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Ways out of the Crisis



Publix White paper Common-Good-Oriented
Journalism as a Model for the Future

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Abstract



This paper examines the concept of common-good-oriented journalism within the rather challenging conditions of current media developments in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (the DACH region). It establishes a basis for the definition, identification, and strategic funding of various forms of journalistic output that make a vital contribution to the wellbeing of society in democracies.

An additional document with detailed commentary is attached and elaborates on many aspects of the main text. It points to selected academic and specialized literature as well as key data on developments in media and journalism.

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Journalism and its Challenges

In the DACH region, the media landscape has traditionally been structured as a **dual system** made up of public broadcasters and private-sector providers. A select group of small, non-commercial community media outlets are also currently receiving public funding. In addition, an increasing number of foundation- and donation-funded media as well as membership-based providers are emerging. Such initiatives help safeguard journalistic diversity for particular topics and target groups, closing gaps in coverage left by an independent journalism struggling to survive with commercial revenue alone.

What is Journalism...?

Media are both economic and cultural goods; they are *mixta composita*, and they have a democratic function that is fulfilled by journalism. In turn, journalism provides the public with information and orientation such that it can make informed decisions and participate in the democratic process. Independent journalism is thus the backbone of public communication in a liberal society and a cornerstone of democracy.

Journalism of this kind is rooted in the continuous research, elaboration, and dissemination of information, which can be carried out within different legal frameworks and with different forms of editorial oversight. Journalism appears in all current information channels and will be equally present in every conceivable future form. This includes traditional, analogue distribution models such as print media and linear broadcasting, as well as online formats like websites, newsletters, podcasts and social media, as well as manually supervised future AI formats.

This outline of how journalism sees itself in the world rests on certain **core principles**:

① Editorial independence (with a clear separation of journalistic content from paid advertising), ② Impartiality, ③ Critical scrutiny and supervision of social subsystems, ④ Currency, ⑤ Relevance, ⑥ Accuracy of reporting, ⑦ Overall clarity, ⑧ A clear distinction between reporting on the facts versus expressions of personal opinion across all formats, ⑨ Journalistic research and reporting should embody the maxim *Audiat et alter pars* (let the other side be heard) in the consideration and presentation of different positions. ⑩ Established ethical standards (as laid down, for example, in codes of conduct or existing press codes) must be adhered to in all editorial roles. ⑪ Transparent correction procedures, which are enacted if such standards are violated. ⑫ Relationships based on exchange and dialogue with the public. Digitization and the internet have made these into a principle of growing importance for democracy, one that is increasingly vital to the quality of journalism.

Given the colossal growth of parajournalistic formats across numerous channels, any contemporary definition of journalism must include clear demarcations: journalism is not public relations, nor is it advertising, corporate publishing, opinion pieces, campaigns or propaganda. Unlike journalism,

media output of this sort seeks to influence public opinion for the benefit of the communicator, the respective employer, or as a means of advancing an isolated political agenda. It does not serve the common good but rather the consolidation or implementation of the individual interests of those that generate it.

... And What Problems Does It Currently Face?

The long-term viability of public broadcasters depends on how society at large, and media policymakers, in particular, assess their 'public value', and on the willingness to maintain them with public money or licence fees. In the private sector, globalisation and digital disruptions have led to a substantial decline and, in some instances, to the complete collapse, of existing business models.

Journalistic media companies have reacted with varying degrees of acuity, innovation and a will to invest or adapt. Above all, advertising content is being absorbed by international platforms such as Meta (Facebook, Instagram, etc.), Alphabet (Google, YouTube), and TikTok, thus significantly reshaping national value chains. Indeed, these companies now earn more in advertising revenues in the DACH region than every news and entertainment media outlet combined, yet they produce no journalistic output.

