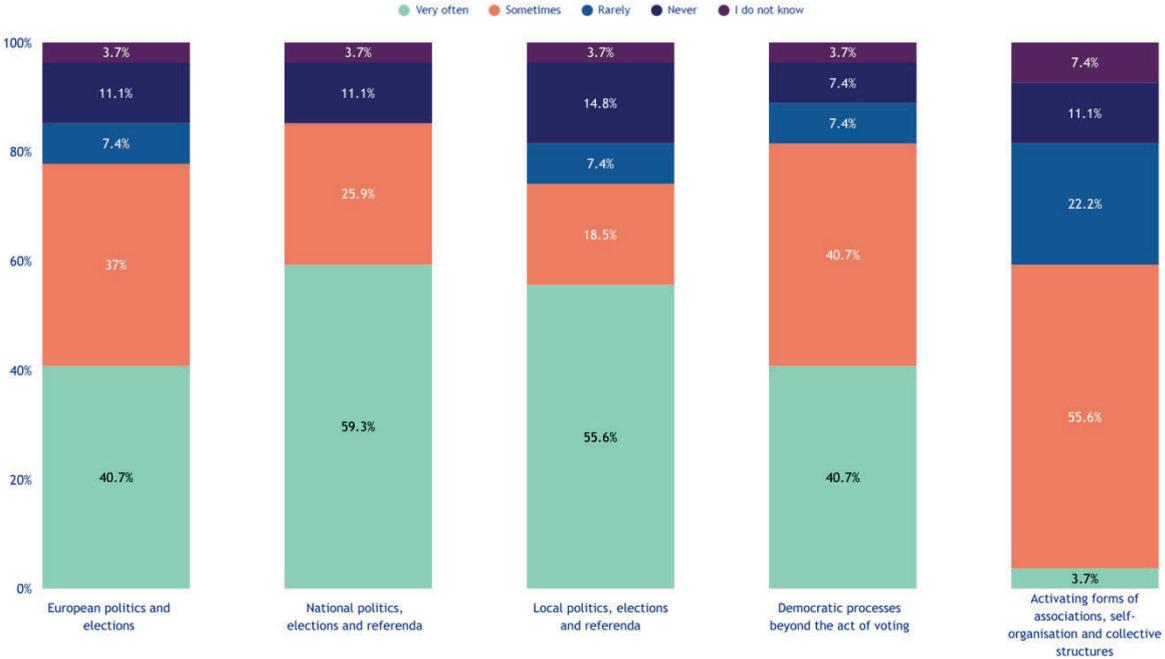
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

German respondents report a strong propensity across the media sector to encourage electoral participation, with national politics being the most favored area for mobilization, and local politics the least favored. We can observe polarization in some media sectors, for instance tabloids show 100% positive engagement nationally, but 50% of negative engagement for the EU and 100% of negative engagement for local politics.

This confirms a strategy strictly focused on high-stakes, domestic political narratives. Similarly, news portals indicate 100% of positive engagement for national and European politics, but the rate drops to 50% of negative engagement for local politics. Interestingly, PSM shows the lowest positive rates in all three categories (EU: 50%, national 60%, local 60%). It is the sole source of "never" responses in all three categories, accumulating the majority of total negative responses (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Frequency — Type of media	Total (n = 27)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	10	4	1	1	3	1	5	1	0	3	1	5	1	0	3	1
Commercial TV stations	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
News portals	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	0	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Other / mixed responses	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of encouraging non-electoral activities, overall level of support is also high (see: Table 6). Despite PSM registering some of the highest absolute numbers of positive responses in both categories (with scores of 6 and 5 out of 10, respectively), the elevated negative rate, particularly the 40% of PSM respondents who reject the activation of collective structures, indicates a hesitancy within this major group to support activism that might be viewed as politically partisan.

Daily newspaper and news portals fully embrace the role of activating collective structures, while commercial TV and commercial radio are 50%/50% in the activating category (see: Table 6).

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation	Total (n = 27)	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
Frequency / Type of Media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	10	4	2	1	2	1	0	5	1	3	1
Commercial TV stations	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
News portals	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Other / mixed responses	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

5. Conclusions

The data on German media reveals a clear institutional dichotomy where strong support for democratic political participation is universally high, yet internal operational capacity and acceptance of audience input into core newsroom functions remain minimal. The analysis, while limited by a highly restricted sample size (particularly the low response rate from non-PSM sectors), yields several significant and often polarized conclusions regarding the German media's approach to audience engagement. However, as the response rate was comparatively very low, generalizations should be viewed with caution. In particular, the low response rate from media outlets outside the public service sector may indicate that self-selection led to responses from protagonists who are particularly aware of the issues and sensitive to democracy, thereby distorting the sample and thus the overall results.

On the basis of these limited data, we can state that German media strongly endorse audience involvement in outward-facing activities, such as electoral participation and diversity representation, but overwhelmingly reject audience input in inward-facing operations like management and content production. However, the commitment to encouraging political mobilization is clearly structured by political stakes, with national politics being the most favored area.

Conversely, decisions related to strategic planning, content production, and media management are viewed as the exclusive domain of newsrooms, as evidenced by the high rejection rates.

The PSM sector often acts as an institutional outlier; while it registers high absolute numbers of positive responses in some categories, its overall commitment is frequently characterized by internal tension. Furthermore, the extreme restrictiveness of PSM in the autonomous content production domain (with a 9 out of 10 negative rate) underscores its adherence to traditional editorial sovereignty.

The polarization of responses – where respondents from mainstream media do not express support for collective activism and other than electoral participation – indicates a strategic priority placed on mitigating political risk and maintaining an appearance of strict editorial neutrality. While this may foster stability, it ultimately limits the media's potential as an engine for robust civic activation and the support of diverse forms of democratic expression within German society. It is important to note, however, that civic participation in media, while vital for grassroots democratic expression, requires critical vigilance. The escalating influence of right-wing extremist groups, evidenced by electoral gains, underscores the risk that participatory platforms may be exploited for anti-democratic manipulation. Consequently, the potential of participatory media must be approached with caution, moving beyond an unequivocally positive assessment.

COUNTRY REPORT: IRELAND

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in collaboration with Jude McInerney and Rosemary Day

1. Introduction

The data collection process in Ireland took place between 24th May and 28th June 2025. All media categories specified in the research protocol were contacted via e-mails sent to relevant managers and editors-in-chief. An issue with reaching out by email was highlighted to the Irish team by two major outlets. Initially, by the managing director of news and current affairs at Ireland's Public Service Broadcaster, who requested an online meeting. The Irish team's coordinator and a facilitator obliged and met with the head of sales, HR, and news teams to explain the relevance and importance of the project. The head of Ireland's commercial TV station requested a phone call and advised that many media outlets are no longer opening unsolicited e-mails because of cyberattacks.

The final sample consists of 27 responses from 8 journalists and 19 persons performing decision-making functions. The low number of responses may be attributed to pressure of time, lack of resources, and money. These were referred to as common obstacles affecting journalism nowadays in the interviews with the Irish media community, conducted on the previous stage of the MeDeMAP research. All outlets were emailed at least three times and follow up phone calls were also made.

Despite the initial distrust from the PSM representatives, there were 7 responses from this sector. Another highly represented sector are community media with 9 responses. Only 6 responses came from the commercial sector at the national level, including 1 response from a radio station and 5 responses from the news portals. The sample for local and regional newspapers consists of 3 responses. Two remaining respondents marked multiple answers, and these were: commercial radio station / PSM in one case, and community medium / PSM in the other (see: Table 1).

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	7
Commercial TV stations	0
Commercial radio stations	1
National daily newspapers	0
National weeklies	0
National tabloids	0
News portals	5
Local / regional newspapers	3
Community / non-profit / minority media	9
Other / mixed responses	2
Total	**27**

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

It should be noted that an over-representation of certain sectors may account for the conclusions. The results are not representative for the whole media landscape in Ireland, although can be interpreted as a good representation for the PSM and Irish community newsrooms. Furthermore, the sample is dominated with responses from persons performing decision-making functions (editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief and managers): 19 out of 27 responses. This dominance is particularly visible in the case of community / non-profit / minority media, for which the whole sample consists of responses coming from decision makers (similarly to the group of other/mixed responses). In other sectors, at least single responses from journalists were secured (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 27)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
			Number of responses	
Public service media	7	3	4	0
Commercial TV stations	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	1	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	0	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	0	0	0	0
News portals	5	3	2	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	2	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	0	9	0
Other / mixed responses	2	0	2	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

More females than males responded to the survey, with 16 females (59%) to 10 males (37%); one person chose not to answer the gender question. Ninety-six% of those who responded to the survey identified as being Irish, with one person preferring not to answer. Only two people said they belonged to a minority (based on ethnicity, nationality, or sexual orientation). Particularly concerning is the age demographic, which indicates an over-representation of respondents aged above 35 years old, which might result from the trend of people leaving the journalistic profession after training because of low salary and workload (see: Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.
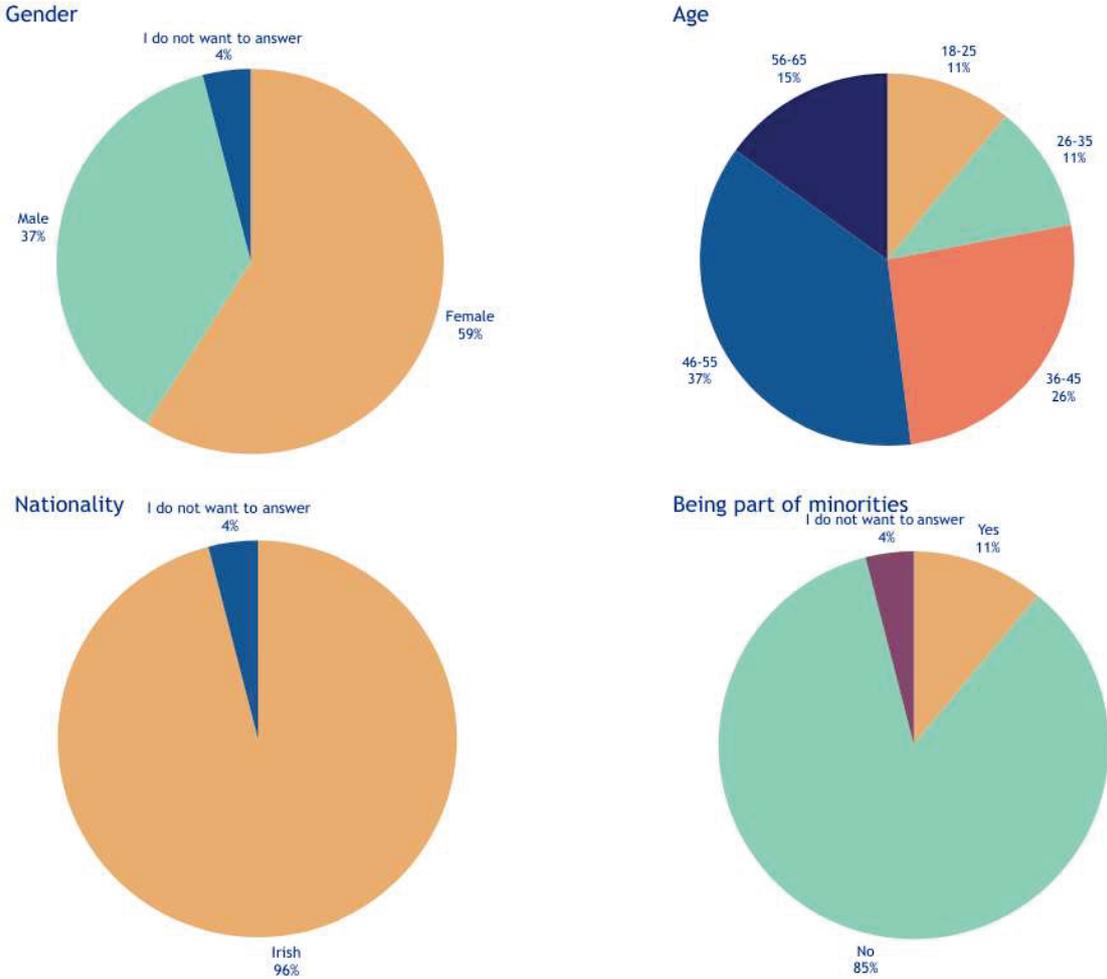
The highest number of responses came from the capital city of Dublin, with 13 respondents. There were also 3 responses from another big city, 5 responses from a medium-sized town, and 1 from a small town.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

In Ireland, an overall willingness to maintain a proper representation of audiences in the media content is visible. The respondents claim to take numerous steps to present the public views (85% of positive responses, i.e. "very often" and "sometimes") and represent societal diversity (93%). The declarative support does not, however, translate into taking specific actions to keep a direct contact with the audience, as the majority of the newsrooms "never" or "rarely" organise debates with participation of an audience (56%), and only 37% of the respondents state to do it "sometimes" (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.

Legend: ● Very often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never ● I do not know

Letting an audience express their views:
- Sometimes: 14.8%
- Very often: 44.4%
- (orange): 40.7%

Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience:
- I do not know: 7.4%
- Rarely: 29.6%
- Sometimes: 25.9%
- Very often: 37%

Taking steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom:
- I do not know: 3.7%
- Rarely: 3.7%
- Very often: 29.6%
- (orange): 63%
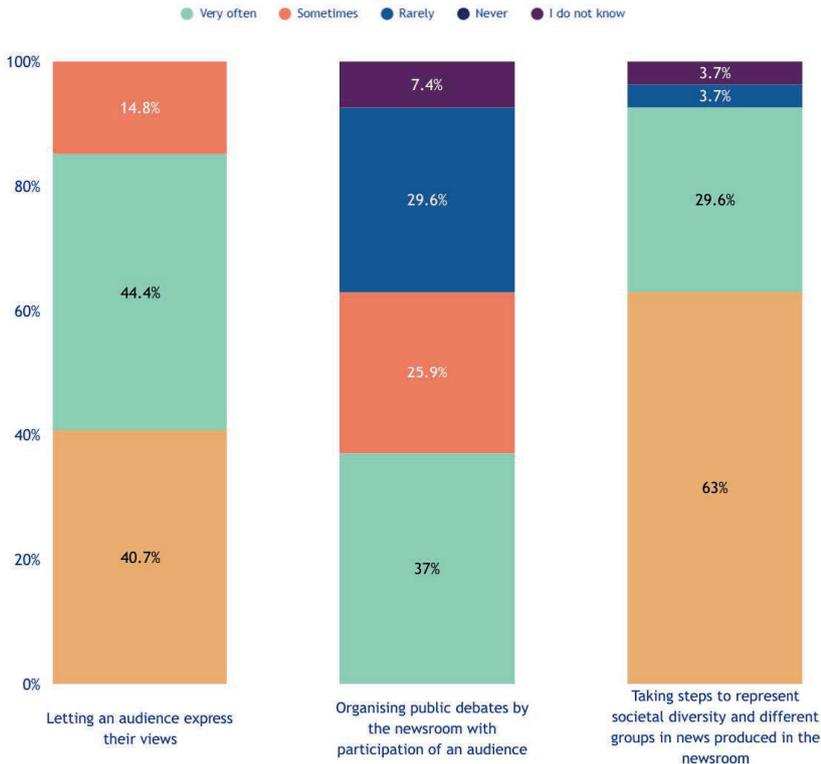
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

A lack of presence of the audience in debates is particularly visible in the case of digital and local media. All representatives of these newsrooms types responded with "rarely" or "never". The positive answers came mostly from respondents representing the PSM (3 out of 7 respondents chose "sometimes") and community/non-profit / minority media (4 out of 9 respondents). Still, however, a lack of prioritization of audience's participation in debates by these kinds of newsrooms is visible.

In the case of questions on letting audiences express their views and representing diversity, the positive responses dominated in all media types, for which responses were obtained (see: Table 3). As pointed out by the Irish journalists interviewed on the previous research stage, the most common form of facilitating the discussion with the audience is social media channels. Social platforms are used, for example, to publish online opinion polls or engage readers to report potential disinformation that is later fact-checked by the given outlet. These strategies were mentioned foremost by the journalists and editors from the local press and digital media. Not reaching out to members of the public was often justified by the interviewees as a result of time pressures or the lack of human and financial resources.

