



MEDIA LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS - MONTENEGRO

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ARTICLE19

Media landscape analysis – Montenegro

This fact sheet analyses the media landscape in Montenegro. It complements ARTICLE 19's [Global Expression Report](#) (GxR), which examines trends in the right to freedom of expression and information globally, regionally, and nationally. The report is unique in that it provides a concrete measure and quantifiable perspective on expression: from posting online to protesting, investigating, and accessing the information needed to keep leaders accountable. In this fact sheet, we examine seven indicators¹ informing the media landscape. All the indicators are used in the GxR and are developed based on the annual responses of experts on the topic who provide ratings for the country. The below information provides context on Montenegro from 2023. Scores are ordered from highest to lowest to produce country rankings. Countries that do not have the minimum number of raters are excluded from the ranked list. The figures below (expressed as X/149) show Montenegro's ranking (X) out of 149 countries for each indicator.



1. The indicators in this briefing have been extracted from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) [2024 Codebook](#) to explore aspects of freedom and democracy worldwide. To address variation in coder ratings, V-Dem works closely with leading social science research methodologies and has developed a Bayesian measurement model that, to the extent possible, addresses coder error and issues of comparability across countries over time. V-Dem has advised against using point estimates for indicator years where a country has 3 or fewer raters. In those cases, countries are excluded from the analysis.

Importance of media landscape indicators

Media bias and corruption: These are critical as they directly affect the credibility and independence of the media. The three indicators in this section (each measured for all 149 countries) are:

- 1. freedom from media bias against opposition parties
- 2. lack of self-censorship among journalists when reporting on issues that the government considers politically sensitive
- 3. freedom from media corruption, avoiding the change of payments for altering news coverage

Internet and government censorship: Vital for ensuring a free and open information environment. The two indicators in this section (each measured for all 149 countries) are:

- 1. freedom from government attempts to censor information on the internet
- 2. freedom from government attempts to censor print or broadcast media

Media perspectives and criticism: Essential for a democratic society, allowing for diverse views and accountability. The two indicators in this section (each measured for all 149 countries) are:

- 1. print and broadcast media represent a wide range of political perspectives
- 2. print and broadcast outlets routinely criticise the government



Country profile: Montenegro

Montenegro has a media landscape that is influenced by its political environment and external pressures. The country's media environment exhibits both positive aspects, such as the relative freedom of traditional media, and significant challenges, particularly related to media corruption and internet freedom.



Media bias and corruption

Montenegro's ranking *for freedom from media bias* (**60/149**) is the highest in the region, indicating that the country performs relatively well in minimising overt bias in its media. In 2017, Montenegro had reached a peak ranking of **42/149**, highlighting a period of reduced media bias and greater media independence. This improvement was likely influenced by Montenegro's efforts to align with European Union standards, which emphasised media pluralism and reduced political interference. However, the ranking dropped to 86 in 2019, reflecting a resurgence of media bias, likely due to increased consolidation of media ownership among politically connected individuals and persistent political pressures on media outlets. Montenegro's current ranking, though an improvement on 2019, still places the country in the middle range globally, reflecting ongoing issues with biased reporting, particularly in the context of political alignment. The media environment remains politically polarised, with uneven application of the journalistic Code of Ethics and professional standards. This was particularly obvious ahead of the [presidential and parliamentary elections in 2023](#).

Self-censorship is a notable problem, with Montenegro ranking **66/149** for *lack of media self-censorship*. While this ranking is better than some of its regional peers', it still suggests that journalists face significant pressures, often from political entities, which lead them to censor their own work. The case of [Jovo Martinovic](#) provides a dramatic example of how politics interfered in the justice system to keep journalists silent. An investigative

reporter covering organised crime, Martinovic was finally acquitted on appeal in 2023 after a seven-year judicial ordeal that included 15 months in pre-trial detention after being charged with drug trafficking. In 2022, the authorities registered 22 cases of violence against journalists in Montenegro, involving threats, intimidation, harassment, and, in several instances, physical violence. This environment stifles the development of a robust and independent press, which is crucial for holding power to account.

Media corruption is a critical issue in Montenegro, as evidenced by its ranking of **90/149** for this indicator. This low ranking reflects the economic pressures and lack of financial independence faced by journalists and media outlets. Such conditions make them vulnerable to corruption, where media entities might accept financial incentives in exchange for favourable coverage or to suppress unfavourable stories. This undermines journalistic integrity and erodes public trust in the media.

Internet and government censorship > > > > > > > > > >

Montenegro ranks the lowest in the region for *freedom from internet censorship efforts* (**73/149**), suggesting significant government control over online content. Over the past decade, Montenegro experienced a decline in its ranking, dropping by 10 places. This stands in contrast to the relatively more open environment for traditional print and broadcast media; Montenegro ranks high at **22/149** for *freedom from government censorship efforts*. Since 2023, the public broadcaster, Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG), has pursued '[a more balanced editorial policy and has been more inclusive of diverse political content](#)'. However, the disparity between internet and traditional media censorship highlights a complex media environment where the government exerts more control over digital spaces while allowing relatively greater freedom in traditional media.

