

Hungary - Media Landscape

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Overview

Hungary's political and media landscapes have undergone frequent changes over the past one hundred years. The country went through eleven political regimes, and most of the political elites instrumentalised the press and media in an effort to

cement their positions by promoting their messages. As a result, media freedom has often been flawed and journalistic autonomy has been lacking. Many of the subsequent political regimes have captured the state/public media via the appointment of clients and have channelled private media outlets into the hands of political and business cronies. As a consequence, news media have been highly biased and political parallelism has often been high. A relatively underdeveloped media market and a high level of government intervention, including the favouritist distribution of advertising revenues, programme production funds, and broadcasting frequencies, have undermined the financial viability of most outlets and made the news media a non-lucrative investment. Political intervention has hindered the professionalisation of journalism.

Between the demise of the state socialist regime in 1989-1990 and a neo-authoritarian turn following the electoral victory of Viktor Orbán's right-wing populist Fidesz party and its Christian Democrats party ally in 2010, Hungary was among the forerunners of democratic change in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. Legislative and municipal elections, held every four years and based on a mixed electoral system, were competitive, free and fair. The country was ruled by coalition governments, while the President of the Republic, elected by parliament, had limited and mostly symbolic powers. Democratic consolidation was underway, and Hungary was admitted to NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. Press privatisation began as early as 1989 and, after the Radio and Television Act was passed in 1996, state broadcasters were transformed into public service media and nationwide private commercial outlets were launched. According to international press freedom watch organisations, the status of media freedom began to improve, and Freedom House listed Hungary among the 'free press' countries.

After the 2008 financial and economic crisis and following a number of corruption scandals involving members of the ruling Hungarian Socialist Party, the 2010 legislative elections brought about a further major political transformation. Having earned a supermajority of seats in parliament, the Fidesz/Christian Democrats party alliance formed a government and introduced a new constitution and a new election law, as well as a new media regulation that established new media authorities with new appointment mechanisms. In the 2010-2014 parliamentary cycle, Fidesz took control of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority, the Hungarian Wireless Agency and the Public Service Foundation via its appointees. In the current parliamentary cycle, following another electoral victory in 2014, the ruling coalition expanded its influence also over much of the private media, via a network of media oligarchs informally linked to the Fidesz party.

By the middle of the 2010s, the Fidesz/Christian Democrats party alliance had transformed most outlets into tools of pro-government propaganda, including a large-scale anti-immigration campaign in 2016. Ideological hegemony had been established, while critical and oppositional voices had largely been marginalised. Overtly pro-government outlets currently include: fourteen "public service" broadcasters, a nationwide commercial television channel (*TV2*), a cable news channel (*Echo TV*), several local and networked radio stations (*Karc FM*, *Radio 1*), quality dailies (*Magyar Idők*, *Magyar Hírlap*), a tabloid outlet (*Riposzt*), most of the regional dailies, several weekly magazines (*Demokrata*, *Figyel?*, *Lokál*) and a number of online news sites (*Origo.hu*, *888.hu*, *Ripost.hu*). Most local commercial radio stations re-broadcast the news of the Hungarian Wireless Agency. As of today, apart from a few small-circulation political weeklies (such as *Magyar Narancs*, *168 Óra*, *HVG*, and *Élet és Irodalom*) and one quality daily (*Népszava*) as well as a few independent news sites (*Index.hu*, *444.hu*, *Atlatszo.hu*, *Abcug.hu*), the only nationwide outlet covering government policies in a highly critical way is the private commercial television channel *RTL Klub*. Outlets owned by Lajos Simicska, a former party cashier of Fidesz, who was involved in a conflict with his long-time friend the prime minister in 2015, promote a conservative and nationalist agenda while at the same time are moderately critical of the government. The status of media freedom has been downgraded by international press freedom watch organisations, and Freedom House now lists Hungary among the 'partly free' countries.

Despite attempts to introduce the standards and practices of the Anglo-Saxon journalism tradition after the 1989-1990 political transformation, opinionated and partisan journalism continues to prevail. Advertorial and kompromat are widely

practiced. The professional community is divided along political and ideological cleavages. As a consequence, journalism associations and the only dedicated union are largely inactive and fail to protect journalists from political and business pressures. Self-regulatory mechanisms are only a formality with little practical outcome.

Even considering the scarce resources and limited access to public information, investigative journalism is vivid in Hungary and abuses of the taxpayers' money are regularly exposed. Media scandals, however, have little impact on public opinion and in recent years have not undermined the relative popularity of the incumbent government (a notable exception being the resignation in 2012 of President Pál Schmitt, a former senior Fidesz representative, who was found to have committed plagiarism in his PhD thesis in his younger years). As a general rule, corruption cases uncovered by the press and media entail no moral, political or legal consequences, possibly because, according to a recent opinion survey by Medián Public Opinion and Market Research Ltd., less than 10 percent of the population has an intense interest in politics.