Table 3: Results regarding the question: *Letting an audience express their views* in correlation with the type of medium.
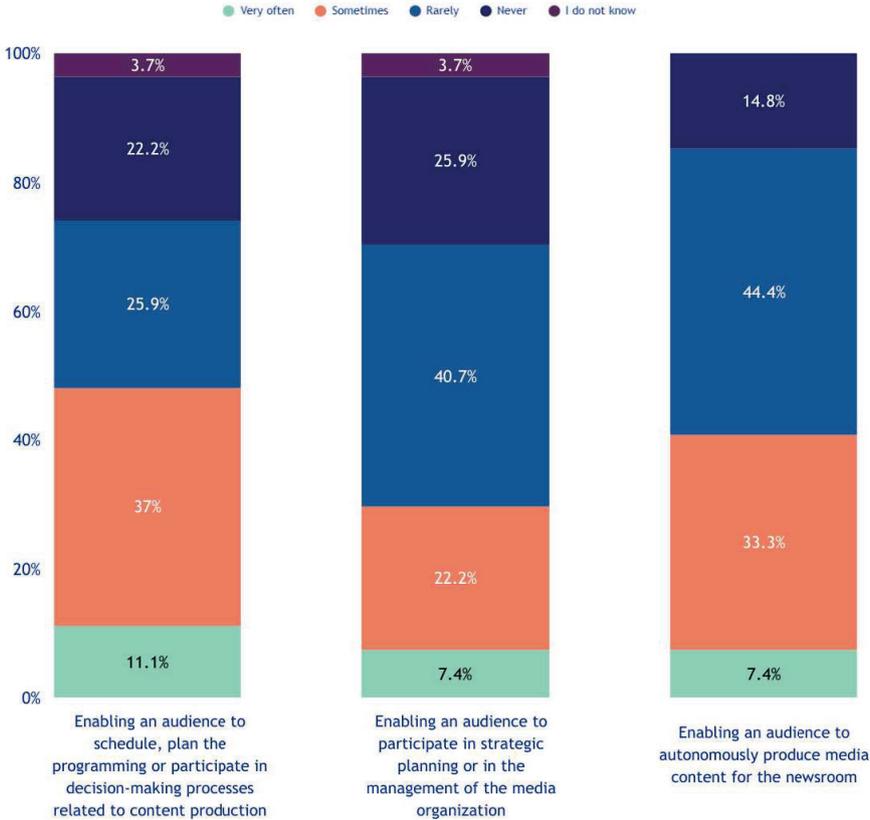
Level of participation	Total (n = 27)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with the participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in the news produced in the newsroom				
Frequency / Type of media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	7	4	1	2	0	0	0	3	0	2	2	5	1	0	0	1
Commercial TV stations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	4	1	0	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	2	5	2	0	0	0	4	2	3	0	4	4	0	1	0
Other / Mixed responses	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

3. Participation in the Production

The Irish journalistic community appears to give a relatively high degree of agency to the audience in terms of participation in the production (see: Figure 3). In particular, enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production is a relatively common practice in the newsrooms (48% of positive responses), although this may be because so many of the respondents came from the community media sector. Enabling an audience to autonomously produce a content is rarer, although it still occurs at least sometimes in 40% of cases. The least frequent tactic of enabling the public to participate in the media production is to let them into strategic planning or the management of the outlet (less than 30%).

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production.*

Legend: ● Very often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never ● I do not know

Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production
- I do not know: 3.7%
- Never: 22.2%
- Rarely: 25.9%
- Sometimes: 37%
- Very often: 11.1%

Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization
- I do not know: 3.7%
- Never: 25.9%
- Rarely: 40.7%
- Sometimes: 22.2%
- Very often: 7.4%

Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom
- Never: 14.8%
- Rarely: 44.4%
- Sometimes: 33.3%
- Very often: 7.4%

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

These results might, however, be overstated by a high representation of the community, non-profit and minority media in a sample. Respondents from these outlets relatively often pointed to positive responses (see: Table 4), and, as indicated by the interview results, these newsrooms see a role for themselves to facilitate participation by members of the public in the generation and dissemination of news, which was not commonly mentioned by interviewees from other media types in Ireland.

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

| Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 27)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
Frequency		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	7	0	1	2	3	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	2	3	2	0
Commercial TV stations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	5	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	2	2	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	2	4	2	1	0	0	3	4	2	0	1	4	3	1	0
Other / Mixed responses	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

Respondents from the Irish media show openness to actively support different forms of electoral participation and activism. All five questions were dominated with positive responses (see: Figure 4). It shows, particularly, when it comes to encouraging the audiences to participate in national and local elections and referendums, for which responses "very often" clearly outnumbered responses "sometimes" (respectively: in case of the national politics and elections, 48% of respondents claim to support public engagement "very often"; in the case of the local politics, the rate reaches nearly 52%).

Encouraging participation in the European politics and other forms of political and social participation is less of a priority, as responses "sometimes" were the most common in those categories. The least importance is attached to supporting activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures: a combined rate of positive answers is less than 60%. Interestingly, in this category, the Percentage of responses "I do not know" is significantly higher than in other questions (11%), which further indicates that relatively less focus is put on this topic in the Irish newsrooms on an everyday basis.

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*.
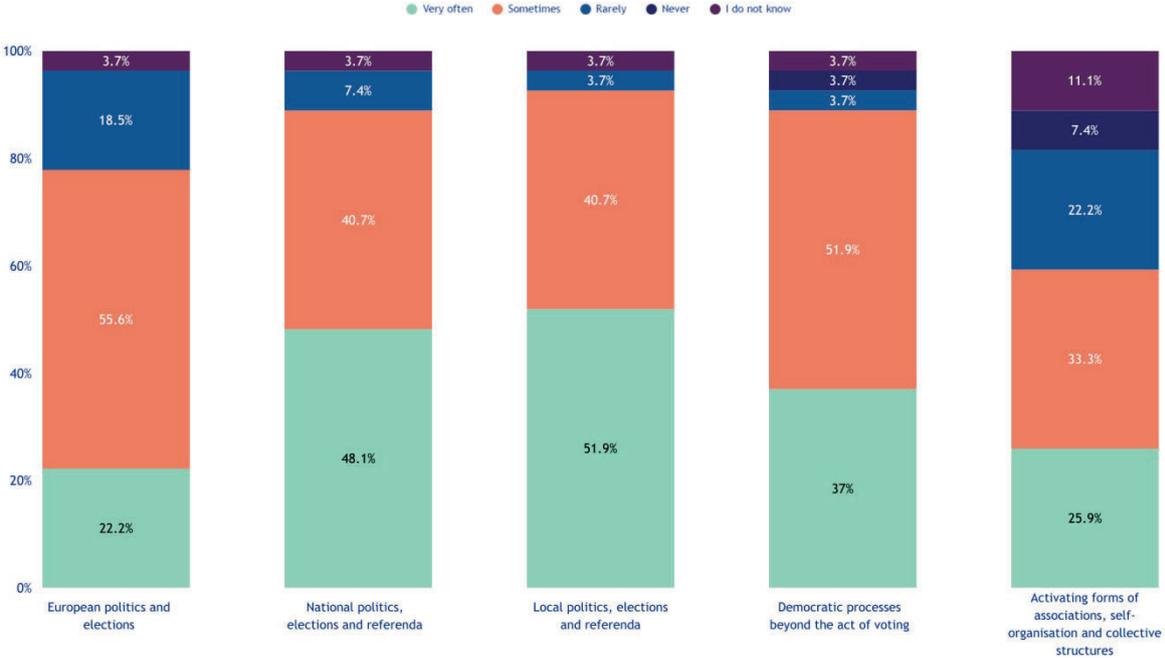
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Among the studied media types, the PSM and news portals seem to be the most interested in informing their audiences on political and electoral issues. In the case of the digital sector, all respondents stated that they cover these topics at least sometimes. All representatives of the public sector responded with "very often" or "sometimes" for the national and local level, and in the case of European politics, one response "rarely" occurred.

As for the community, non-profit and minority media, although the sample was dominated with positive answers, opinions were more divided. Representatives of this sector are the most willing to encourage political and electoral participation at the local level (8 out of 9 responses), and the least focus is put on the European level (5 out of 9 responses) (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in correlation with the type of media.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 27)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	7	1	5	1	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0
Commercial TV stations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	5	3	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	0	5	4	0	0	5	2	2	0	0	5	3	1	0	0
Other / Mixed responses	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The non-profit media seem to show more interest in encouraging democratic processes beyond the act of voting: all representatives of this sector responded positively to the question on supporting activism, community engagement, demonstrations and citizens' initiatives (see: Table 6). However, when it comes to activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, the community, non-profit and minority media workers were more likely to choose options "rarely" or "never".

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participation in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in correlation with the type of media.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 27)	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	7	1	5	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	2
Commercial TV stations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercial radio stations	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National weeklies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	5	2	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	1	0
Local / regional newspape	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	9	4	5	0	0	0	2	5	1	1	0
Other / Mixed responses	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The results show a slightly lower frequency of responses "very often" and "sometimes" for the PSM and news portals, too (it is particularly visible in terms of encouraging for activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures).

5. Conclusions

The results for the Irish media market are highly affected by a small sample, in particular when it comes to the commercial sector. This might result from a general trend of newsrooms losing experienced journalists due to the poor pay and work overload (which may also be reflected in the age demographic of the responses to the survey). The 27 responses received provide a good insight mostly into tactics implemented by the public service and community media, as well as, to a smaller degree, national digital outlets and the local/regional press.

Those media, for which the responses were obtained, declare a high level of support for increasing the public's participation. Respondents state that they take numerous steps to reflex the societal diversity, even though – as shown by the demographic structure and the interview results – many newsrooms in Ireland lack social, cultural, and political diversity. The main gaps identified by the interviewed journalists were a lack of representation of new immigrants, Travellers (indigenous Irish ethnic minority), people of colour, the working class, and women generally.

The respondents also show an openness to involve their recipients in expressing their views through the media. The media's willingness to increase participation presents even more significantly when it comes to encouraging people to take part in different forms of political activities, especially national and local elections and referenda. Activism and overall social engagement are also of relatively high interest among the Irish media, although to a smaller degree.

The struggles with financial and human resources might serve as an explanation for the low frequency of meetings and debates with the audience in the newsrooms that were included in the sample. On the other hand, participation of the public in the media production, including scheduling, strategic planning and autonomous content production, is relatively common in Ireland. This result might, however, stem from a high representation of the community media, which, as indicated by interviews with the Irish journalists, attach much more importance to the audience's participation in creating content than, for instance, commercial media.

COUNTRY REPORT: ITALY

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1. Introduction

The process of data collection on the Italian media market took place from April 1st to May 31st. Invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent to 145 journalists and editors-in-chief. A total of 109 responses were collected. Overall, 10 types of media outlets are represented in a sample, which is a slight modification compared to a proposed sample structure: a category of "Local/regional radio/TV" was added to the questionnaire (see: Table 1). In Italy, the term "tabloid media" is not widely used, and therefore the category included newspapers (especially online) that cannot be considered "quality press" due to their focus on news related to leisure, gossip, etc. However, to maintain consistency with other country reports, the following document uses the term "national tabloid".

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	22
Commercial TV stations	12
Commercial radio stations	11
National daily newspapers	13
National weeklies	6
National tabloids	5
News portals	17
Local / regional newspapers	5
Local / regional radio / TV	8
Community / non-profit / minority media	10
Other	0
Total	**109**

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Regarding the question on the type of media represented by responders, an option for a multiple choice was abandoned. All the media types specified in a questionnaire are represented in a final sample, and the balance between the public and commercial sector is assured. The lowest number of responses came from the tabloid workers and local/regional newspapers (5 responses per each). No respondent chose an option "other".

Around two thirds of the sample consists of journalists; the remaining responders were editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers and other decision-making functions (one respondent was classified as other position). In the case of national weeklies and tabloids, no responses from persons in decision-making and managerial positions were obtained. The only categories in which the number of respondents performing managing functions exceeded those in journalistic positions were local / regional newspapers and community / non-profit / minority media (see: Table 2).
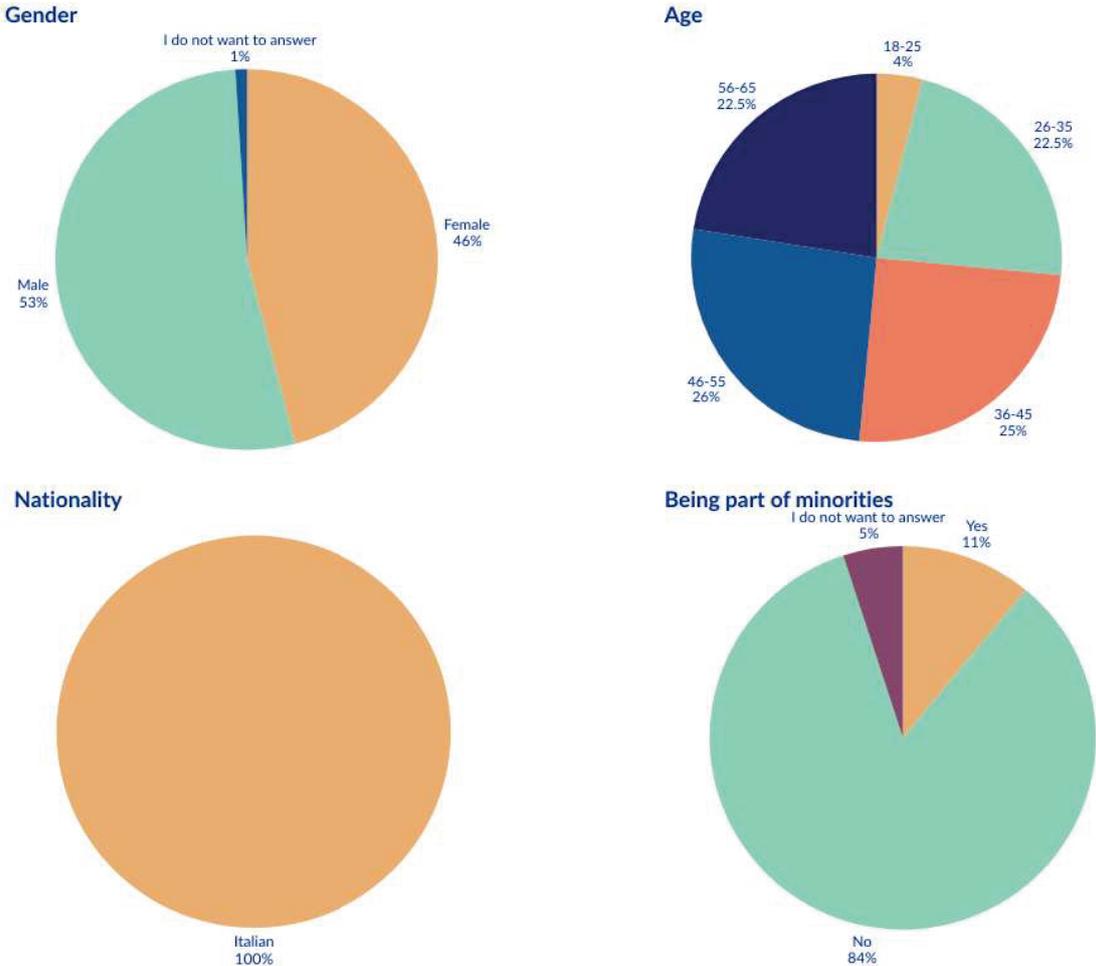
Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 109)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
		Number of responses		
Public service media	22	17	5	0
Commercial TV stations	12	9	3	0
Commercial radio stations	11	6	5	0
National daily newspapers	13	9	4	0
National weeklies	6	6	0	0
National tabloids	5	5	0	0
News portals	17	10	7	0
Local / regional newspapers	5	2	3	0
Local / regional radio / TV	8	6	2	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	3	6	1
Other	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The sample shows an adequate gender balance. More than 10% of responders belong to some minority group (based on ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.). However, in terms of age and nationality, the sample is not fully representative. As for the nationality, there were no responses from non-Italians retrieved, and in the case of age, the lack of representation of responders at the age of 66 and older is visible (see: Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.

Gender

- I do not want to answer 1%
- Female 46%
- Male 53%

Age

- 18-25 4%
- 26-35 22.5%
- 36-45 25%
- 46-55 26%
- 56-65 22.5%

Nationality

- Italian 100%

Being part of minorities

- I do not want to answer 5%
- Yes 11%
- No 84%

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Interestingly, the city of Rome was not the most common response to the question on the newsroom location. Out of 109 respondents, 25 (23%) chose the Italian capital, and 76 (70%) chose other big city (mostly Milan). Besides, 7 respondents (6%) chose a medium-sized town; 1 person marked a small town; no one represented a newsroom located in the countryside.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

The majority of the respondents claimed their newsrooms allow for public views being expressed in their content (64% responded positively, including almost 38% stating to use this participation strategy "very often"). Considerably better results were noted in terms of societal diversity and different groups representation: more than three fourth of respondents showed a support for promoting inclusiveness, with 55% claiming this tactic is a priority in their outlet.