This has resulted in continuously declining revenues and rising economic pressure, with a growing share of legacy media operating at a loss. Moreover, numerous outlets have closed, thousands of journalistic jobs in the DACH region have disappeared, while production demands are on the rise owing to the number of new digital channels. In Austria, many publishing houses have only been able to balance the books and continue operations thanks to direct and indirect state funding. In Switzerland, several media outlets and groups have merged, laying off much of their staff. For its part, Germany has seen the disappearance of many editorials and titles, particularly those operating at a local level. Indeed, in around half of Germany's rural districts, only a single newspaper remains. This continuous decline in publications runs contrary to our expectations of media and journalism in a liberal democracy.

New journalistic business models are increasingly dependent on a variety of revenue sources. In addition to classic revenue sources such as subscriptions and advertisements. While classic revenue sources such as subscriptions and advertisements persist, memberships, donations, event profits, and external funding have all become increasingly important. However, in contrast to their counterparts in Scandinavia, for example, DACH-region consumers are not generally predisposed to pay for online news. This partially explains why journalistic start-up culture has developed more slowly than in Anglo-Saxon countries, as well as in Northern and in Southern Europe.

Orientation Toward the Common Good and a Way Out of the Crisis

Wherever market logic fails, such as at the local level or for target audiences with little purchasing power, journalistic provision in the DACH region also fails. More and more people find themselves without reliable sources of information. In many villages, districts, and regions, democratic control and transparency are disappearing. It is easy to feel – and indeed to measure – the legal infractions of businesses, the higher municipal costs, and the ever-increasing political divide to which these developments lead.

The diversity, quality and reach of journalistic media shrink in the absence of targeted funding. This has negative consequences for social cohesion, civic engagement, and the capacity of policy makers and public administration officials to act effectively.

Fair regulation and funding procedures are crucial to maintain diversity within the media, to maintain journalism's capacity to perform its crucial function of scrutiny, and to maintain the visibility of every voice and position in our democratic society. These procedures must be rooted in a definition of journalism according to which it orchestrates its activities so as to meet the information needs of society as a whole: common-good-oriented journalism.

What Is the Common Good ... ?

There are a number of definitions for the common good, almost all of which refer back to the following philosophical core. Written two and half thousand years ago, Plato's Republic defined the common good as the well-being of everyone who comes together precisely in the interest of achieving the greatest possible collective welfare. It was thus considered to be both the function and the goal of political societies. Indeed, no political order could be deemed legitimate without some concept of the common good. How precisely it was to be determined was the subject of renewed discussion in the aftermath of National Socialism and the Second World War. Ultimately, it became clear that the common good could only emerge through open discussion and the continual balancing of conflicting interests. The common good, which is rooted in diversity, does not arise *a priori* (as a given), but *a posteriori* (as a result), through the safeguarding of a pluralistic democracy, the parameters of which must be broadly represented and publicly debated by means of a free press and independent journalism.

Today, the term is often defined with regard to the requirements of the economic system, such as in EU definitions of orientation toward the common good, which are also reflected in national guidelines and associations across the DACH region. These definitions clearly state that a company's orientation toward the common good is evident in its contribution to social innovation. Common-good-oriented businesses, for

example, are specifically geared toward solving social problems, and reinvest their profits towards achieving these goals. Their business models and impact models are thus closely intertwined. Moreover, the organisational structure and the property relations of common-good-oriented businesses are characterized by forms of co-determination and employee participation as well as by employment practices aimed at promoting social justice.

...And What Does This Mean for Journalism?

Common-good-oriented journalism shares the same fundamental principles as journalism in general: from editorial independence, through accuracy and relevance, to a clear separation between reporting on facts versus expressions of opinion (see above: *What Is Journalism*, points ① – ①②). Its specific purpose, however, is to enact these principles so as to foreground topics, regions, and circumstances that are rarely seen in commercial media or receive many resources.

Common-good-oriented journalism expands the media resonance chamber, so to speak. It functions as a sort of watchdog, ensuring democratic public scrutiny and providing, as a whole, the broadest possible representation of all social groups. It ensures that previously marginalized perspectives become the subject of public debate. In the DACH region, these include people with migration backgrounds, certain linguistic and religious communities, rural dwellers, children, young people, and single parents.