Like in many other third-wave democracies, television is the market-leading medium in terms of audience, with the dominance of commercial outlets, while the Internet is currently the number one medium on the advertising market. Internet penetration nears the European Union average. The circulation figures of nationwide quality dailies have been in decline for many years now, while most tabloid newspapers have preserved their readership figures, even though a free-distribution middlebrow newspaper is highly popular in urban areas. There is no press subsidies system. The state is, however, a major advertiser, and the favouritist distribution of state and government advertising funds is a powerful means of influencing the press and media markets. Under the impact of the 2008 crisis and as a result of favouritist media policies, many foreign investors have left Hungary in recent years and sold their outlets to domestic oligarchs, including, among others, Andy Vajna, government commissioner in charge of the film industry (Radio Plus Ltd. owning the *Radio 1* network and the *TV2 Média Csoport* Plt. Owning a total of 9 channels), Árpád Habony, informal communication advisor to the Prime Minister (Modern Media Group owning the free distribution daily *Lokál*, the weekly *Lokál Extra*, the tabloid *Riposzt*, *Local.hu*, *888.hu*) and Lőrinc Mészáros, a childhood friend to Viktor Orbán (Mediaworks owning 13 regional dailies, the business daily *Világgazdaság*, the sports daily *Nemzeti Sport*, *Vg.hu*, the weekly *Vasárnap Reggel*, *Echo TV*, as well as a number of lifestyle magazines).

Media

Print

In 2015, the Hungarian publishing industry's total revenues were, according to *Magyar Lapkiadók Egyesülete* (Hungarian Publishers' Association), 96.456bn forints (€313.5m). Of this, advertising revenues amounted to 32.234bn forints (€104.7m), while more than 50 percent of the total revenues, 57.953bn forints (€188.3m), came from distribution. Online advertising revenues amounted to 6.27bn forints (€20.1m), showing a 12 percent growth compared to 2014.

According to Whitereport Financials, the total revenues of the 31 print dailies amounted to 61bn forints (€198.3m) in 2015, figure which makes dailies the strongest segment of the newspaper industry. The top five cluster made up 90 percent of the industry's total revenues (36.1 percent by dailies, 19.5 percent by women's magazines, 16.2 percent by free weeklies and the advertising press, 9.3 percent by economic and general interest magazines, and 8.9 percent by the B2B press). The 2015 total revenue figure shows a decline of 13 percent compared to that of 2011, which was over 111bn forints (€360.8 m), of which 41,663bn forints (€135.4m) came from advertising and 70bn forints (€227.5m) from distribution. Advertising revenues

dropped by 22 percent between 2011 and 2015, while the revenues generated by distribution decreased by 17 percent.

According to *Nemzeti Olvasottság Kutatás* (National Survey on Reading Habits), 80 percent of the population—a total of 6,746,000 people—read newspapers. In 2011, their numbers were 6,828,000.

While in terms of their total revenues, the dailies are the industry's leading segment, in terms of the titles, over 1300 monthlies or glossies constitute the top segment of the newspaper industry. According to Whitereport mediabrowser, there were 31 dailies, 262 weeklies, 176 biweeklies, 1,358 monthlies, 542 bi-monthlies, 1,129 quarterlies, 363 bi-annuals and 2,792 other publications in the second quarter of 2016. In the third quarter of that year, sales evinced a slow decrease or stagnation in comparison with the third quarter of 2015, according to Magyar *Terjesztés-ellenőrző Szövetség* (Hungarian Distribution Monitoring Association, MATESZ).

According to the latest data provided by MATESZ, the most widely read newspaper in the first term of 2016 was the centre-left quality daily *Népszabadság* with an average daily circulation of 37,246 copies (yet the paper was closed down by its new owner in October 2016). The conservative daily *Magyar Nemzet* was second in line, with an average of 18,100 copies. This was followed by *Népszava*, another centre-left quality daily, with an average of 10,582 copies. No data are available on the circulation figures of the three other national dailies, including the pro-government *Magyar Hírlap* and *Magyar Idők*, and the pro-government business daily *Világgazdaság*, as these have no active registration with MATESZ. In the first quarter of 2014, the average circulation figure of *Magyar Hírlap* was 6,625 copies. The two tabloids, *Blikk* and *Bors* are the best-selling dailies in Hungary with an average circulation of 116,423 and 64,774 copies, and are followed by the sports daily *Nemzeti Sport* with 41,506 copies.

Local and regional daily newspapers have high circulation figures, but these depend on the population living in the given county. The best-selling regional daily is *Kisalföld* with an average circulation of 56,365 copies, followed by *Vas Népe* with 40,134 copies, *Zalai Hírlap* with 39,068 copies, *Kelet-Magyarország* with 34,704 copies, and *Észak-Magyarország* and *Délmagyarország* with 34,550 and 34,304 copies, respectively.

As the state-owned Budapest Transportation Company and Hungarian Railways did not renew their contracts with *Metropol*, a free daily owned by Lajos Simicska with an average daily circulation of 330,000 copies, the company was closed down at the end of 2015 with a loss, and *Metropol* left the Hungarian market. Its place was taken by *Lokál*, a new free daily owned by Árpád Habony, with an average daily circulation of 150,000 copies.

Weeklies have the highest circulation figures in Hungary. Gossip magazines are the best-selling: *Story* is published in 162,119 copies on average, *Vasárnap Blikk* (the Sunday version of the daily tabloid) in 72,663 copies, *Best* in 74,225 copies and *Hot!* in 55,661 copies. The most popular weekly television programme guide is *Színes RTV* with an average of 152,028 copies. The most popular women's magazines include: *Nők Lapja* with 215,903 copies, *Kiskegyed* with 186,886 copies, *Meglepetés* with 90,353 copies, *Fanny* with 73,323 copies and *Blikk Nők* with 59,255 copies. Public affair weeklies with high circulation figures include: *HVG* with 32,874 copies, *Vasárnap Hírek* with 18,871 copies, *168 Óra* with 13,141 copies and *Élet és Irodalom* with 10-11,000 copies on average.