However, the audience is much less frequently invited to participate in direct debates organised by the Italian media. Around 39% of the respondents admit this kind of event never takes place in their newsrooms, and in 17% of cases, debates are arranged rarely. Only 9% chose the answer "very often" (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
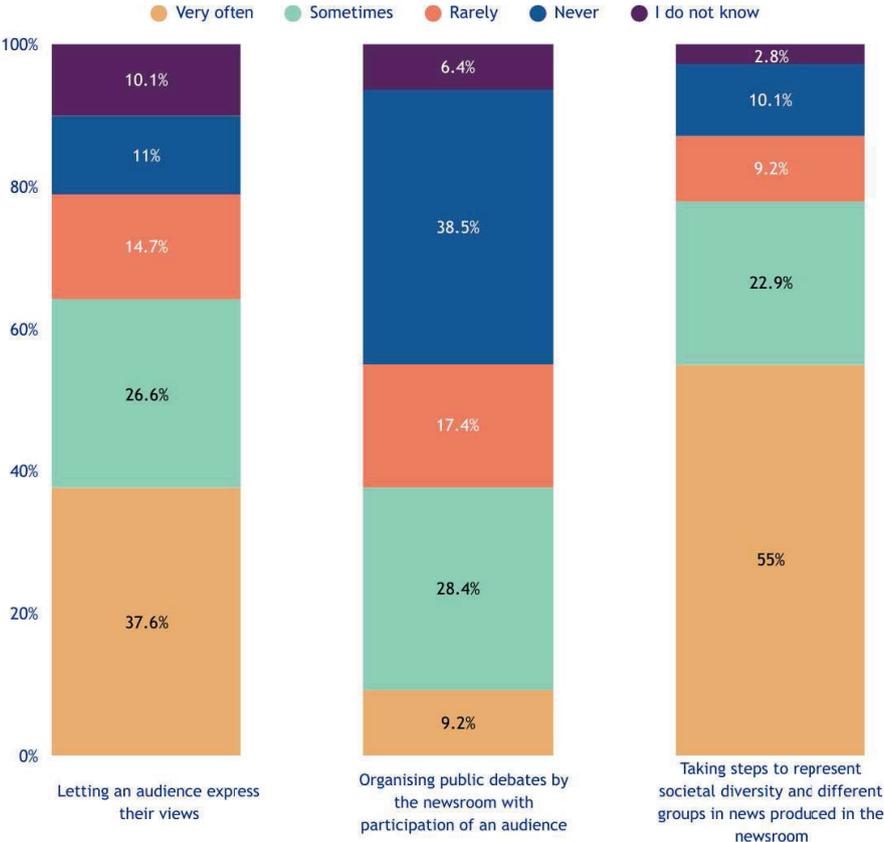
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Letting an audience express their views is common across the media types, although in some cases, the occurrence of positive responses is less frequent (see: Table 3). For instance, less than a half of the PSM's representatives chose the answers "very often" (4 out of 22 responses) or "sometimes" (6 out of 22). This is, to some degree, contrary to conclusions drawn from the interviews conducted with the representatives of the PSM in Italy, who stated to regularly use social platforms (in particular WhatsApp) not only to disseminate content, but also to encourage interaction with the audience.

Also, in the case of the national weeklies, 2 out of 6 surveyed persons claimed to "sometimes" allow for the public voice being expressed, while no one in this group marked a response "very often" (it needs to be noted, however, that a small sample of responses from weekly national newspapers distorts the results).

Table 3: Results regarding the question: *Letting an audience express their views* in a correlation with type of the medium.

| Level of participation		Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
Frequency Type of media	Total (n = 109)	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	22	4	6	5	4	3	1	3	3	12	3	10	9	2	1	0
Commercial TV stations	12	6	4	1	0	1	3	4	1	2	2	6	1	1	3	1
Commercial radio stations	11	4	4	2	1	0	2	3	2	4	0	5	4	2	0	0
National daily newspapers	13	5	2	1	2	3	1	3	3	4	2	7	2	0	3	1
National weeklies	6	0	2	0	2	2	0	2	1	3	0	4	0	0	2	0
National tabloids	5	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	3	1	0
News portals	17	10	2	3	2	0	2	8	3	4	0	10	6	0	0	1
Local / regional newspapers	5	1	2	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	0	5	0	0	0	0
Local / regional radio / TV	8	2	2	3	1	0	0	2	1	5	0	5	2	1	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	7	2	1	0	0	1	5	3	1	0	7	1	1	1	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of organising public debates, the news portals and NGO-based media stand out positively. In the case of the formers, 10 out of 17 tend to arrange such events at least sometimes. The representatives of community, non-profit and minority media do implement this practice in 6 out of 10 cases. Both groups of respondents admit, however, that debates are not priorities in their newsrooms, as evidenced by the fact that responses "sometimes" dominate over "very often". In other media categories, the practice of organizing debates is even rarer. As showed by the interviews conducted at the previous stage of the research, private outlets in Italy prioritize debates of experts and experts presenting differing opinions rather than debates between citizens.

Regarding the question on diversity, the response "very often" was the most common across all media types, except for the tabloid outlets (3 out of 5 respondents stated their newsrooms rarely use this participation strategy, and 1 claimed to never do it). The highest willingness to represent societal diversity can be seen among the representatives of local and regional newspapers, who unanimously chose a response "very often".

3. Participation in the Production

More than one third of the respondents state that their newsrooms involve the public in the news production process. Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes never takes place in almost 60% of surveyed outlets, while only around 11% of respondent gave positive responses. Similarly, an audience is never allowed to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization in more than a half of cases, although the rate of positive responses in this case is higher and reaches almost 27%. An autonomous production by the public is a little more common, although still almost 50% of the respondents claim their media never let their recipients create their own content, compared to 36% of positive responses (see: Figure 4).

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production.*
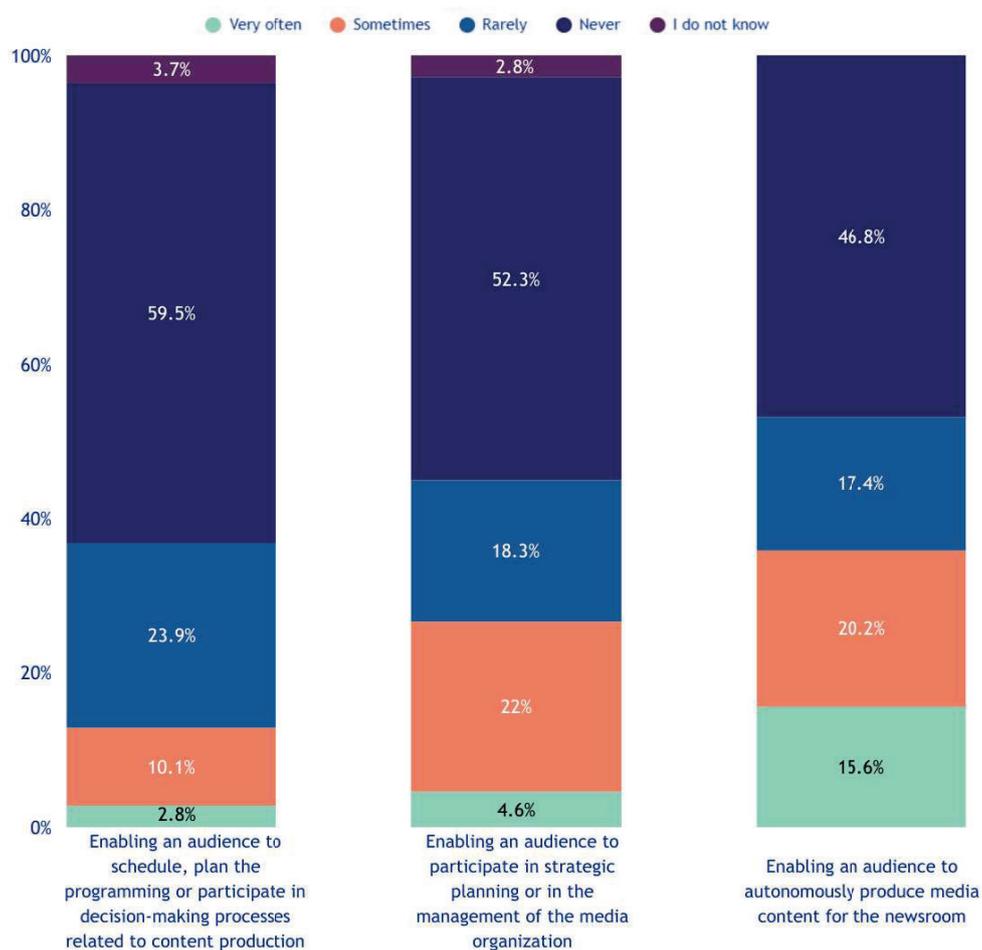
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The only media types that allow for some degree of the audience's participation in the media production are the public media, news portals and community, non-profit and minority media (see: Table 4). Particularly in the case of news portals, a relative willingness to engage the public can be seen: out of 17 responders, 3 claimed their newsrooms at least sometimes enable the audience to schedule, plan or participate in other decision-making processes; 7 stated to engage the audience in strategic planning and

management; and 7 make it possible for the audience to autonomously produce its own content.

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation	Total (n = 109)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
Frequency / Type of media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	22	1	3	3	15	0	1	4	5	12	0	4	4	3	11	0
Commercial TV stations	12	0	1	2	8	1	0	3	1	6	2	1	2	2	7	0
Commercial radio stations	11	0	1	2	7	1	0	2	3	6	0	1	1	1	8	0
National daily newspapers	13	0	1	3	7	2	1	2	2	7	1	1	4	2	6	0
National weeklies	6	0	0	1	5	0	0	2	1	3	0	1	2	0	3	0
National tabloids	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	2	1	2	0	1	2	0	2	0
News portals	17	2	1	7	7	0	2	5	2	8	0	6	1	1	9	0
Local / regional newspapers	5	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	1	2	2	0
Local / regional radio / TV	8	0	1	0	7	0	0	1	1	6	0	1	3	3	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	0	2	5	3	0	1	3	1	5	0	1	2	5	2	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In other cases, the sample structure is highly dominated with the responses "rarely" and "never".

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

In general, the Italian media provide coverage of electoral issues, especially during the election campaigns. Journalists and editors-in-chief also state that they encourage citizens to vote (see: Figure 4). In terms of the European and national politics, the rate of positive answers is identical (around 60% of either "very often" or "sometimes" responses). The frequency of supporting the political and electoral participation at the local level is slightly lower, although still high (57%).

Media coverage of democratic processes beyond the act of voting (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations and citizens' initiatives) is much less common (around 40% of positive responses). The rarest form of encouraging the public participation is informing on issues like citizen organizations, associations and other initiatives (around 36%).

Regardless of the participation kind, the response that remains dominant is "sometimes", which indicates that – although the Italian media attach great importance to supporting political and electoral participation – in general, they do not prioritize covering those themes.

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*.
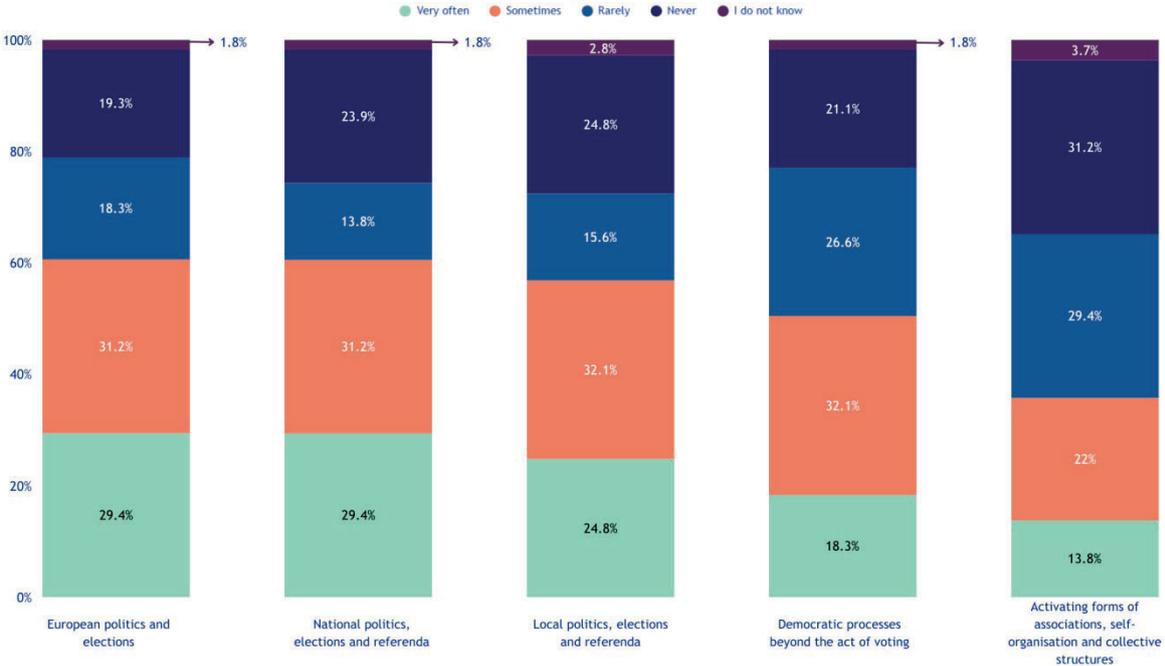
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Nevertheless, there are media in Italy that focus more heavily on covering the political and electoral topics, i.e., in particular the local media. The representatives of both local press and radio/TV were choosing the response "very often" the most frequently, regardless of the level of politics (European, national and local). On the opposite pole, there are national weeklies and tabloids, for which no respondent stated to facilitate the political and electoral participation "very often" (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Frequency / Type of media	Total (n = 109)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	22	4	7	6	4	1	3	7	5	6	1	4	6	5	6	1
Commercial TV stations	12	6	2	1	3	0	4	3	1	4	0	3	3	1	5	0
Commercial radio stations	11	3	5	1	2	0	3	5	1	2	0	2	4	2	2	1
National daily newspapers	13	2	2	3	5	1	3	1	3	5	1	1	3	3	5	1
National weeklies	6	0	1	3	2	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	3	0
National tabloids	5	0	3	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	3	1	1	0
News portals	17	5	6	3	3	0	5	6	3	3	0	5	6	3	3	0
Local / regional newspapers	5	3	2	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
Local / regional radio / TV	8	5	3	0	0	0	6	1	1	0	0	6	1	1	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	4	3	1	2	0	4	4	0	2	0	3	4	1	2	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Local media, especially newspapers, are also the most active in the field of other forms of political engagement, in particular democratic processes beyond the act of voting like activism and demonstrations (see: Table 6). Another group of respondents that stands out positively in this respect are representatives of community, non-profit and minority media.

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
Frequency / Type of media	Total (n = 109)	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
					Number of responses						
Public service media	22	1	9	2	8	2	1	2	8	9	2
Commercial TV stations	12	3	3	4	2	0	1	4	1	5	1
Commercial radio stations	11	2	4	4	1	0	2	4	2	3	0
National daily newspapers	13	1	1	6	5	0	1	2	4	5	1
National weeklies	6	0	4	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	0
National tabloids	5	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	3	2	0
News portals	17	4	5	6	2	0	2	3	8	4	0
Local / regional newspapers	5	2	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	0
Local / regional radio / TV	8	2	2	3	1	0	2	2	3	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	4	4	1	1	0	4	3	1	2	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

5. Conclusions

A general focus on inclusivity, diversity and social minorities – at least at the declarative level – is prominent in the news in Italy. There is also relatively much emphasis put on allowing the audience for expressing its views and providing feedback, for instance via comments on social media. The importance of technological development in facilitating a public debate was previously discussed in the interviews with the Italian media community as an opportunity for audience's broader participation and engagement in news production. On the other hand, however, it also brings risks, particularly related to misinformation, which might potentially draw newsrooms' attention away from interaction with the public and force them to focus more on fact-checking and raising internal standards.