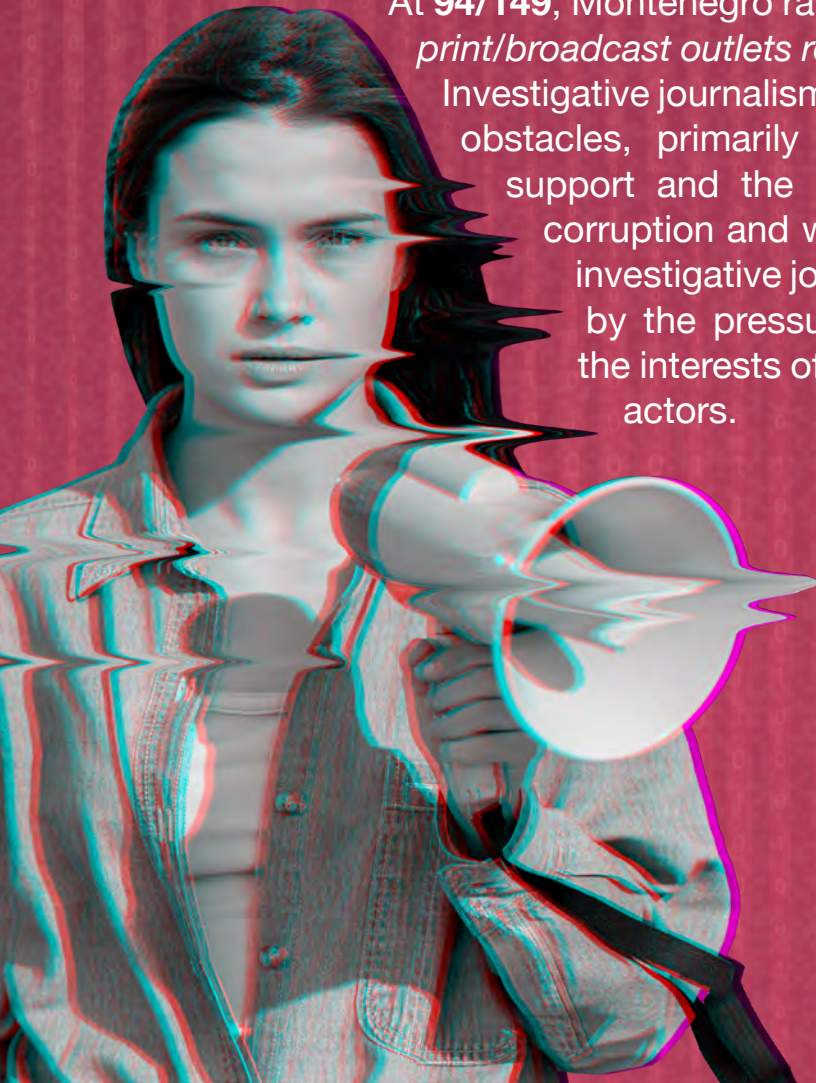


Media perspectives and criticism

Montenegro's ranking of **88/149** for its range of *print and broadcast media perspectives* highlights a moderate level of diversity in media content. While there is some variety in the perspectives presented by media outlets, this does not necessarily translate into balanced or comprehensive coverage. There are concerns that the foreign owners of some outlets influence editorial policies to serve the interests of other governments (such as the Serbian government) or those of their local political favourites. As of 2022, all broadcasters with national coverage in Montenegro except public broadcaster RTCG were majority or completely foreign-owned, often by groups associated with Serbian businesses. Two out of the three major daily newspapers are foreign-owned.

At **94/149**, Montenegro ranks in the lower third globally for *print/broadcast outlets routinely criticise the government*.

Investigative journalism in Montenegro faces significant obstacles, primarily due to the lack of financial support and the risks associated with exposing corruption and wrongdoing. The environment for investigative journalism is further compromised by the pressure on journalists to conform to the interests of powerful political and economic actors.



Annex: Indicator rank comparison

Media bias and corruption

1) Freedom from media bias against opposition parties

60/149

Analysis: Montenegro ranks the highest in the Western Balkans for this indicator, suggesting that media bias is less prevalent compared to its regional peers. However, it still falls in the middle range globally.

Regional comparisons:
Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks **91**
Kosovo ranks **99**
Serbia ranks **122**

2) Lack of self-censorship among journalists when reporting on issues that the government considers politically sensitive

66/149

Analysis: Montenegro is mid-ranked globally, indicating that self-censorship is a moderate issue, less severe than in some neighbouring countries.

Regional comparisons:
Kosovo ranks **38**
Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks **99**
Serbia ranks **116**

3) Freedom from media corruption, avoiding the change of payments for altering news coverage

90/149

Analysis: Montenegro is in the bottom half globally, indicating that media corruption remains a significant challenge.

Regional comparisons:
Kosovo ranks **30**
Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks **86**
Serbia ranks **125**

Internet and government censorship

1) Freedom from government attempts to censor information on the internet

73/149

- : **Analysis:** Montenegro ranks the lowest in the region for internet censorship efforts, reflecting significant government control over online content.

Regional comparisons:

Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks **20**

Kosovo ranks **38**

Serbia ranks **48**

2) Freedom from government attempts to censor print or broadcast media

22/149

- : **Analysis:** Montenegro ranks high for this indicator, suggesting relatively low levels of government censorship of print and broadcast media. This ranking is closest to Italy within the EU.

Regional comparisons:

Kosovo ranks **20**

Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks **80**

Serbia ranks **135**



Media perspectives and criticism

1) Print and broadcast media represent a wide range of political perspectives

88/149

- : **Analysis:** Montenegro's ranking reflects a moderate level of diversity in media content. However, the presence of varied perspectives does not necessarily translate into balanced reporting, as issues of bias and corruption still prevail. The closest European Union counterparts are Bulgaria and Romania.

Regional comparisons:

Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks **57**
Kosovo ranks **90**
Serbia ranks **114**

2) Print and broadcast outlets routinely criticise the government

94/149

- : **Analysis:** This ranking places Montenegro in the lower third globally, with Poland as the closest European Union comparison. This indicates that while there is some level of media freedom, significant constraints still exist.

Regional comparisons:

Kosovo ranks **33**
Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks **65**
Serbia ranks **119**