The leading outlets mentioned above are published by:

- Blikk Ltd.: *Blikk* (tabloid daily), *Kiskegyed* (women's weekly), *Blikk Nők* (women's weekly), *Vasárnap Blikk* (weekly tabloid);
- Central Mediacoport Ptl.: *Meglepetés* (women's weekly), *Nők Lapja* (women's weekly), *Színes RTV* (television programme weekly), *Story* (gossip weekly);
- Geomedia Kiadói Ltd.: *Vasárnap Hírek* (political weekly);

- HVG Kiadó Plt.: *HVG* (political and business weekly);
- Irodalom Ltd.: *Élet és Irodalom* (political and cultural weekly);
- Lapcom Ltd.: *Best* (gossip weekly), *Bors* (tabloid daily), *Délmagyarország* (regional daily), *Kisalföld* (regional daily),
- Magyar Hírlap Kiadói Ltd.: *Magyar Hírlap* (quality daily);
- Magyar Idők Kiadó Ltd.: *Magyar Idők* (quality daily)
- Mediaworks Hungary Ltd.: *Hot!* (gossip weekly), *Nemzeti Sport* (sports daily), *Világgazdaság* (business daily);
- Modern Media Group Plt.: *Lokál* (free daily);
- Nemzet Lap- és Könyvkiadó Ltd.: *Magyar Nemzet* (quality daily);
- Népszava Lapkiadó Ltd.: *Népszava* (quality daily);
- Pannon Lapok Társasága Kiadói Ltd.: *Vas Népe* (regional daily), *Zalai Hírlap* (regional daily);
- Ringier Axel Springer Magyarország Ltd.: *Kiskegyed* (women's weekly);
- Russmedia Ltd.: *Észak-Magyarország* (local daily), *Kelet-Magyarország* (regional daily);
- Telegráf Kiadó Ltd.: *168 Óra* (political weekly).

Radio

In 2015, the radio sector had a 9.6bn forints (31.2m euros) share in the total advertising revenues, evincing a 3 percent decrease compared to 2014, according to *Magyar Reklámszövetség* (Hungarian Advertising Association). In the same year, the market leading station *Class FM* had 2.9bn forints (€9.44m euros) revenue.

The radio sector has increased its listenership since 2015. According to a report by TSN Hoffmann-Mediameter, nearly 6 million people listened to the radio on a daily basis in the June-September 2016 period, displaying an increase of 100,000 people compared to the previous year. In the period of November 2015-January 2016, 64 percent of the population listened to the radio at home, 45 percent in their cars, 19 percent at work or at school, 6 percent at other places, while 8 percent declared not to listen to the radio on an average day.

Since the public broadcaster MTVA (Media Service Support and Asset Management Fund) terminated its contract with the TNS Hoffmann-Mediameter consortium at the end of 2016, the last available data on the audience figures of the major public radio stations (including *Kossuth*, *Petőfi*, *Dankó*, *Bartók*) date back to February 2016. Between December 2015 and February 2016, 2,886,000 daily listeners tuned in to the commercial station *Class FM*, 1,544,000 to public service *Kossuth Rádió*, 902,000 to public service *Petőfi Rádió*, 732,000 to the commercial broadcaster *Music FM*, 382,000 to public service *Dankó Rádió*, 172,000 to public service *Bartók Rádió*, and 116,000 to the private talk station *Lánchíd Rádió*. The total reach of the public radio stations was 3,000,000 people. *Class FM*, the only nationwide commercial broadcaster lost its frequency license and stopped broadcasting on 19 November 2016.

Among the market leading stations, *Class FM* is owned by Advenio Zrt. (formerly a property of Lajos Simicska and Zsolt Nyerges and then sold to Sláger Rádió Plc. in May 2016); *Kossuth*, *Petőfi*, *Dankó* and *Bartók* are public radio stations; *Music FM* is owned by Lánchíd Rádió Műsorszolgáltató Ltd., while *Lánchíd Rádió* is the property of Nemzet Lap- és Könyvkiadó Ltd. (both companies being owned by Lajos Simicska).

Television

At the end of October 2016, the ten most important Hungarian telecommunication companies covered 93 percent of the market and delivered television programmes to 3.292m subscribers nationwide. According to the latest market research conducted by the National Media and Infocommunications Authority, more than 3.5m of the approximately 4.1m Hungarian households had access to cable television. The remaining nearly 600,000 households used satellite services. In October, of

the various television services used, 44 percent were digital cable television or IPTV, 30.1 percent wireless television, and 25.9 percent analogue cable television. Digital broadcasting services were used by 74.1 percent of subscribers, contracted with the ten biggest telecommunication companies. Of the three largest telecommunication companies (*Magyar Telekom*, *UPC* and *Digi TV*), the market leader was UPC with a 26.8 percent share, followed by Magyar Telekom with a 25.5 percent share and Digi TV with a 24.9 percent share. Of the Hungarian population, 3.5 percent live in a household without television, according to the data of Nielsen Media Research. Of these, 186,000 watch television online.