The Italian media also provide coverage of electoral issues and encourage citizens to participate both in the European, national and local elections or referendums. In views of respondents, commitment to media coverage of citizen organizations, however, remains weak. What is more, the public – as declared by respondents – seems to be rarely involved in the debates or news production process. In this light, the Italian audience seems to have a limited agency in terms of scheduling, planning the programming or participating in decision-making processes related to content production. The management in the media

organizations also remains professionalized and reserved for internal structures within particular newsrooms.

COUNTRY REPORT: POLAND

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1. Introduction

The data collection process in Poland took place between 24th February and 10th June 2025, and was preceded by a pilot study conducted for the purpose of the final research design applied to the whole MeDeMAP project. The results of the pilot study were not included in the final analysis, presented below. The survey was distributed using a template for a letter to chief editors, provided in the research protocol, as well as through contacts with individual journalists via social media and e-mail addresses. The request for the survey distribution was also sent to a few Polish journalistic associations, including: Local Newspapers Association, Journalistic Association, Local Media Association and Association of Journalists of the Republic of Poland.

The overall number of sent requests exceeded 200. The final sample consisted of 83 responses. All media types are represented in a sample (see: Table 1), the numbers, however, vary and in some cases, are too small to draw representative conclusions about a given group. The highest number of responses came from the public service media (PSM) and community / non-profit / minority media. The PSM managers and editors-in-chief were the only group who agreed to distribute the survey among their workers. In the case of the commercial media, most of the managers and editors-in-chief were reluctant to forward the request to the members of their teams.

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	16
Commercial TV stations	8
Commercial radio stations	6
Daily national newspapers	4
Weekly national newspapers	5
National tabloids	1
News portals	8
Local / regional newspapers	6
Community / non-profit / minority media	14
Other / mixed responses	15
Total	**83**

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The task that turned out to be particularly problematic was collecting data from the representatives of tabloids, who probably found that label offensive and chose to pick the "national daily newspaper" option instead. Eventually, only two responses were collected from responders identifying as representatives of tabloid, one of them was, however, categorised as "other/mixed responses" due to giving a multiple answer to the question about the media type they represent. A high number of responses in the "other/mixed responses" category is another issue hampering the extensive analysis, although it shows

how fragmented and unsustainable the Polish media market is, as a result of which journalists are often forced to work in a few newsrooms simultaneously.

Another challenge was keeping a balance in terms of respondents' positions in newsrooms. Out of 83 respondents, 62 (75%) were journalists; only 17 (20%) were editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief or managers; and 4 (5%) performed other functions. In the case of commercial TV and radio stations, as well as national tabloid, no responses from persons in decision-making and managerial positions were obtained. The only type of media where the number of respondents performing managing functions exceeded those in journalistic positions were news portals (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.
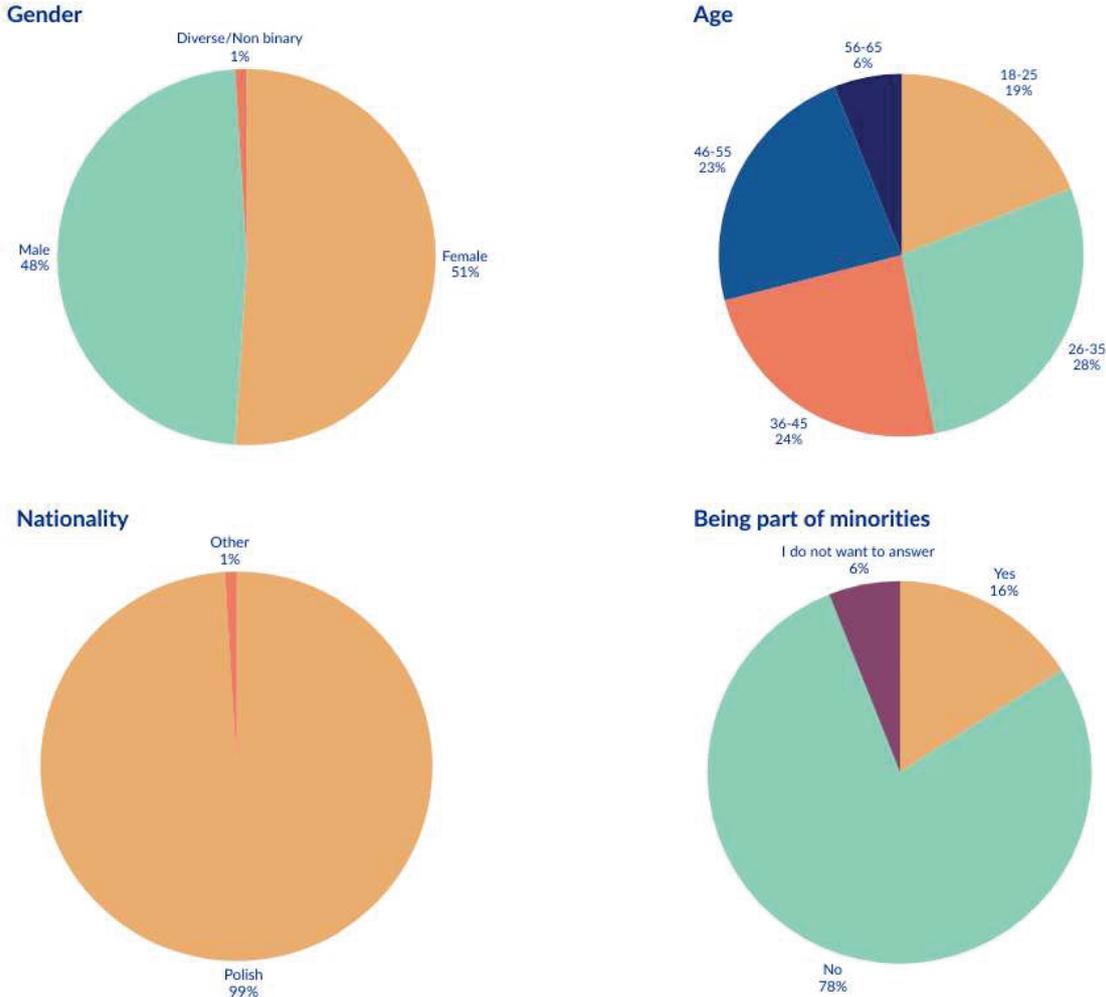
Type of media	Total (n = 83)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers	Other
		Number of responses		
Public service media	16	11	5	0
Commercial TV stations	8	8	0	0
Commercial radio stations	6	6	0	0
National daily newspapers	4	3	1	0
National weeklies	5	4	1	0
National tabloids	1	1	0	0
News portals	8	3	5	0
Local / regional newspapers	6	4	1	1
Community / non-profit / minority medium	14	12	1	1
Other / mixed responses	15	10	3	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities, the sample is relatively representative (see: Figure 1). In terms of nationality, the sample was dominated by responders being native Poles, and in the case of age, the underrepresentation of responders at the age of 56 years and more is visible (no responder chose an option "66+ years old").

Out of 83 responders, 53 (64%) said that their newsroom is located in Warsaw; 24 (29%) pointed to other big city; 5 (6%) chose a medium-sized town; 1 person marked a small town; no responder represented a newsroom located in the countryside.

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.
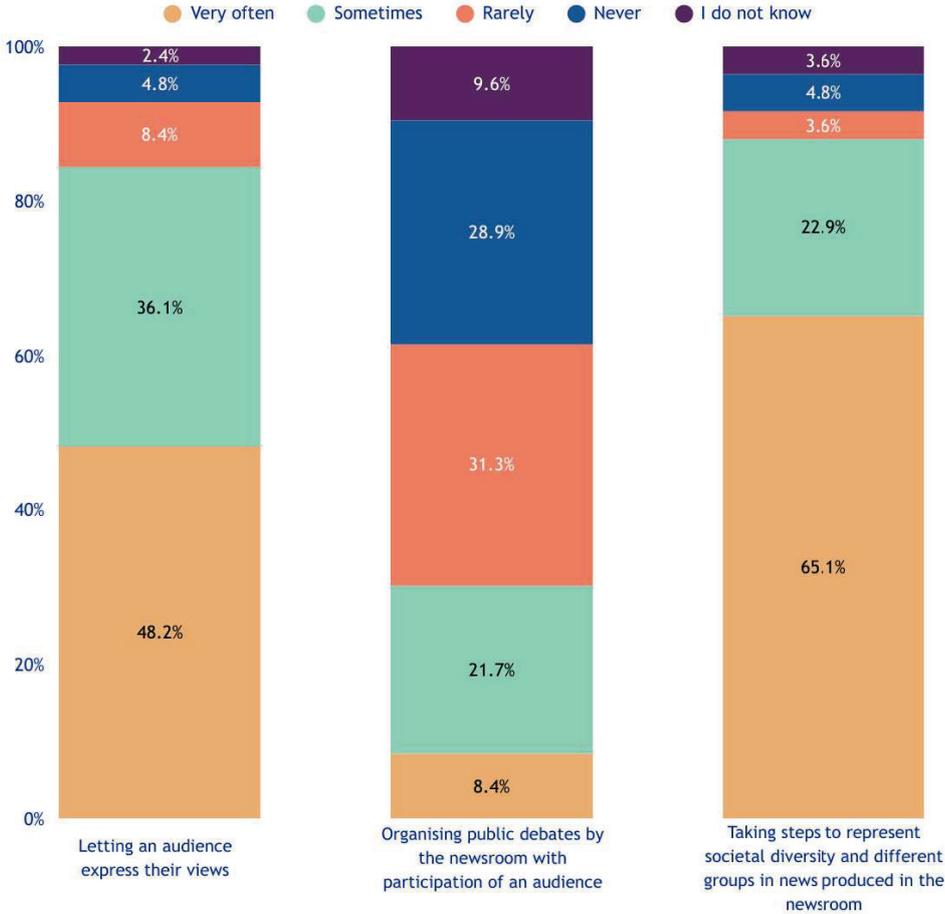
Gender

Diverse/Non binary
1%

Male
48%

Female
51%

Age

56-65
6%

18-25
19%

46-55
23%

26-35
28%

36-45
24%

Nationality

Other
1%

Polish
99%

Being part of minorities

I do not want to answer
6%

Yes
16%

No
78%

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

At the declarative level, respondents take numerous measures to involve their recipients into different forms of participation *through* media. A total of 84% let their audience express their views "very often" or "sometimes". Similarly, 88% of respondents claim to take some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in their newsrooms. More significant differences are, however, evident in terms of organising public debates with participation of the audience: 30% admit doing it "sometimes" or "very often", while 60% do it "rarely" or "never". Interestingly, one out of ten respondents has no knowledge about such activities being taken in their newsrooms; those cases apply, however, only to journalists and other non-decision-making positions (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.

Legend: ● Very often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never ● I do not know

	Letting an audience express their views	Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience	Taking steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom
I do not know	2.4%	9.6%	3.6%
Never	4.8%	28.9%	4.8%
Rarely	8.4%	31.3%	3.6%
Sometimes	36.1%	21.7%	22.9%
Very often	48.2%	8.4%	65.1%

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

When it comes to allowing the audiences for expressing their views on air or by commenting the published content, no clear differences between media types show (see: Table 3). In the case of the PSM, the response "sometimes" was chosen most often, although the response "very often" was picked almost as frequently, which shows that in respondents' view the sector seems to be relatively committed to letting its audience participate in the content creation.

Respondents from commercial audiovisual media suggest that particularly TV show commitment for having public voices expressed in their content, as the only responses from the TV and radio sectors were "very often" and "sometimes" with a dominance of the former. Similarly, news portals representatives claim to allow their audiences to express their views either "very often" or "sometimes". In cases of other media types, responses "rarely", "never" and "I do not know" appear more often; however they are not dominant, and it can be seen clearly that overall, newsrooms in Poland place great value on allowing for simple activities strengthening the public's voice like letting people speak on air or commenting a published content.

However, as shown by the responses to the second question, Polish newsrooms appear to be more reluctant to organise actual debates with participation of an audience (see: Table 3). Particularly concerning might seem a low interest in such activities presented by the public media – 10 out of 16 responders chose either "rarely" or "never" – which are legally obliged to developing contacts with their recipients by, among others, means of distance

communication (Article 21 of the Radio and Television Act). On the other hand, the news portals stand out positively as the only sector (except for "Other / mixed responses") with a dominance of responses "very often" and "sometimes".

Table 3: Number of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 83)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	16	6	7	2	1	0	1	5	4	6	0	10	6	0	0	0
Commercial TV stations	8	7	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	3	0	6	0	0	1	1
Commercial radio stations	6	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	5	1	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	1	0	0	1
National weeklies	5	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	0	3	2	0	0	0
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	8	4	4	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	2	5	2	0	0	1
Local / regional newspapers	6	5	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	0	4	2	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	14	6	5	3	0	0	0	3	5	3	3	8	3	0	3	0
Other / mixed responses	15	3	9	1	2	0	4	4	2	4	1	11	2	2	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Regarding the question on representing diversity, the results present similarly to the question on letting audiences express their views. Regardless of the sector, most of the responders in all sectors declare that their newsroom take such steps "very often" or at least "sometimes". The media types with the highest rate of those two answers are: the PSM, commercial radio stations, weekly national newspapers, and local newspapers (see: Table 3).

3. Participation in the Production

Audience participation in production, according to respondents, seems rather low in Poland. The question about scheduling, planning the programming or participating in decision-making processes related to content production was answered positively only by 13% of respondent (including 1.2% claiming to offer such practice "very often"). The level

of enabling the audiences to participate in strategic planning or management is even lower, with only 2.4% of respondents admitting their newsrooms take such steps "sometimes". As for enabling the audiences to autonomously produce media content for newsrooms, the distribution of responses is more balanced: 32% of responders chose "very often" or "sometimes"; 25% claim to do it "rarely"; while 29% never allow for content produced by the public (see: Figure 3).

Compared to the *Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation* section, one notices a much higher rate of responses "I do not know", regardless of the question (respectively: 17%, 20.5%, and 14.5%). Interestingly, a group of responders where this answer was recorded, although dominated by journalists, included a few cases of persons in managerial positions (editors-in-chief, deputy editors-in-chief and managers).

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production.*
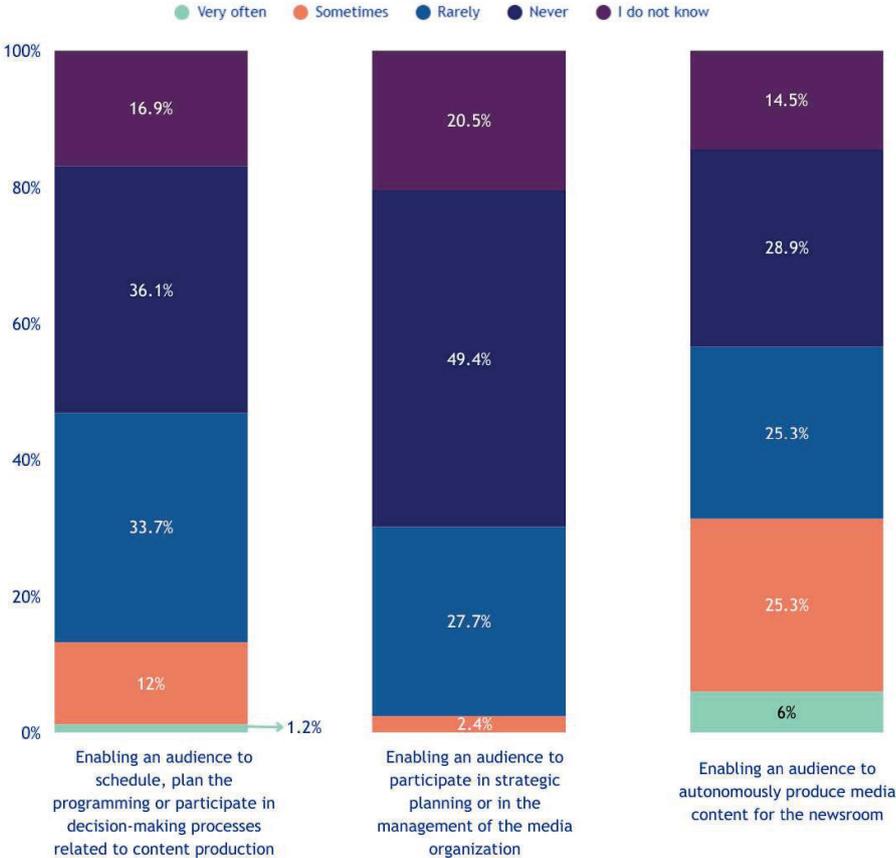
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The representatives of the PSM and national weeklies were most likely to admit that their newsrooms never allow their audiences to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes. In other cases, the responses "rarely" or, less commonly, "I do not know" were dominant. The only exception were respondents from the news portal, who chose the answer "sometimes" relatively often (3 out of 8 responses).