The number of those watching television via online platforms shows a growing tendency, yet Hungarians consume digitally delivered content only once in a week or even more infrequently. According to a survey by Nielsen Media Research, 34 percent of the population watch television programmes on the Internet, of which 3 percent on a daily basis, 10 percent once or twice a week, and 22 percent more infrequently. Of this, 16 percent (1.4m people) access Hungarian television content, 1 percent on a daily basis, 3 percent once or twice a week, and 12 percent more infrequently. These 1.4m watch online television content on the following devices: 54 percent on a personal computer, 58 percent on a laptop, 14 percent on a tablet and 10 percent on a smartphone. As regards the sources, 64 percent use a television channel's website, 43 percent use other websites, and 30 percent use other applications.

In terms of content, Hungarian viewers have a choice of over 130 nationwide free or subscription channels and a total of 390 local and regional channels, according to the National Media and Infocommunications Authority. Public television channels include *M1* (airing news), *M2/Pet?fi* (delivering children's and youth programmes), *M3* (rebroadcasting old programmes), *M4* (sports), *M5* (education, documentaries and culture), *Duna* (news and entertainment) and *Duna World* (news and entertainment for Hungarians living abroad). Online audiovisual programmes via on-demand streaming are provided by both the public broadcasting channels and the major commercial channels, and are mostly available on registration.

In 2013, the television sector had a total of 45.628bn forints (148.625m euros) share in the total advertising revenues. In 2015, this amount was 51.581bn forints (168.016m euros), meaning an 11.5 percent increase in revenue. The share of digital terrestrial television channels was 55 percent, while other (cable) channels had a 45 percent share, which means that the latter had increased their advertising revenues by 30 percent compared to 2014. The revenues of the market leader *Magyar RTL Televízió Plt.* amounted to 25.6bn forints (€83.38m), and the company had increased its revenues by 4.2bn forints (€13.68m) by 2015. *TV2 Média Csoport Plt.* closed the year 2015 with a 18.3bn forints (€59.6m) revenue, and had nearly doubled its revenues compared to the year before—not least because of generous state advertising.

According to Nielsen Media Research, Hungarians spent an average of 4 hours and 16 minutes a day watching television in October 2016. This evinces a 10-minute decrease compared to the same period in 2015. Linear television is still the most popular way to consume audiovisual content; only 1.3 percent (3.2 minutes) of the total time spent watching television was done in playback or TSV (time-shifted viewing) mode. In terms of audience share, in the third quarter of 2016 the major commercial television channels *RTL Klub* and *TV2* together reached a 21.6 percent share, displaying a 2.6 percent loss compared to the same period in 2015; the public broadcasters combined had a 18.7 percent share and had raised their share by 0.7 percent; general entertaining channels had the second biggest share with 20.2 percent; the biggest change, a 2 percent increase, was made by movie channels, reaching a 11.4 percent share. The remaining 28.2 percent share was split between smaller specialised channels.

Digital Media

Most daily and weekly print publications have online versions, usually accessible free of charge and funded through advertising, albeit these usually offer more restricted content than the printed original. Major outlets also make digital copies accessible upon subscription via four accredited providers, including Digitalstand Ltd., Five International Ltd., TestMan Ltd.,

and Inform Média Ltd. It is to note, though, that only a few dozens or hundreds of subscribers use these digital copies, according to data provided by MATESZ. Most news outlets provide users with smartphone applications.

All of the three market-leading telecommunication companies (*Magyar Telekom*, *UPC* and *Digi TV*) offer live and on-demand online services for the following devices: television, computer, smartphone, tablet and smart television (the latter with *Digi TV* only). The applications offered by the three services, including TV GO (*Magyar Telekom*), Horizon GO (*UPC*) and DIGI Online (*Digi TV*) are available online via websites and for iOS, Android and Windows smartphone devices. Subscribers are free to use these with an existing cable television contract (except with *DIGI*, which requires a combined television + Internet contract). In Hungary, only TV GO provides online streaming media, with hundreds of movies and television shows (and with additional charges).

Social Networks

At the end of the third quarter of 2016, the number of Internet subscriptions was over 8.7m (of this, 68 percent used mobile Internet subscription), according to data by the *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal* (Hungarian Central Statistical Office). This was 10 percent more than in the same period in 2015. Since 2008, the number of Internet subscriptions had increased by 6.5m. According to the latest data available on Internet World Stats, Hungary's Internet penetration was 79.7 percent in June 2016 (in 2010, this rate was 61.8 percent), while the European Union's average Internet penetration was 80.1 percent. A survey conducted in the summer of 2016 shows a different picture: according to Gemius and Digitális Közönségmérési Tanács (Digital Audience Measurement Council - DKT), there were 5.4 million active Internet users in Hungary at that time, and 76.6 percent surfed the web on a daily basis. Regarding the devices, 4.9 million people accessed the Internet via their personal computers, while 3.5 million used their mobile phones.

Hungarian Internet users spend an average of 209 minutes online daily, as opposed to 201 minutes in 2011. According to GfK Digital Connected Customer, the top three activities online include the use of social media, email services and news sites. According to data provided by DKT, in November 2016 the most visited sites after search engines and social media pages included: *Origo.hu* (a news site with 552,393 real users), *Index.hu* (a news site with 504,564 real users), *Blog.hu* (a blog-hosting site with 446,915 real users), *24.hu* (a news site with 394,761 real uses) and *Freemail.hu* (an email service with 359,220 real users).

In terms of advertising, the online sector had a 56.17bn forints (€183m) or 27.6 percent share in the total advertising revenues in 2015, compared to a 49.45bn forints (€161m) share in 2014. According to *IAB Hungary* (Interactive Advertising Bureau Hungary) and *Pwc Hungary* (PricewaterhouseCoopers Hungary), this amount displayed a 14 percent increase, and reached beyond 50bn forints (€162.86m) for the first time. With this amount, the Internet took the lead on the advertising market from the former market leader, the television sector. The competition levelled off between domestic and global participants, so these share approximately fifty-fifty percent on the total online advertising spending.

According to a survey by the specialised agency *Kutatópont*, 67 percent of Internet users have a social media profile. Of them, 74 percent read the news and—although most of them are passive news consumers, meaning they usually do not share content or comment—60 percent share a content at least once a month. In Hungary, Facebook is the most widely used social network, with 5.3 million users in March, 2016, according to a survey by MediaQ. It is followed by: YouTube (3.2 million users), Google+ (1.7 million users), Instagram (942,000 users), Pinterest (837,000 users), LinkedIn (711,000 users) and Twitter (631,000 users).

Opinion Makers

The biggest blog-hosting site is *Blog.hu* which is operated by *Index.hu*, Hungary's second most popular news website; It is the 10th most visited site in Hungary, according to *Alexa.com*. The second biggest news site, *Origo.hu*, has a blog-hosting site as well, called *Reblog.hu*, but this is much less popular. Many Hungarians use international blog-hosting sites such as Google's *Blogspot.com* or *Tumblr.com*.

Since there are no publicly available data on the number of Hungarian blogs or the number of visitors, the only reliable method to measure a blog's popularity is to look at the site's Facebook page and the number of people who have liked it. Some of the biggest and most popular blogs edited by an editorial staff include *Kett?s Mércse* (on politics, with 106,716 Facebook likes), *Street Kitchen* (on gastronomy, with 109,718 Facebook likes), *WMN* (on lifestyle, with 81,838 Facebook likes), *Határátkel?* (on Hungarians living abroad, with 50,471 Facebook likes), *Sorozatjunkie* (on television shows and series, with 29,222 Facebook likes), *Könyvesblog* (on books, with 24,929 Facebook likes), and *Comment:com* (on the media, with 22,853 Facebook likes).

The most popular personal blogs dedicated to political issues include *Puzser.hu* (by the television host Róbert Puzsér, with 91,265 Facebook likes), *Torokgaborelemez.blog.hu* (by the political scientist Gábor Török, with 50,137 Facebook likes), *Badog.blogstar.hu* (by the journalist Zsolt Bayer, with 31,592 Facebook likes), and *Twitter.com/dajcstomi* (by the Fidesz politician Tamás Deutsch, with 61,200 followers).

In Hungary, Facebook is the most widely used social media platform for public figures to express their opinions. YouTube is the second most popular social network, with video bloggers including *Videómánia* (film reviews by Péter Dancsó, 594,948 subscribers), *PamKutya* (music parodies and videos, by two anonymous video bloggers, with 460,945 subscribers), *The VR* (video game reviews by István Fábian and János Komzsik, with 450,193 subscribers). Twitter is only the 7th most used social network in Hungary with 631,000 registered users.

Sources

Newspapers

- [168 óra](#)
- [Best](#)
- [Blikk](#)
- [Bors](#)
- [Délmagyarország](#)
- [Élet és Irodalom](#)
- [Észak-Magyarország](#)
- [Hot!](#)
- [HVG](#)
- [Kelet-Magyarország](#)
- [Kisalföld](#)
- [Kiskegyed](#)
- [Lokál](#)
- [Magyar Hírlap](#)
- [Magyar Id?k](#)
- [Magyar Nemzet](#)
- [Meglépetés](#)

- [Nemzeti Sport](#)
- [Népszava](#)
- [Nők Lapja](#)
- [Story](#)
- [Vas Népe](#)
- [Vasárnapi Hírek](#)
- [Világgazdaság](#)
- [Zalai Hírlap](#)

Publishers

- [Central Mediacsoport Plt.](#)
- [Geomedia Kiadói Ltd.](#)
- [HVG Kiadó Plt.](#)
- [Irodalom Ltd.](#)
- [Lapcom Ltd.](#)
- [Magyar Hírlap Kiadói Ltd.](#)
- [Magyar Idők Kiadó Ltd.](#)
- [Mediaworks Hungary Ltd.](#)
- [Modern Media Group Plt.](#)
- [Nemzet Lap- és Könyvkiadó Ltd.](#)
- [Népszava Lapkiadó Ltd.](#)
- [Ringier Axel Springer Magyarország Ltd.](#)
- [Russmedia Ltd.](#)
- [Telegráf Kiadó Ltd.](#)

Radio

- [Bartók Rádió](#)
- [Class FM](#)
- [Dankó Rádió](#)
- [Info Rádió](#)
- [Kossuth Rádió](#)
- [Lánchíd Rádió](#)
- [Magyar Katolikus Rádió](#)
- [Music FM](#)
- [Petőfi Rádió](#)
- [Rádió Rock](#)
- [Sláger FM](#)

Television

- [Chili TV](#)
- [Cool](#)
- [Duna](#)
- [Duna World](#)