Similarly, when it comes to enabling the audiences to take part in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization, the dominant response is "never". Only representatives of community/non-profit/minority media and other media pointed to the option "rarely" more often than "never", while respondents from commercial radio stations and national daily newspapers chose those two answers in equal number. The only

groups that responded with "sometimes" were representatives of commercial radio stations (1 response out of 6) and "other/mixed responses" (2 responses out of 15). Overall, the results suggest that the Polish media show limited willingness to engage their recipients into strategic planning and managing activities (see: Table 4).

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

| Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 83)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Public service media	16	0	3	3	8	2	0	0	6	9	1	1	5	5	5	0
Commercial TV stations	8	0	0	1	2	5	0	0	0	3	5	1	1	1	2	3
Commercial radio stations	6	0	1	2	2	1	0	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	1
National daily newspapers	4	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	0
National weeklies	5	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	2	2
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	8	0	3	2	1	2	0	0	3	3	2	1	2	2	2	1
Local / regional newspapers	6	0	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	5	1	0	4	0	1	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	14	0	2	7	5	0	0	0	9	4	1	0	2	4	5	3
Other / mixed responses	15	1	0	8	4	2	0	2	5	4	4	1	4	7	2	1

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

As mentioned above, a slightly more positive picture is painted when it comes to enabling the audiences to autonomously produce media content for the newsrooms. The only groups where no responders chose answers: "very often" and "sometimes", were national weeklies and a tabloid. A good performance was observed in a case of the local/regional newspapers (4 out of 6 respondents claim to do it "sometimes") and commercial radio stations (3 out of 6 respondents chose either "very often" or "sometimes"). Also, within the PSM, representatives of the public are relatively often allowed to participate in the content production, as 6 out of 16 respondents from the sector picked either "very often" or "sometimes" (see: Table 4).

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

The Polish media appear to actively support different forms of electoral participation and activism. All five questions were dominated with responses "very often" and, less frequently, "sometimes". It shows, particularly, when it comes to encouraging the audiences to participate in elections at all levels. The results present respectively: in case of the European politics and elections, 72% of respondents claim to support public engagement "very often" or "sometimes"; in the case of the national politics, the rate reaches nearly 80%; and in the case of the local politics, it is 75%.

In terms of encouraging non-voting activities (such as activism, community engagement, demonstrations and citizens' initiatives), as well as activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, the level of support is also very high (respectively: 82% and 75%), although – in contrast to first three questions – in those two cases, respondents were more likely to choose an option "sometimes" rather than "very often" (see: Figure 4). The rate of "I do not know" responses was once again low and limited to journalists and other respondents on non-managerial positions.

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism.*
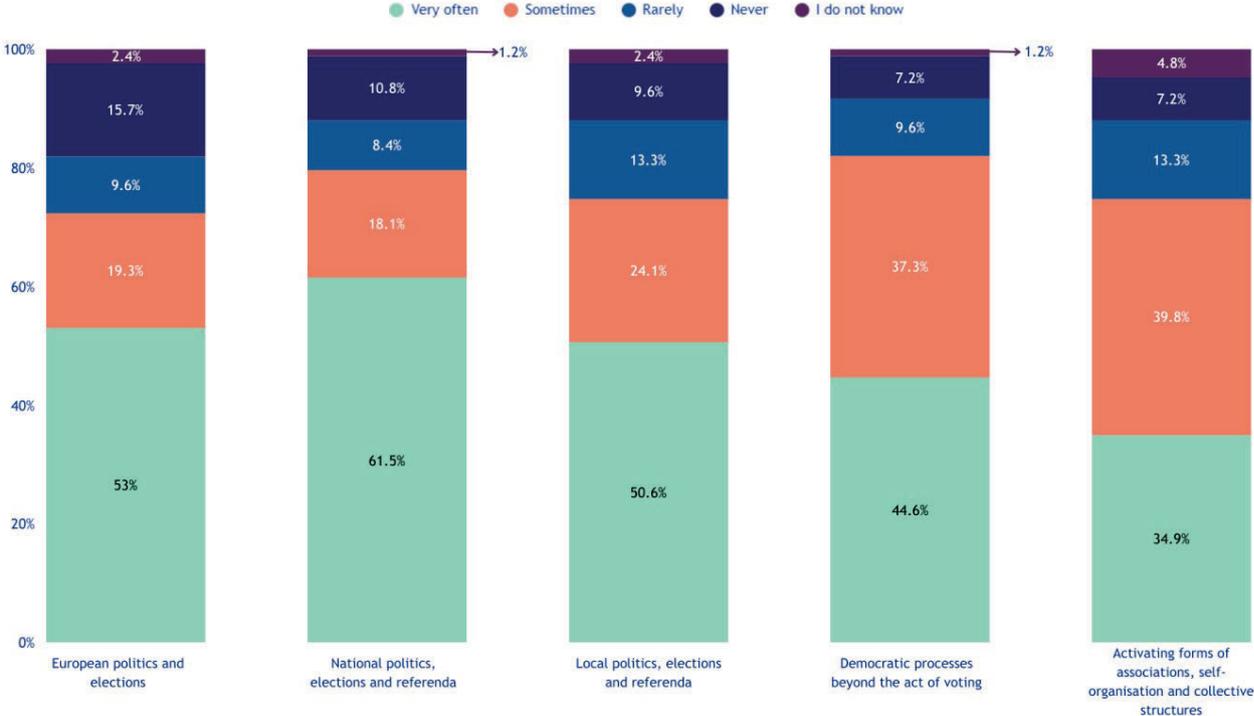
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Interestingly, the media with the lowest rate of encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, regardless of the level (European, national or local), are the community, non-profit and minority media. In other groups, responses "rarely", "never" and "I do not know" occurred occasionally. It is worth noting, however, that two out of six representatives of local/regional newspapers claimed to encourage participation in local politics "rarely" or "never" (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Frequency / Type of media	Total (n = 83)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	16	13	2	0	1	0	13	2	0	1	0	11	3	2	0	0
Commercial TV stations	8	4	2	0	0	0	5	2	0	1	0	4	3	0	1	0
Commercial radio stations	6	3	3	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	4	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0
National weeklies	5	2	1	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	0
National tabloids	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
News portals	8	5	2	0	0	1	7	0	0	0	1	5	2	0	0	1
Local / regional newspapers	6	3	0	1	1	1	4	0	0	2	0	4	0	1	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	14	1	2	3	8	0	2	2	4	6	0	1	1	5	6	1
Other / mixed responses	15	8	4	0	1	0	9	4	2	0	0	9	4	2	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of encouraging non-electoral activities, overall level of support is also high (see: Table 6). It is, again, noticeable that the community, non-profit and minority media representatives were more likely to choose options "rarely" or "never". Besides this, the results show a slightly lower frequency of responses "very often" and "sometimes" in the following groups: commercial TV stations and daily newspapers (in case of the latter, it is particularly visible in terms of encouraging for activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures).

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation	Total (n = 83)	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
Type of Media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	16	7	8	1	0	0	6	7	3	0	0
Commercial TV stations	8	1	4	1	2	0	1	2	2	2	1
Commercial radio stations	6	2	4	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0
National daily newspapers	4	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0
National weeklies	5	2	1	2	0	0	1	2	2	0	0
National tabloids	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
News portals	8	5	2	0	0	1	4	3	0	0	1
Local / regional newspapers	6	3	2	0	1	0	3	2	0	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	14	4	5	2	3	0	4	5	0	3	2
Other / mixed responses	15	10	4	1	0	0	6	8	1	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

5. Conclusions

Respondents from the Polish media declare a relatively high level of support for increasing public's participation. Surveyed journalists and producers claim to take numerous steps to reflect the societal diversity and to involve their recipients into expressing their views through the media. The media's willingness to increase participation, as declared by the respondents, presents even more significantly when it comes to encouraging involvement in different forms of political activities, especially elections, but also activism and overall social engagement.

That confirms the conclusions that were also drawn from the interviews with the Polish media representatives, conducted at previous stages of the research: most of the media self identify as proactive and perceive their own role in shaping democracy as important. However, this does not translate into specific actions taken to engage the audiences in

participation in the debates and media production. Also, another aspect worth adding is a highly polarized structural pattern of the Polish media which influences an active role of the media in mobilizing a particular camp of media users identifying with given media outlets.

 It should also be emphasized that Polish newsrooms appear to be rather reluctant to organise actual meetings and debates, to which an audience would be invited. Lack of direct actions manifests even more with a marginal role of participation of the public in the media production, including scheduling, strategic planning and autonomous content production. In this case, Poland belong to MeDeMAP countries with the lowest level of participation.

These limitations might stem from financial constraints and staff shortages, which were previously identified as a common struggle affecting Polish newsrooms, including the PSM sector. Another reason might be ascribing more importance to debates between politicians than citizens, particularly before elections, and increasing significance of internal fact-checking and sources verification, which could be more difficult in a case of content created by nonprofessional media workers.

COUNTRY REPORT: PORTUGAL

Monika Szafrańska

in collaboration with Tatiana Chervyakova, Manuel José Damásio and Nuno Cintra Torres

1. Introduction

The process of collecting the data in Portugal took place between 25th February and 22nd June 2025. The invitations were distributed mostly via the two journalism institutions that own the most prominent journalists' databases in Portugal: The Accreditation Committee (Comissão da Carteira Profissional do Jornalista), with 4276 journalists on its database, virtually all Portuguese journalists, and the Journalists' Union with 1731 members. In total, 89 responses to the questionnaire were received.

Nearly all media types provided in a questionnaire are represented in a final sample; however, no respondents positioned themselves as working for a tabloid. It can be assumed that some journalists working for brands that fit in the tabloid category did participate in the survey but abstained from declaring tabloid as their workplace as it might be an indicator of bad quality journalism.

In other cases, the numbers of responses vary and, in some cases, are too small to draw representative conclusions about particular newsrooms types. Another hampering factor is a high number of responses categorized as "other" and "mixed" (the latter refers to cases in which a respondent chose more than one outlet as their workplace).

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	16
Commercial TV stations	8
Commercial radio stations	3
National daily newspapers	16
National weeklies	7
National tabloids	0
News portals	3
Local / regional newspapers	10
Community / non-profit / minority media	4
Other / mixed responses	22
Total	89

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Another significant factor hampering the analysis is lack of balance in terms of respondents' position in newsrooms. Out of 89 responses, 61 (68.5%) were journalists, and 25 (28%) performed decision-making functions. Although 12 respondents chose an option "other", their responses (for example, "correspondent", "producer") allowed to classify them into remaining categories, which resulted in only 3 non-categorized responses. The only media type with no responses from persons in decision-making and managerial positions was the PSM (see: Table 2).

Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of medium	Total (n = 89)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers and other decision-making positions	Other
		Number of responses		
Public service media	16	16	0	0
Commercial TV stations	8	6	2	0
Commercial radio stations	3	1	1	1
National daily newspapers	16	9	6	1
National weeklies	7	6	1	0
National tabloids	0	0	0	0
News portals	3	2	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	10	7	3	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	4	2	2	0
Other / mixed responses	22	12	9	1

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

The overall gender picture is balanced, although no non-binary persons participated in the survey. The newsroom's age picture is not balanced due to the fact representatives of the younger generation were less willing to take part in the study. Only 7% of participants claimed they belonged to a minority, and 6% did not have Portuguese origins (see: Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.
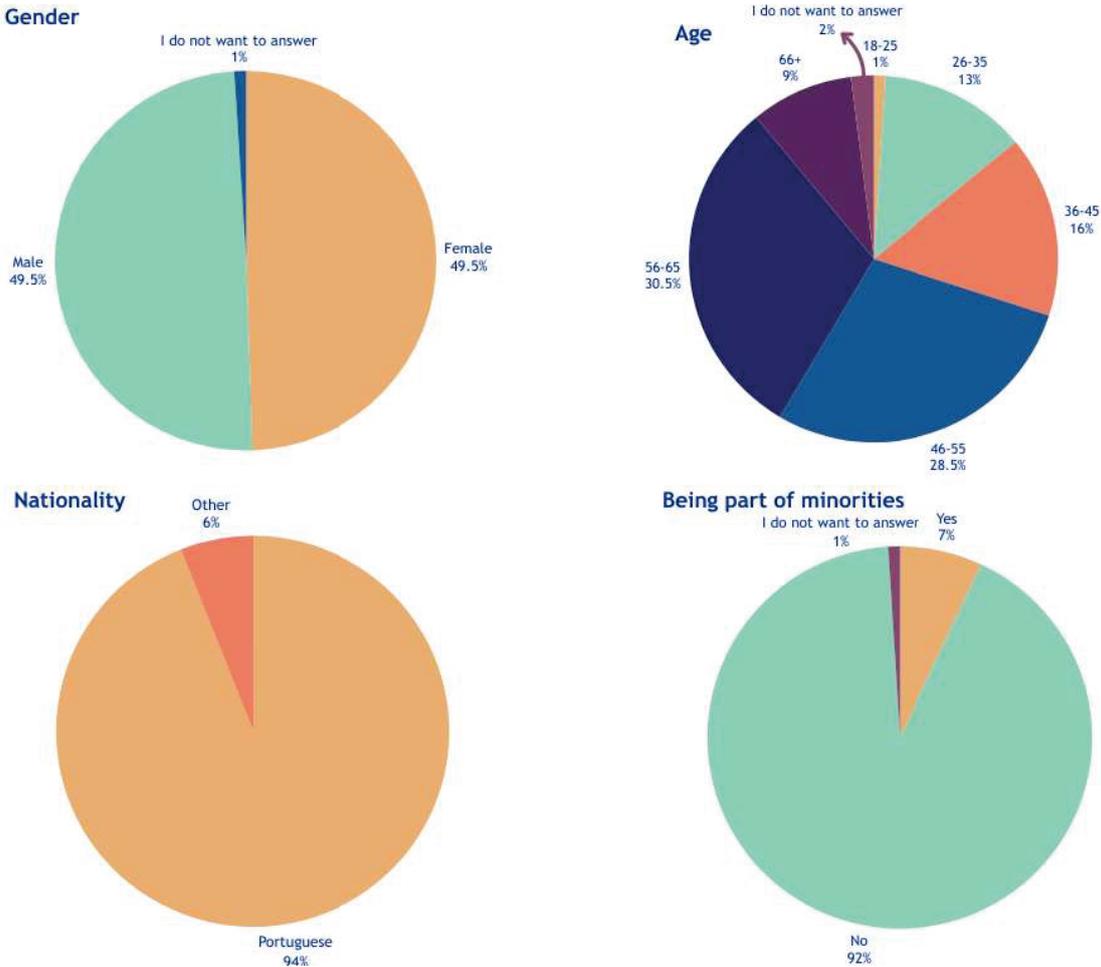
Out of 89 responders, 57 (64%) said that their newsroom was located in the country's capital, Lisbon; 13 (15%) pointed to other big city; 10 (11%) chose a medium-sized town; 9 (10%) marked a small town; no responder represented a newsroom located in the countryside.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

Letting the audience express their views is stated as a common practice by half of the respondents who claim their outlets do this "very often". Additionally, one fifth of the newsrooms allow for this form of public engagement "sometimes". Taking steps to reflect societal diversity in the published content is also rather common: nearly 77% of the respondents chose either "very often" or "sometimes", most of which picked the former option.