- [FEM3](#)
- [Film +](#)
- [Humor +](#)
- [Izaura TV](#)
- [Kiwi TV](#)
- [m1](#)
- [m2/Pet?fi](#)
- [m3](#)
- [m4](#)
- [m5](#)
- [Mozi +](#)
- [Muzsika TV](#)
- [Prime](#)
- [RTL II](#)
- [RTL Klub](#)
- [Spíler TV](#)
- [Super TV2](#)
- [TV2](#)
- [Zenebutik](#)

Opinion makers

- [Comment:com](#)
- [Határátkel?](#)
- [Kett?s Mérce](#)
- [Könyvesblog](#)
- [Sorozatjunkie](#)
- [Street Kitchen](#)
- [WMN](#)
- [Zsolt Bayer](#)
- [Tamás Deutsch](#)
- [Róbert Puzsér](#)
- [Gábor Török](#)
- [PamKutya](#)
- [TheVR](#)
- [Videómánia](#)

Organisations

Trade Unions

The interests of Hungarian journalists are to be represented by the Press Union, a partner organisation of the International

Federation of Journalists. This trade union, established in 1989, provides journalists with healthcare services and vacation opportunities, and is also relatively active in political matters. For example, it issued a written statement contesting the closing down of the quality paper *Népszabadság* in October 2016, but it did not call on Hungarian journalists for any joint action such as a solidarity strike.

Journalist Associations

As the Hungarian journalism community is divided along political cleavages, there are several journalists associations, including the Hungarian Journalists Association (associated with left-wing/liberal journalists), the Hungarian Journalists Community (associated with right-wing/conservative journalists), the Hungarian Association of Catholic Journalists, and the Protestant Journalists Association. Membership in an association is not mandatory for journalists to pursue their profession, and especially the younger generation is reluctant to join any of the above organisations. All of these associations have codes of ethics as well as ethics commissions. The deeply divided nature of the journalism community, however, makes self-regulatory efforts largely ineffective: as ethic codes are only binding for the members of an association but not for other journalists, transgressions of journalism ethics have rarely entailed any moral or professional consequences in recent years. Divisions within the journalism community have also hindered the ability of these associations to counter the political and business pressures exerted upon journalists.

Publishers are gathered in the Hungarian Publishers Association which is, according to its credo, to represent the interests of the publishers of print outlets vis-à-vis the government, political parties, and business interest groups. It has an ethics code, passed as a co-regulatory effort in association with the National Media and Telecommunications Authority.

News Agencies

Since the new media regulation was passed, the Hungarian Wireless Agency releases news free of charge (upon registration). Most minor outlets, including local radio stations, rely on the news items provided by the organisation, which is under government control (see section 3.3.). As a result of this distortion of market competition, the Independent News Agency, an independent organisation that was financially supported by *RTL Klub* television, closed down in 2011. Some minor news agencies, such as C-Press, specialised in news concerning the Romany community, are still operational at the time of writing. Like elsewhere, media outlets also frequently rely on the news provided by international news agencies and media companies such as CNN International and BBC World.

Audience measurement organisations

Audience measurement is conducted by a number of private companies. AGB Nielsen measures television viewership, DKT and Gemius Hungary map the uses of online platforms, and MATESZ audits the circulation figures of newspapers. The audience figures of broadcast radio were, until recently, measured by Ipsos and TNS Hoffmann-Mediameter. According to recent press information, however, in the future radio audience shares will be measured by a company to be commissioned by the National Media and Telecommunications Authority. It is to note, that as state advertising and some of the private advertising funds are allocated in line with political criteria as opposed to real market figures, the importance of audience measurement seems to have declined in recent years.

Sources

News agencies

- [C-Press](#)

- [Hungarian Wireless Agency](#)

Trade unions and journalists associations

- [Press Union](#)
- [Hungarian Journalists Association](#)
- [Hungarian Journalists Community](#)
- [Hungarian Association of Catholic Journalists](#)
- [Protestant Journalists Association](#)

Other media outlets

- [TNS Hoffmann](#)
- [Ipsos](#)
- [MATESZ](#)
- [DKT](#)
- [AGB Nielsen](#)
- [Gemius](#)

Policies

Media legislation

Shortly after taking office in 2010, Viktor Orbán's new parliamentary majority passed new media regulation, including Act CIV of 2010 on Press Freedom and the Fundamental Rules of Media Content (the so-called 'Media Constitution') and Act CLXXXV of 2010 on Media Services and Mass Communication (the 'Media Act'), regulating all platforms, including the print press, radio, television, and the Internet. Neither the opposition parties, nor professional bodies, nor non-governmental organisations were consulted before passing the law. Other pieces of legislation—such as Act CCXI of 2011 on the Protection of Families—also regulate media content. Hungary's constitution (the so-called 'Base Law'), passed in 2011, declares that Hungary protects the freedom to impart and to gather information. The new media regulation replaced the 1986 Press Act and the 1996 Radio and Television Act, and established new regulatory authorities with new appointment mechanisms.

The Penal Code, passed in 2012, retained the numerous restrictions on free speech established by the previous Penal Code, including incitement to hatred, incitement to violence, incitement against a community, as well as the denial of "crimes committed by national socialist or communist systems." It also bans the use of the swastika, the red star, and the sickle and hammer. The denial of the Holocaust is a criminal offense.

Act 2011 CXVII on Information Self-Determination and Freedom of Information, as amended in 2013, grants state bodies the right to reject requests for information on vaguely defined grounds. A series of new regulations passed in late 2016 were to enable state-owned companies—including the Hungarian Post and companies and foundations owned by the National Bank—to classify data on their economic activities and to deny access to these for the protection of 'business interests.' The Constitutional Court, however, ruled that the financial transparency of entities under the control of the National Bank should

be preserved.

International and domestic press freedom watch actors, including the Media Freedom Representative of OSCE, the International Press Institute, Reporters Without Borders, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression have widely criticised the 2010 media laws for concentrating power over the media in the hands of Fidesz nominees. The latest country report issued in 2016 by Freedom House states that: “Laws passed in 2010 increased state regulation of the media and created new avenues for political interference, and the media environment deteriorated further in 2015.”

Accountability systems

After the political transformation in 1989-1990, journalism organisations and media policy makers attempted to introduce the standards and practices of neutrality-seeking journalism, including investigative reporting. For example, the code of the Hungarian Journalists Association states that it is “both the right and the duty of journalists to provide fair, objective and well-funded information”. The 1996 Broadcasting Act prescribed in a similar vein that “information must be plural, factual, timely, objective and balanced”. The Hungarian Journalists Association has an Ethics Council, and the quality daily Népszabadság used to employ an ombudsperson for a few years in the 2000s.

However, while codes of ethics and laws promote the objectivity doctrine, most news outlets continue to offer engaged accounts of political events and issues in Hungary. As Guy Lázár observed in the early 1990s, “the *one-party* model of the press has not disappeared completely but has been transformed into a *multi-party* model that is still far away from the *nonpartisan* model of the press”. Many of the newsrooms have codes of ethics which, however, are largely unobserved. The line between news and views is often blurred; outlets routinely use double standards when reporting on political events, and tend to offer a black-and-white picture of the real world. Advertorial and kompromat are widely practiced.

While the majority of news outlets are now organisationally independent from political parties, many are still informally linked to these via their owners. In a similar vein, many journalists have become part of the political and business client systems, and act like ‘party soldiers’ rather than ‘democracy watchdogs.’ For example, the news site Pesti Srácok made a deal with the Ministry of Agriculture in 2015: in exchange for financial support, the editors sent over the articles for approval to the ministry before publication.

Journalism organisations, including the Hungarian Journalists Association gathering 3,500 members, typically do not represent the entire profession in an effort to jointly protect journalists vis-à-vis political and business pressures, but only parts of the community. For example, after Népszabadság, Hungary’s highest circulation quality daily was unexpectedly closed down on 8 October 2016 by its new owner, suspected to have close links to the government, the Hungarian Journalists Association did not protest.

Regulatory authorities

The Media Act established the National Media and Telecommunications Authority to replace the National Radio and Television Board created by the 1996 Radio and Television Act. This authority is also in charge of telecommunication, while media matters are managed by the Media Council of the authority, a body of four members, appointed by an *ad hoc* parliamentary commission. The council’s chairperson is also the Head of the National Media and Telecommunications Authority and of the Media Council. Currently, all members of the Media Council are Fidesz nominees. The Council’s chair, former member and MP of the Fidesz party Annamária Szalai, was appointed by the prime minister himself. The chair and the four members are elected for a nine-year term, reaching beyond two regular parliamentary cycles. Szalai deceased in

early 2013 and was replaced by Monika Karas, a former lawyer who had worked for right-wing outlets such as the daily *Magyar Nemzet*, the 24-hour news channel *HírTV* and the news and talk station *Lánchíd Rádió*. Under the pressure of the European Union, the Media Act was amended in 2013 and the chair of the Media Council is now nominated by the President of the Republic, upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister (the current head of state being János Áder, a former senior Fidesz member).

The National Media and Telecommunications Authority is in charge of frequency distribution, among other things. The allocation criteria are not laid down in any legal document and the procedure is non-transparent. During the first 18 months of its mandate, it distributed 35 local radio frequencies, of which 18 were granted to pro-government stations (*Mária Rádió* obtained 7 licences, *Katolikus Rádió 2*, the protestant *Európa Rádió 3*, and *Lánchíd Rádió 5*). At the same time, the authority refused to renew the frequency concessions outside the Budapest area of the longstanding left-liberal *Klubrádió*, the last of the opposition voices on the air. In 2016, after the expiry of the frequency concession of *Class FM*, a music station owned by Lajos Simicska, former Fidesz cashier who had been involved in a conflict with the prime minister, the authority did not renew the license of the station. At the same time, however, it allocated several local concessions to *Radio 1*, owned by Andrew G. Vajna and establishing a new network, covering half of the country's territory. The authority is also in charge of content monitoring, and can impose fines of up to 200m forints (approximately 650,000 euros) on media outlets that breach the law. Commercial outlets have been regularly fined for airing explicit language as well as depicting 'deviant' behaviour such as drinking, smoking and sex, especially on their reality shows. In May 2011, for example, *RTL Klub* paid a fine of 144m forints (516,000 euros) after airing the Hungarian mutation of the reality show 'The Real World 4.'

The 2010 regulation created a Media Service and Asset Management Fund (the 'Media Fund') to manage the funding of public service broadcasters. The director of the Media Fund is appointed by the chair of the Media Council. The National Media and Telecommunications Authority and the Media Council are thus in control of substantial financial resources. The law, however, does not specify allocation criteria for the Media Fund.