On the other hand, organising direct debates with the audience is much less frequent, as only around 28% of the respondents answered the question in this subject positively, with

only 12% declaring that debates take place in their newsrooms "very often" (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
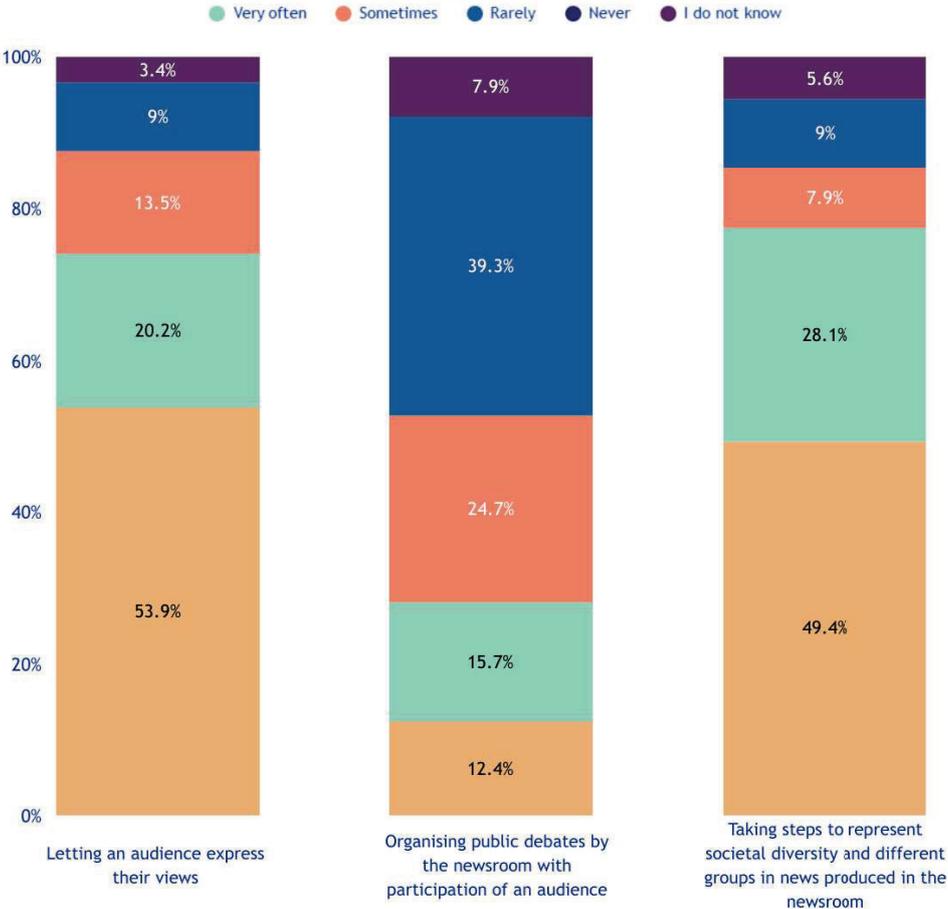
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Drawing correlations with the media types does not reveal any specific patterns (see: Table 3). Interestingly, the representatives of news portals were the only group where the first question was dominated with a response "sometimes" rather than "very often". It might appear untypical considering that the presence on Internet allows for most direct contact with the recipients; however, a low number of responses from this sector makes it difficult to draw consistent conclusions.

The PSM does not seem to prioritize letting its audience express their views, either. Only 4 out of 17 respondents from the public sector chose the response "very often", and another 4 respondents claim to adapt this form of audience's participation "sometimes".

Table 3: Results regarding the question: *Letting an audience express their views* in a correlation with type of the medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 89)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	16	4	4	3	5	0	1	1	4	9	1	9	6	0	1	0
Commercial TV stations	8	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	7	0	1	5	0	2	0
Commercial radio stations	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0
National daily l newspapers	16	12	1	2	0	1	2	6	5	3	0	6	6	1	1	2
National weeklies	7	5	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	2	1	2	1	0	2	2
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	10	7	2	1	0	0	1	2	4	3	0	7	1	1	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	4	3	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0
Other / Mied responses	22	12	7	2	0	1	1	2	6	8	5	13	4	4	0	1

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

When it comes to organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience, printed national media stand out relatively positively. In the case of daily national newspaper, 8 out of 16 respondents claim their newsrooms adapt this kind of format at least sometimes, and in the case of weeklies, 4 out of 7 declare to do this "very often".

The last group that shows willingness to involve the public into direct debates are community / non-profit / minority media (2 out of 4 respondent answered with "very often", and 1 marked "sometimes"). When it comes to diversity representation, all media types representatives declare a high frequency of taking steps to reflect a presence of different social groups in their content.

3. Participation in the Production

As declared by respondents, the Portuguese newsrooms seem rather reluctant to include the public in the decision-making processes, especially strategic planning and management

(59% of respondents claim to never use such ability). Similarly, more than a half of respondents (53%) never allow the audience to autonomously produce content for their newsrooms. Only in the case of scheduling, planning the programming or participating in decision-making processes related to content production, the rate of responses "never" is lower, although still relatively high (43%) (see: Figure 3).

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production.*
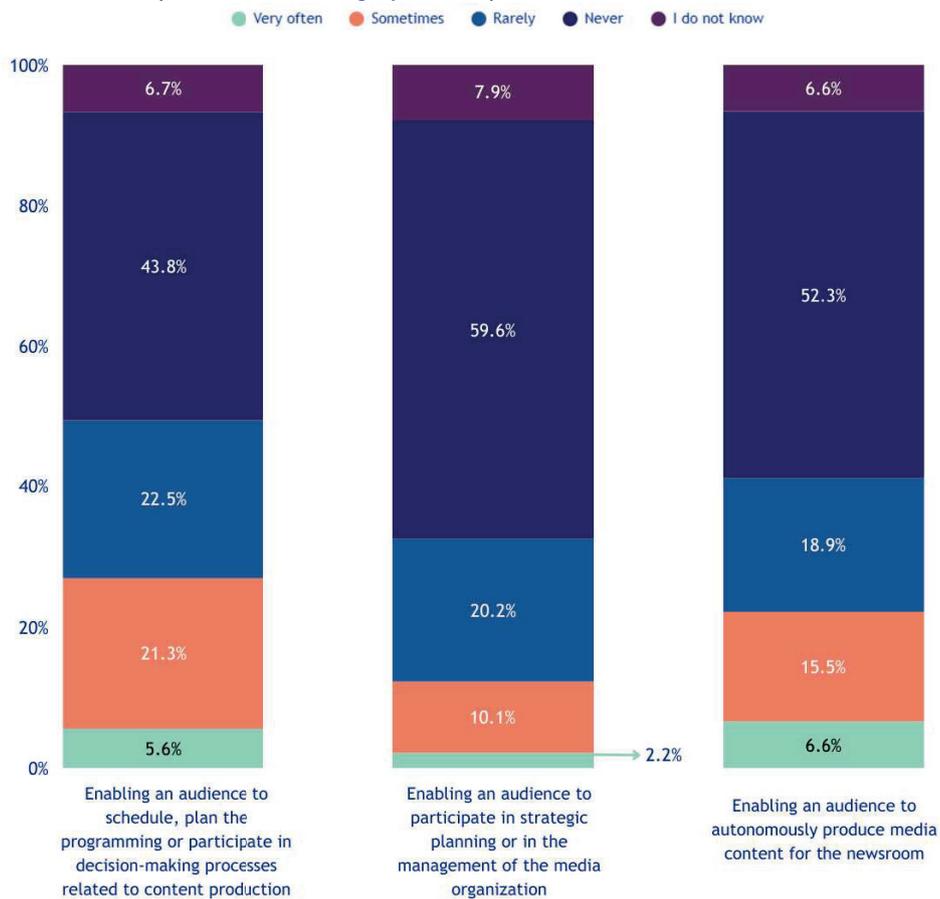
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025

The audience's participation in the media production is rare or does not occur at all, regardless of the media type (see: Table 4). As for enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management, minor traces of this practice were recorded in the case of the PSM, commercial radio stations, daily national and local/regional newspapers as well as community and non-profit newsrooms.

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 89)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	16	1	1	4	9	1	1	0	4	9	2	1	0	2	12	1
Commercial TV stations	8	0	1	3	4	0	0	0	2	6	0	0	2	1	5	0
Commercial radio stations	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
National daily newspapers	16	0	3	6	7	0	0	2	6	8	0	3	2	3	8	0
National weeklies	7	0	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	6	1	0	1	1	4	1
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Local / regional newspapers	10	0	4	4	2	0	0	2	2	6	0	0	4	2	4	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	4	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0
Other / Mixed responses	22	2	6	2	8	4	1	2	2	13	4	2	4	4	9	3

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

According to respondents, enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content is occasionally practised by the PSM, daily national newspapers and local media. A good example of the public-based content are the letters to the editors published by one of the regional newsrooms in Portugal, as evidenced by the interviews with its journalist conducted for the MeDeMAP Task 4.2. Interestingly, the practice of direct public participation exists daily in some morning radio shows, although it was not revealed in the presented study (it is important, however, to note a small sample in this media category).

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

The Portuguese media show a relative willingness to support electoral and activist participation on different levels. National and local politics are of greatest interest to the respondents (in both cases around 65% of positive responses, e.g. either "very often" or "sometimes"). European politics are also covered frequently (53% of positive responses).

The least positive results were received in the case of a question on associations, self-organisation and collective structures (44.5%). This could stem from the following reasons:

1) a weak condition of civil society organisation in Portugal, 2) its weak relationships with the media, 3) not enough resources for the media to cover all the niches, 4) diminishing audiences from immigration to the major cities.

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*.
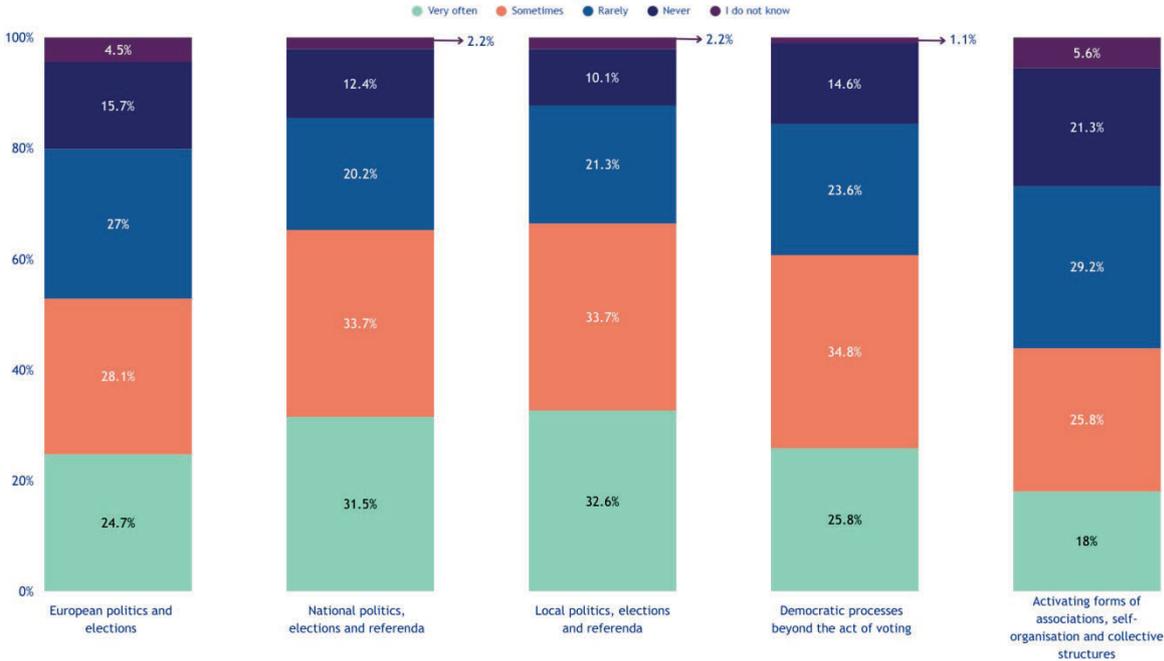
The media types that, according to respondents, commit mostly to covering the political and electoral themes, especially at the European level, are commercial radio stations and news portals (in both cases, small samples need to be noted). In other cases, rate of encouraging participating in politics, elections and referenda at different levels is evenly high.

As mentioned above, the Portuguese media are seemingly more likely to encourage political engagement on the national or local level rather than on the European one, which is particularly evident in case of local/regional newspapers. On the opposite pole, there is the PSM, whose representatives claimed to cover the European politics slightly more often than politics on other levels (see: Table 5).

Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Frequency / Type of media	Total (n = 89)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	16	6	4	3	3	0	7	3	3	3	0	6	4	3	3	0
Commercial TV stations	8	3	2	3	0	0	3	2	3	0	0	3	2	3	0	0
Commercial radio stations	3	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	0
National daily newspapers	16	3	6	5	2	0	4	6	4	2	0	4	7	3	2	0
National weeklies	7	1	3	0	1	2	2	4	0	1	0	2	3	1	1	0
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	10	4	1	5	0	0	4	4	2	0	0	6	2	2	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	4	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0
Other / Mixed responses	22	5	4	6	5	2	6	6	5	3	2	6	8	4	2	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of encouraging non-electoral activities, overall level of support is also high, particularly in case of supporting activism, community engagement, demonstrations and citizens' initiatives (see: Table 6). As for encouraging associations, self-organisation and collective structures, whenever the responders answered positively, they were more likely to choose "sometimes" or "rarely" over "very often". The only exception in this respect are local and regional newspapers, in case of which 5 out of 10 responders picked "very often", and 4 marked "rarely", with no one choosing "sometimes" (one person chose "I do not know").

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation	Total (n = 89)	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
Type of Media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	16	7	2	3	4	0	3	3	4	6	0
Commercial TV stations	8	2	2	3	1	0	1	2	1	3	1
Commercial radio stations	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
National daily newspapers	16	2	8	5	1	0	2	6	7	1	0
National weeklies	7	0	4	0	3	0	0	1	3	2	1
National tabloids	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
News portals	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
Local / regional newspapers	10	5	4	1	0	0	5	0	4	0	1
Community / non-profit / minority media	4	1	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0
Other / Mixed responses	22	5	7	6	3	1	3	8	4	5	2

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

5. Conclusions

A declared support for increasing the audience's participation is relatively high among the representatives of Portuguese media. It manifests in particular through opinions about letting an audience express its views and taking steps to reflect societal diversity in the published content. The respondents also claim to encourage the citizens actively to engage in political activities, like participating in elections, creating different forms of collective structures and taking other forms of community or social activism.

Direct contact in view of surveyed journalists and producers with the audience is, however, not so common. Only slightly more than one fourth of respondents admitted their newsrooms organize at least sometimes the debates with representatives of the audience. This might stem from, among others, the lack of financial resources, which was pointed to as a common struggle by the Portuguese media workers interviewed at the previous MeDeMAP research stage.

The participation of the public in the media production (like scheduling, strategic planning and autonomous content production), as declared by the Portuguese respondents, is not frequent, either, which proves that journalists still see their role as gatekeepers and mediators rather than a platform for the audience to share its own content or be involved in decision-making processes. Additionally, as shown by the MeDeMAP interviews, many tensions between the media system and the citizens in Portugal occur like a lack of

approbation of the journalistic work from the audience), although journalists themselves perceive their commitment to their craft as high. The decreasing trust between journalists and audiences might be a hampering factor in terms of creating a space for a fruitful cooperation in, for example, creating initiatives for bottom-up media content.

The course of the study also shows some interesting conditions, including diverging willingness to participate in the survey by representatives of different media types. Particularly striking is the absence of tabloid workers. More knowledge about their motivations to avoid recognising what is often commonly perceived as sensational journalism, as well as the definition and the ethical aspect of including this response option when asking the professionals themselves, might be an important direction in the future media studies.

Another issue is a high number of respondents who claimed to work in more than one newsroom, which made it impossible to draw specific correlations. This finding, however, corresponds to some extent with the conclusions drawn from interviews with the Portuguese journalists who often referred to harsh working conditions and a high media employee turnover.

COUNTRY REPORT: SLOVENIA

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1. Introduction

The process of collecting the data on the Slovenian market took place between 25th March and 24th June 2025. A total of 150 invitations were distributed, 133 to journalists and 27 to editors from 20 different media outlets (3 public service media, 2 commercial TV channels, 2 commercial radio channels, 3 quality press media, 1 national tabloid press, 3 digital native news media, 2 regional press outlets, 2 regional TV or radio outlets, 2 non-profit media). Following the initial invitation, two reminder e-mails were sent over the course of approximately one month, with an additional reminder targeted at media outlets with lower response rates.

The final sample consisted of 62 responses, among which all required media types are represented, albeit to varying degrees (see: Table 1). A notable differentiation in response patterns emerged between public and non-profit media, and privately owned outlets. Public and non-profit outlets both responded more quickly, typically within the first three days of distribution, and at higher overall rates. By contrast, securing responses from private media proved more challenging.

This is reflected in the final response distribution: 20 surveys were submitted by the public service broadcaster Radio-Television Slovenia and 10 by non-profit media organizations, in contrast to 32 responses collected from all other media categories combined. Especially challenging turned out to be collecting data from representatives of the following newsrooms types: commercial radio stations (2 responses), local/regional newspapers (2 responses) and national tabloids (1 response).

Table 1: Number of responses in a correlation with the type of medium.