The 2010 regulation united Hungarian Television, Hungarian Radio, Danube Television and the Hungarian Wireless Agency in what is now called a Public Service Foundation. Almost all staff, rights and property of the public service broadcasters were transferred to the Property Management and Support Fund. Public service broadcasters are managed by boards of trustees which consist of a chair and seven members and elect the directors-general. The chair and one member are delegated by the Media Council, three members by the governing parties, and three by the opposition parties. However, as the number of employees of each of the three public service broadcasters has been reduced to only 49 people, transforming these into 'shell companies,' neither the directors-general nor the boards of trustees have much influence on production and programming. The law outsourced the production of the three public service broadcasters' news bulletins to the Hungarian Wireless Agency and that of other programmes to the Property Management and Support Fund, the latter being accountable to the Media Council.

Sources

Laws, regulations and institutions

- [Act CIV of 2010 on Press Freedom and the Fundamental Rules of Media Content and Act CLXXXV of 2010 on Media Services and Mass Communication](#)
- [Ethics Code of the Hungarian Journalists Association](#)
- [Hungarian Journalists Association](#)
- [National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information](#)
- [National Media and Telecommunications Authority](#)

Education

Universities and schools

There is no journalism BA or MA programme at Hungarian universities. There are, however, communication and media studies BA (three years) and MA (two years) programmes where -with variations in content -future journalists are also trained, among other communication specialists. Until 2015, a special two-year programme had also been launched, free of charge, but this has been terminated as of 2016.

Ten years ago, media and communication studies were among the most popular majors chosen by university students. However, in consequence of a series of higher educational budget cuts introduced after the 2008 financial and economic crisis, the introduction of a tuition fee for most students in 2012, as well as the establishment of enhanced accession criteria in 2013, the number of communication and media studies students has been declining, along with the overall number of students. While their numbers were over 2,500 in the late 2000s, only 852 began their communication and media studies at a BA or a MA programme in 2016. Currently, 15 higher educational institutions offer accredited communication and media studies programmes, including both public and private universities. Of these, only two are specifically dedicated to the training of future journalists. Communication and media studies are mainly taught by academics with no background in journalism or journalism studies, as PhD level communication and media studies have only recently been launched, and few of the universities provide students with practical training. Because of the declining number of students, the future of communication and media studies in Hungary is uncertain, as higher educational institutions may need to close down their departments.

In addition to higher educational institutions, there were, according to a 2013 overview, 16 lower-level schools providing journalism education and hosted by journalism associations and media outlets.

Professional development

Employment as a journalist is not linked to any formal criteria. Journalists do not necessarily need to have a higher educational degree, nor are they bound by law to attend professional trainings. Most journalists, however, have a BA or MA degree. According to the last research on journalism as a profession, conducted in 2006 by Mária Vásárhelyi and her team, 83 percent of all journalists had a higher educational degree, of which 32 percent had one in communication and media studies, and an additional 35 percent came from the humanities. Fifty-three percent of journalists were men, but the ratio of female journalists had significantly grown in the decades preceding the survey. So had the number of journalists under the age of 30, reaching 31 percent by 2006. Young journalists mainly work for online outlets and commercial broadcasters. Journalism is an urban profession in the sense that 39 percent of journalists were born in the capital city Budapest, and an

additional 57 percent in smaller towns.

Sources

The higher educational institutions that launched communication and media BA and/or MA studies in 2016 are the following:

- [Budapest Business Scholl University of Applied Sciences](#)
- [Budapest Metropolitan University](#)
- [Budapest University of Technology and Economics](#)
- [Corvinus University of Budapest](#)
- [Eötvös Lóránd University](#)
- [Eszterházy Károly University](#)
- [Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary](#)
- [King Sigismund University](#)
- [Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences](#)
- [Pázmány Péter Catholic University](#)
- [Szent István University](#)
- [University of Debrecen](#)
- [University of Dunaújváros](#)
- [University of Pécs](#)
- [University of Szeged](#)

Conclusions

Conclusion

Like most other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, since the political transformation in 1989-1990, Hungary has evinced a week newspaper market, a high level of political parallelism, a low level of journalistic professionalisation, and a high level of state and/or government intervention.

The Hungarian media landscape has, however, undergone major changes in recent years. While the one-party model of the press was transformed into a multi-party model during and after the demise of the state socialist regime in 1989-1990, a near one-party model has emerged again after the electoral victory of the Fidesz/Christian Democrats party alliance in 2010. Conservative and nationalist voices have earned a near-hegemony in the print press and the broadcast media, whereas critical views have been largely marginalised. Hungary, which until 2010 compared with the most developed countries of Central and Eastern Europe such as the Czech Republic and Slovenia, has been since then evincing more similarities with the least developed ones such as Bulgaria and Romania. In particular, features commonly shared with the latter countries now include the enhanced political instrumentalisation of the press, the growing role of domestic and politically affiliated media oligarchs, the preferential redistribution of media resources such as state advertising funds and broadcasting frequencies, and the rise of kompromat journalism.

The Hungarian media landscape continues to change dynamically. In 2015 and 2016, a number of new pro-government outlets have been launched, while critical ones have either changed their political position or have been closed down as a

result of ownership changes, financial pressures, or the loss of broadcasting licences. In consequence of these developments, the transparency of government has declined, and media freedom has been severely flawed in recent years.

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