Type of media	Number of responses
Public service media	20
Commercial TV stations	11
Commercial radio stations	2
National daily newspapers	9
National weeklies	2
National tabloids	1
News portals	4
Local / regional newspapers	2
Community / non-profit / minority media	10
Other	1
Total	62

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Keeping a balance in terms of respondents' newsroom positions turned out to be a challenge, too. Out of 62 responses collected, 50 (81%) came from journalists, and only 12

(19%) were obtained from editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers and other decision-makers. The PSM, commercial TVs, local/regional newspapers and community/non-profit/minority media were the only newsrooms types for which at least a minimal number of responses from persons in decision-making and managerial positions was secured (see: Table 2).
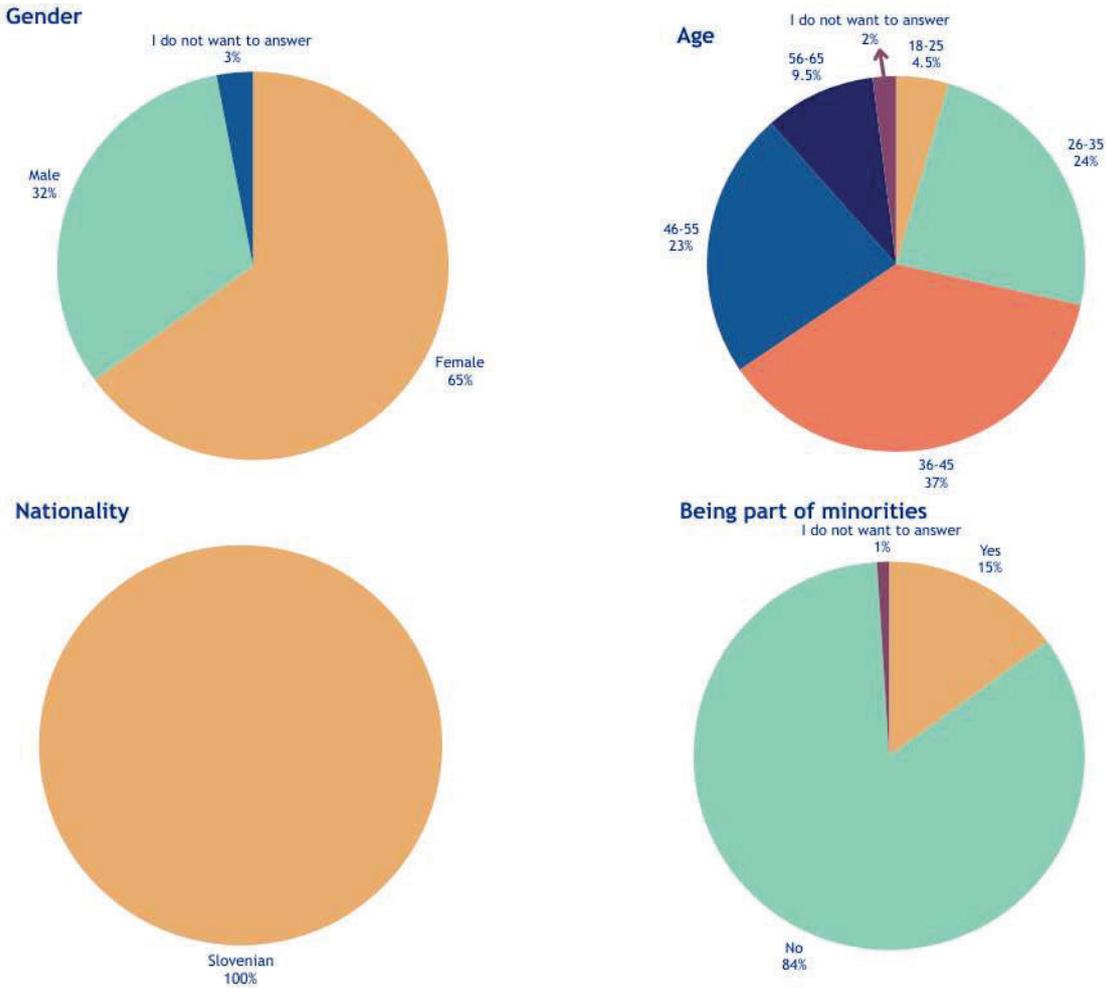
Table 2: Number of responses in a correlation with positions of respondents.

Type of media	Total (n = 62)	Journalists	Editors-in-chiefs, deputy-editors-in-chief, managers and other decision-making positions	Other
			Number of responses	
Public service media	20	16	4	0
Commercial TV stations	11	8	3	0
Commercial radio stations	2	2	0	0
National daily newspapers	9	9	0	0
National weeklies	2	2	0	0
National tabloids	1	1	0	0
News portals	4	3	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	2	1	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	7	3	0
Other	1	1	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

In terms of the demographic structure, the study is partly representative. The lack of balance is particularly visible in the case of the nationality: all respondents were Slovenes. As for the gender structure (65% of the respondents were female), the results correspond with findings by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, according to which in Slovenia, the share of female journalists in 2015 was 59% (UNECE, 2017). The difficulties with keeping the demographic balance resulted partly from an inability to collect a bigger overall sample.

Figure 1: Percentage of responses in a correlation with gender, age, nationality and being part of minorities of the respondents.

Gender

- I do not want to answer 3%
- Male 32%
- Female 65%

Age

- I do not want to answer 2%
- 18-25 4.5%
- 26-35 24%
- 36-45 37%
- 46-55 23%
- 56-65 9.5%

Nationality

- Slovenian 100%

Being part of minorities

- I do not want to answer 1%
- Yes 15%
- No 84%

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Out of 62 responders, 49 (79%) claimed that their newsroom is located in the capital city, Ljubljana, and 8 (13%) pointed to other big city. Another 5% picked either a mid-sized or small city, and none chose the countryside.

2. Providing a Voice in the Debate and Representation

Over two-thirds of responders in Slovenia claim their newsrooms allow for audience interaction, with over 40% letting the public to express their views "very often". Similarly, two-thirds of the surveyed state their media outlets aim to represent diverse social groups in their content, though one-third do not prioritize this objective. Public debate formats that involve the audience are, however, not so common: more than 40% of the respondents admit they do not organize such events at all, and around 35% do it "rarely" (see: Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of responses in the category: *Providing a voice in the debate and representation*.
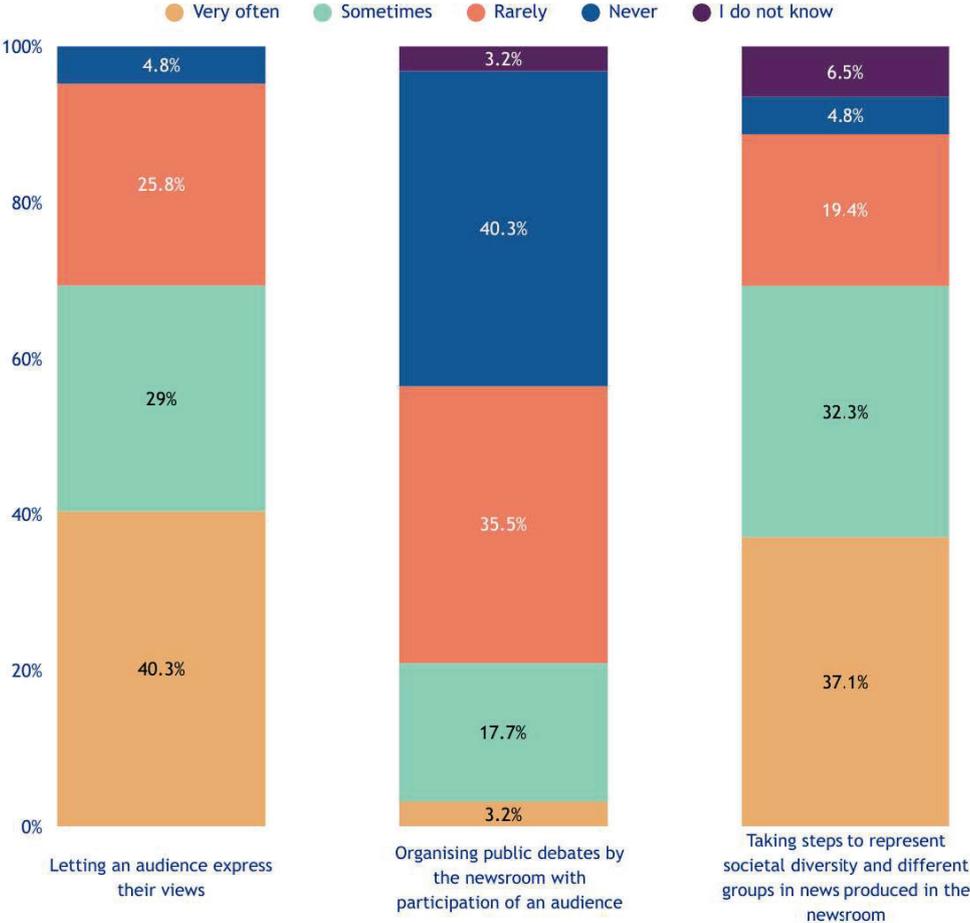
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

The interaction with the audience in Slovenia typically takes the form of publishing letters from readers or more or less moderated comment sections in news portals. The former is a domain of quality print media, whose representatives – especially in the case of daily national newspapers – mostly claim to let the readers express their views "very often" (5 out of 9 respondents) or at least "sometimes" (4 out of 9). The moderated comment sections are typical for the news portal of the Slovenian public broadcaster, while the moderation in the commercial news portals is rather weak. In the case of the PSM and the commercial TV, more than a half of respondents chose answers: "very often" or "sometimes".

As for the public media, the most notable example is the radio format allowing listeners to report on local issues or present their opinion on public matters by calling the station. The media type which also appears to be active in the field of letting an audience express their views are the community, non-profit and minority outlets: in their case, 6 out of 10 respondents, claim to perform this kind of participation "very often" (see: Table 3).

Table 3: Results regarding the question: *Letting an audience express their views* in a correlation with type of the medium.

Level of participation / Type of media	Total (n = 62)	Letting an audience express their views					Organising public debates by the newsroom with participation of an audience					Taking some steps to represent societal diversity and different groups in news produced in the newsroom				
Frequency		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	20	6	6	6	2	0	0	0	9	10	1	6	8	4	1	1
Commercial TV stations	11	2	5	4	0	0	0	0	7	4	0	2	5	4	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0
National daily newspapers	9	5	4	0	0	0	0	6	2	1	0	1	5	2	0	1
National weeklies	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
National tabloids	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
News portals	4	3	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	6	1	3	0	0	2	3	3	2	0	7	2	1	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Public debate formats in the news media outlets that involve the audience are not so common. When they do occur, they are usually tied to specific events such as natural disasters, controversial policy decisions, or elections, and are primarily organized by news portals (3 out of 4 respondents chose the answer "very often"), quality daily newspapers (6 out of 9 picked "sometimes") and community/non-profit/minority media (5 out of 10 marked either "very often" or "sometimes"), rarely also by the public media and most popular commercial television. As shown by previous MeDeMAP research, attempts to organize debates are also taken on the local level. One of the local journalists stated then:

> "We try to open up the public debate also in the actual physical space with public editorial meetings that we have two or three per year, which are usually thematically linked to something that we are doing at the time, a topic that we are dealing with. We have a short presentation or something like that, and then we try to open up a debate with the people who are present there" (Petković, Turnšek, Detiček, Pajnik, 2025: 127).

Regarding the question on diversity, the results indicate a relatively high level of willingness to represent different groups in the media content. Except for the tabloid representative, the majority of the responders, regardless of the media type, declare that their newsroom take such steps at least "sometimes". The only sector where the answer "very often" was dominant is the community, non-profit and minority media. This lack of

prioritization for representing the societal diversity confirms previous MeDeMAP results, in particular those pointing to significant gaps in representation of women.

3. Participation in the Production

Audience participation in decision-making processes is relatively uncommon among the surveyed media outlets. The rarest activity is enabling the recipients to participate in strategic planning or in managing: only 1.5% of respondents claim their newsroom allow this kind of practice; 23% do it "rarely", 63% do not implement such a practice at all, and nearly 13% are not aware whether their outlet has any policy in this field. However, it is worth noting that civil society has a significant presence in the governing body of the public service broadcaster RTV Slovenia: 7 out of 17 members represent various civil society segments.

In terms of audiences' participation in scheduling and planning the production, and its autonomous media content production, both practices are incorporated, in more or less degree, by around 18% of the newsrooms (see: Figure 3).

Figure 3: Distribution of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production*.
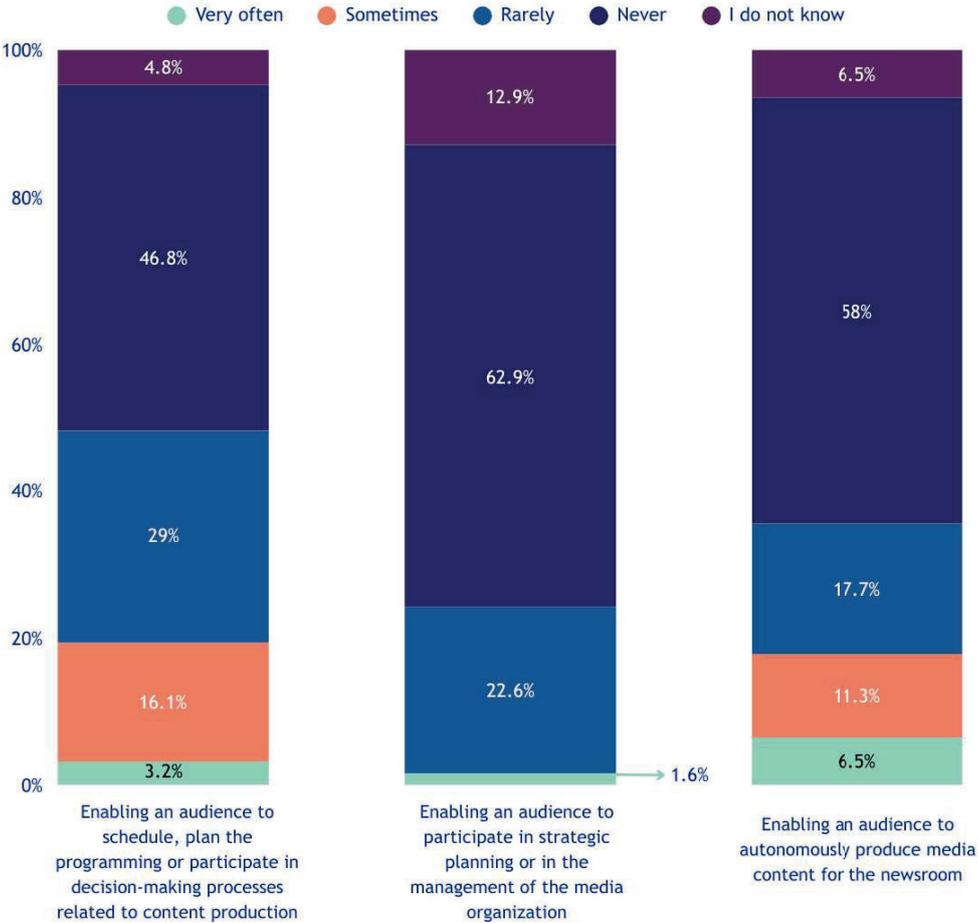
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Allowing the public to schedule, plan or participate in decision-making processes is the most characteristic to the community, non-profit or minority media, for instance fact-

checking outlets (through practices like public editorial meetings). Also, the journalists and producers' responses show that some public service media outlets exhibit a small tendency to involve specific audience segments – such as youth – in the creation of online content for dedicated sections (see: Table 4).

Table 4: Number of responses in the category: *Participation in the Production* in a correlation with the type of medium.

| Level of participation	Total (n = 62)	Enabling an audience to schedule, plan the programming or participate in decision-making processes related to content production					Enabling an audience to participate in strategic planning or in the management of the media organization					Enabling an audience to autonomously produce media content for the newsroom				
Frequency / Type of media		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	20	0	3	3	23	1	1	0	4	14	1	0	1	3	15	1
Commercial TV stations	11	0	0	6	5	0	0	0	0	9	2	0	0	3	8	0
Commercial radio stations	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	9	0	2	3	3	1	0	0	3	4	2	2	2	2	2	1
National weeklies	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
News portals	4	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	1	1
Local / regional newspapers	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	1	5	2	2	0	0	0	3	5	2	1	2	1	6	0
Other	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

As indicated above, audience involvement in strategic planning or media management remains very rare, regardless of the media type. On the other hand, the autonomous production of media content by members of the audience was mentioned as a common or relatively common practice by some representatives of daily newspapers (4 out of 9 respondents chose either "very often" or "sometimes"). For instance, the "Večer" daily, published in the second-largest city in Slovenia, regularly engages audience members with notable societal roles to write personal diary entries for publication. Additionally, letters and open statements from various audience groups are frequently published and given prominent placement in the online edition of the paper.

The only remaining group that, to a small degree, allows for the content produced by the audience is the community, non-profit and minority media (3 out of 10 respondents chose either "very often" or "sometimes").

4. Electoral Participation and Activism

The Slovenian media show a relatively big willingness to cover issues linked to electoral participation and different forms of activism. It does not, however, appear to be their priority, as the dominant response to all five questions was "sometimes" rather than "very often" (see: Figure 4). The most frequent activity is encouraging the citizens to participate in national politics (29% of respondents claim to implement this tactic "very often"), and the least common is supporting associations, self-organisation and collective structures (16%).

Figure 4: Distribution of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*.
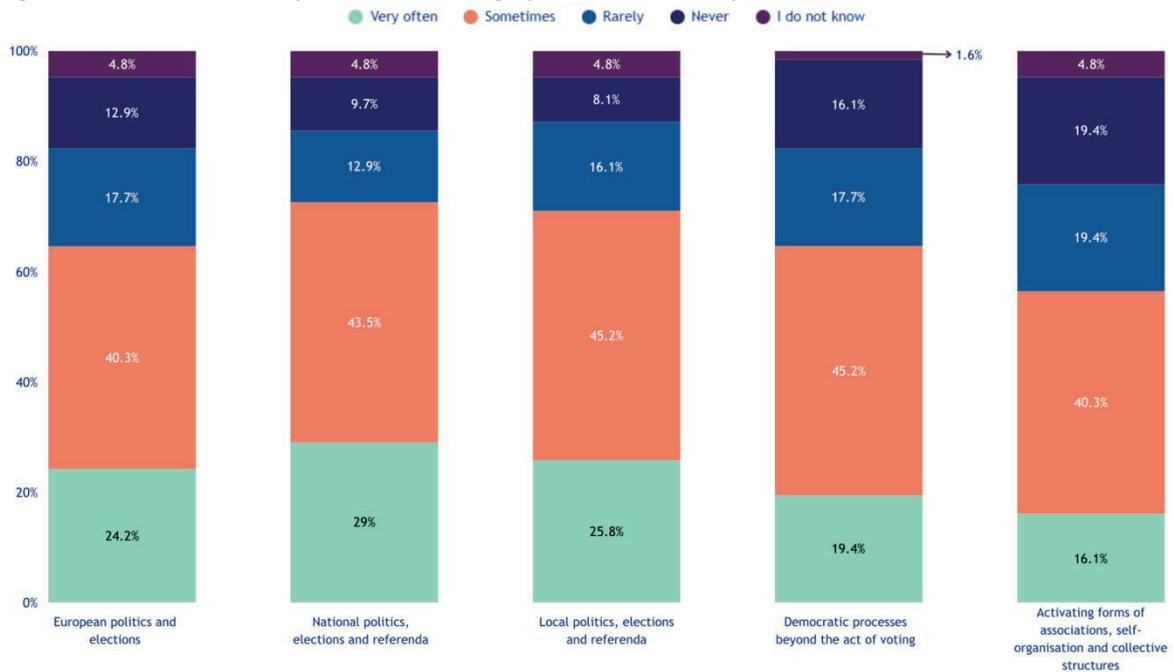
Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

It is the PMS and news portals that seem to support citizens' participation in politics and elections/referenda, regardless of the level, the most often; although the high disproportion of the number of responses needs to, once again, be emphasized (see: Table 5).

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Table 5: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism*, subcategory: encouraging to participate in politics, elections and referenda, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation / Frequency / Type of media	Total (n = 62)	European politics and elections					National politics, elections and referenda					Local politics, elections and referenda				
		Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses														
Public service media	20	8	6	4	2	0	8	7	3	2	0	8	7	3	2	0
Commercial TV stations	11	0	7	4	0	0	1	8	2	0	0	0	9	2	0	0
Commercial radio stations	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	9	2	5	0	2	0	3	5	1	0	0	4	4	1	0	0
National weeklies	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
National tabloids	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
News portals	4	2	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	1
Local / regional newspapers	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	1	5	1	2	1	2	4	1	2	1	1	4	2	2	1
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Coverage of civil society advocacy, protests, citizen initiatives, and activities by associations and non-governmental organizations is periodically featured in Slovenian news media. Still, however, the response "sometimes" dominates over "very often" across all media types (see: Table 6).

Table 6: Number of responses in the category: *Electoral Participation and Activism,* subcategories: encouraging participating in democratic processes beyond the act of voting and activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures, in a correlation with the type of medium.

Level of participation	Democratic processes beyond the act of voting					Activating forms of associations, self-organisation and collective structures				
Frequency / Type of Media	Total (n = 62)	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	I do not know
		Number of responses									
Public service media	20	4	9	4	3	0	3	9	4	4	0
Commercial TV stations	11	1	5	2	3	0	1	3	3	3	1
Commercial radio stations	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
National daily newspapers	9	2	5	2	0	0	2	6	1	0	0
National weeklies	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
National tabloids	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
News portals	4	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	0
Local / regional newspapers	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Community / non-profit / minority media	10	3	4	1	1	1	3	3	2	0	1
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

Source: MeDeMAP, 2025.

Nevertheless, such coverage is often framed positively, as a form of active citizenship and a democratic process that holds power to account, though this framing may differ in some ideologically polarized, right-leaning media outlets. In the case of the national press agency, legal obligations even require the reporting of voluntary work and the activities of non-governmental organizations.

6. Conclusions

The conducted study in general confirms the previous results obtained within the MeDeMAP research regarding the Slovenian media market. The Slovenian journalistic community acknowledges the significance of its role in informing on politics, ensuring diverse cultural and political representation, as well as fostering public debate and public participation.

The respondents appear to focus particularly strongly on covering the political, electoral and activist processes, as well as on encouraging these forms of activity. This commitment was also highlighted in interviews conducted with editors and journalists, who consistently expressed a sense of responsibility for informing the public on elections and referendums, and motivating citizens to vote.

The presented study shows, however, that not all the ideals are implemented in practice. One of the most significant challenges that occur is a non-sufficient representation of minorities and under-protected groups, including women. The quality print media and public service media outlets ought to implement measures to improve inclusivity.

The newsrooms do not prioritise enough an importance of meeting the audience's needs for having its voice expressed in the media content, either. This manifests in particular in a low willingness to organize debates with the public or allowing it for the autonomous content production. Audience involvement in strategic planning or media management in Slovenia also remains rare, and even among community media, management tends to be professionalized. This might result from financial and staff limitations, which were referred to as one of the main obstacles in the interviews with the Slovenian media workers on the previous research stage.

PART III: CONCLUSIONS

The aggregated national findings reveal a consistent and pervasive dichotomy in audience engagement across the sampled European media organizations. While the responses reflect the views of media representatives in selected countries and should not be generalized to the entire journalistic profession, they collectively illustrate a clear institutional posture regarding participation. The research shows a twofold picture of public participation in news media production. In all countries, respondents confirmed that newsrooms frequently offer audiences opportunities for basic participation, such as commenting on content or expressing opinions. On the other hand, actual practice, as declared by respondents, shows relatively high caution in terms of ceding control with regard to such practices as participation in content scheduling, production, management or strategic planning. Also, respondents widely supported different forms of electoral participation with a balanced preference for national and local elections and, less so, for the European election, while commitment to encourage activities other than electoral ones seems much lower.

Referring to the structure of the analysed media sample, a discernible and consistent set of defining characteristics emerges across the European countries studied. Primarily, the data exhibits a pronounced dominance of newsrooms located in capital and major urban centres. This overrepresentation is starkly evident in countries like Estonia (88.5% of the respondents represented newsrooms located in Tallinn), Slovenia (79% – Ljubljana), Czechia (75% – Prague), Poland, and Portugal (both at 64% in their respective capitals, Warsaw and Lisbon), with major cities also dominating the samples in Italy and Austria. Conversely, newsrooms in small towns and rural areas are consistently underrepresented or entirely absent (as noted for Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Italy). This large centers' dominance is also linked in MeDeMAP countries with administrative and historical variation between more centralist and more federalist structures. Secondarily, the age profile of the sample reveals an underrepresentation of older cohorts (specifically the 66+ and often the 56+ groups) in nearly all countries (e.g. Czechia, Estonia, Italy, Poland), with the largest cohort consistently falling within the 26-to-55 age bracket. This outcome appears to be a natural and predictable consequence of the prevailing labour market structure in the context of demographics and professionally active groups, and also the age of retirement. Finally, the gender balance generally displays a tendency towards either near parity or a slight female majority (e.g. Austria, Ireland, Slovenia, Germany), indicating a relatively balanced distribution in this demographic category.

Across the analysed media categories, the most notable observation is the consistently high engagement of the public service media, which secured the highest or second-highest number of responses in seven out of the ten sampled countries (Austria, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and Ireland), and remained a strong contributor in the remaining countries (Czechia and Germany). This underscores the enduring authority and reach of publicly funded broadcasting across the European context. Simultaneously, news portals exhibit significant traction, indicating a pronounced shift toward digital consumption. This type of medium led the response count in Czechia and secured the second or third highest responses in Austria, Estonia, France and Italy, establishing digital news as a core source of responses.

A major conclusion from the findings is the pronounced difference between high-level declarative commitment to providing space for the public's views and the actual implementation of deep, control-ceding engagement. As regards the first aspect of this

study – *Providing a voice in the debate and representation* - most respondents agreed that their newsrooms let their audiences express their views "very often" or "sometimes". The highest proportion of such statements was noted in Ireland (85%) and Poland (84.3%); lowest in Italy (64%) and Czechia (69.2%). Media types with the highest proportion of this attribute vary across countries, e.g. commercial radio stations and PSM in Austria; commercial TV stations and news portals in Czechia. An interesting example refers to practice in Slovenia, where the "Večer" (Evening) daily, published in the second-largest city in Slovenia, regularly engages audience members with notable societal roles to write personal diary entries for publication. Regardless of the media type, as pointed out by the Irish journalists interviewed on the previous research stage, the most common form of facilitating the discussion with the audience are social media channels. These serve, for example, to publish online opinion polls, engage readers to report potential disinformation, or simply allow the public to comment and discuss different issues.

A commitment to the organisation of debates proves much less frequent, with the highest values in Germany (62.9%) and Austria (55.9%); and the lowest in Estonia (22.6%). In Italy, respondents from the news portals and NGO-based media most frequently expressed commitment to organizing such debates, in France, commitment in this dimension was most frequently expressed by respondents from national daily newspapers (positive response rate at 85.7%) and community / non-profit / minority media (a strong rate of 77.7% positive responses). Importantly, low involvement in organising debates or not reaching out to members of the public seems to be justified by the respondents in both steps of research as a result of work overload, time pressures or the lack of human and financial resources.

A strong consensus suggesting the active representation of diverse societal groups is firmly established in Estonia (95.5%), Ireland (95%), as well as in Germany and Poland (around 88% per each), least so in France (59.4%) and Slovenia (69.4%). In Estonia, respondents from local and regional newspapers and news portals mentioned strongest commitment to representation of societal diversity, this was expressed much less frequently by PSM, particularly when it comes to organizing debates.

Compared to the first aspect of the study, the second one (focusing on *Participation of the public in news production*) seems to be more problematic in terms of commitment expressed by the respondents. Regarding audience participation in scheduling, programme planning or participation in decision-making processes related to content production, the highest number of positive responses was recorded in Germany (48.1%) and Austria (46.5%), while the lowest was noted in Poland (13%). As might be expected, commitment to audience participation in strategic planning and management was least frequently admitted practice ranging from 1.5% in Slovenia to 29.6% in Ireland. Participation of audiences in production, as declared by respondents, seemed to be highest in Estonia (45.2%) and Czechia (44.6%) and lowest in Austria (15.5%) and Slovenia (17.8%). Interestingly, overall participation in production, as observed by respondents, seems to be highest in the commercial radio, community/non-profit media sector and news portals. PSM in many countries perform surprisingly low. This may be caused by both production constraints and the mandate. For example, in France, the PSM are not clearly mandated to encourage audience participation in media content. Their four core missions are information, culture, representation, and the promotion of democratic values. It is also

worth mentioning that a high responsibility for editorial quality and control might eventually translate into a more protective stance. Still, some data clearly suggest an absence of sufficient involvement of the public in PSM activities. For example, in Poland, the representatives of the PSM (together with those of national weeklies) were most likely to admit that their newsrooms never allow their audiences to schedule, plan the programming, or participate in decision-making processes.

Finally, the third aspect - *Electoral participation and activism* - seems to revolve mainly around encouraging electoral participation as observed by the respondents. Surveyed journalists and producers from most countries appear to admit that their newsrooms actively support different forms of electoral participation, with the most frequent support for the national election (in Austria – 95.2%; Ireland – 88.8%; Germany – 85.2%), local election (France – 73.7%, Estonia – 87.1%) and the least with the support for the local election in Italy (56.9%) and the European election in Portugal (53.3%). This commitment decreases significantly when moving to activities that support deep civic engagement, such as fostering non-electoral democratic processes, activism, or the formation of grassroots collective structures. The highest frequency of positive answers concerning contribution of the media to the public's participation in democratic process beyond voting was observed in Ireland (88.9%), while the lowest in Italy (50.4%) and Czechia (41.6%). As regards an encouragement of various forms of activism, the highest proportion of positive answers was collected in Poland (74.5%), while the lowest one was recorded in Czechia (30.8%). In Czechia, a clear and widespread refusal to support deep civic engagement in the forms of other than electoral democratic processes stems from a historical concern about being perceived as "too activist", and thus strategic prioritization in practice of strict editorial neutrality. In Poland on the other hand, a high polarization of the Polish media influences an active role of the media in mobilizing a particular camp of media users identifying politically and ideologically with given media outlets.

One of the concluding observations across the countries is the firm maintenance of professional and editorial gatekeeping. The survey results support the gatekeeping paradigm across the sampled European media, driven by both professional identity and operational realities. Newsrooms prioritize their traditional position as intermediaries and mediators, viewing their role as "'reporting to' rather than 'reporting with' citizens" (Day, McInerney, 2025: 79), and are largely unwilling to cede control over core functions like strategic planning or content production. This reluctance, as suggested above, may stem from several reasons. Most importantly, these would include widespread financial and staff shortages, work overload, time-consuming engagement activities – such as organizing debates or facilitating user-generated content – as well as extensive fact-checking. All this may contribute to practically infeasible practices, especially given the costs associated with verification. Across Austria, Estonia, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia, there is a near-universal rejection of audience involvement in strategic planning, scheduling, or content production decisions.

On the other hand, limits of the participatory role of media should also be recognized. The inherent risks of such models include in particular vulnerabilities to exploitation by malicious actors seeking anti-democratic manipulation. Consequently, a resistance to fully ceding editorial control to external actors and maintaining professional gatekeeping is often a function of preserving democratic integrity.

Public service media (PSM), despite often having a public mandate for engagement (e.g. Estonia, Ireland), frequently exhibit a peculiar paradox: they lead in encouraging political participation or diversity representation, but simultaneously report high rejection rates for sharing managerial or strategic authority (e.g. Austria, Poland, France).

Community, non-profit and minority media consistently emerge as leaders in high-level engagement (e.g. France, Ireland), primarily due to their close connection and local anchoring, often acting as the "primary engines of positive civic engagement".

A crucial aspect warranting detailed analysis is the incidence of "I do not know" responses. The frequency and source of these uncertain answers vary substantially across the surveyed countries, suggesting diverse underlying factors related to policy clarity and professional sensitivity. Particularly noteworthy are the findings from Estonia, Poland, and Czechia, where "IDK" rates across various questions often reach 15%-22%. This level of non-response signals widespread internal confusion or a lack of clearly communicated organizational policy regarding core activities. Crucially, the presence of "I do not know" responses among managerial positions (such as editors-in-chief and managers) represents an alarming finding, as it suggests strategic inconsistency at the decision-making level. In summary, the collected data indicates that while media representatives in chosen countries are publicly committed to democratic function and audience expression, their practice reflects a more controlled model of participation where the audience is welcomed as a contributor and viewer, but their role remains strictly subordinated to the professional structure and routine.

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