In short: common-good-oriented journalism is geared toward democratic outcomes (dialogue, pluralism, deliberation, participation, an informed population), not toward maximizing reach or revenues. It helps shorten the regional and social distance to professional journalism. As far as the organisational form is concerned, individual businesses, collectives, freelance journalists, sponsoring associations, limited liability companies, non-profit organisations and other legal forms are, in principle, all possible. Privately operated media can be oriented toward the common good if their profits are not primarily generated for private gain and are instead predominantly reinvested into sustaining and expanding journalistic work.

Orientation toward the common good should be stated plainly in all documents pertaining to the particular media organisation and its editorial team. This would include its articles of association, editorial statutes, mission statements, and activity reports. Moreover, all such documents should be made accessible to the public. In the interest of transparency, regular reports should provide figures on property relations and the organisation's finances, including profits and specific investments back into journalism, such as into broadening their content or creating more editorial posts.

Common-good-oriented journalism complies with all media-related legal obligations, affirms its commitment to the democratic constitutional order, and all pertinent constitutional fundamental rights, as well as human rights, human dignity, and equality. It incites neither disregard for the rule of law nor hatred or violence.

Common good principles are also followed with regard to business operations. This includes appropriate remuneration of journalists, thus ensuring, at the same time, that they do not enter into conflicts of interest due to their dependence on other forms of revenue, such as corporate publishing, and political or economic consulting. Common-good-oriented journalism permits neither precarious employment conditions nor extreme income disparities within its editorial teams. All systems may serve to support journalism, they may not, however, replace journalists.

Common-good-oriented media projects should establish codified principles that strengthen the internal independence of the staff. In larger common-good-oriented media outlets, the independence of journalists is also safeguarded by editorial statutes and elected journalistic representatives. These statutes guarantee internal media freedom and editorial pluralism of opinion.

In short: common-good-oriented journalism strengthens democracy through independent, relevant, and fair reporting. It renders underrepresented perspectives visible, forgoes profit maximization, and reinvests revenues in editorial quality and journalistic jobs.

What Defines Common-Good-Oriented-Journalism:

- 🖱 Working in accordance with the core principles that define independent journalism

- 🖱 A clear and comprehensible definition of how contributions to diversity of topics and perspectives are made

- 🖱 A commitment to the democratic constitutional order and responsibility for social cohesion

- 🖱 Revenues are generated primarily with the aim of strengthening journalism (reinvestment rather than extraction)

- 🖱 Transparency regarding ownership structures, as well as revenues and investments

- 🖱 Fair remuneration and equitable working conditions for staff

- 🖱 Safeguarding journalists' independence through editorial statutes

Funding Perspectives for Common-Good- Oriented-Journalism

Funding Common-Good-Oriented Journalism: Who?

It is certainly possible for more media outlets to orient their journalistic work and their business models toward the common good. In light of the ongoing transformation in media systems and journalism, financial support is required by common-good-oriented journalistic outlets above all else. Supporting them is a collective responsibility that should be shared by multiple stakeholders:

It is in the interest of philanthropic foundations to have a functioning 'fourth estate', given that their work presupposes an informed public, and a free, constitutional order governed by the rule of law. To date, foundations in the media sector have predominantly provided selective and individual support: journalism awards, research trips, fellowships, and (further) training. Given the crisis facing business models and the loss of media diversity, we need to increasingly invest directly in the sustainable development of media organizations in order

to safeguard their journalistic quality, critical capacity, and long-term viability. The most effective way to do this is through funding alliances such as those organized by *Press Forward* in the U.S. and the *Media Forward Fund* in the DACH region.

Impact investors differ from traditional investors in that they do not deploy capital solely to secure financial returns. They expect a triple return: In addition to financial repayment, they expect sound management practices and a measurable positive social or environmental impact. Investments in common-good-oriented media can be attractive to impact investors because they generate a clearly measurable impact on society: they ensure diversity of information, strengthen democratic participation, and contribute, thereby, to the resilience of free and open societies.

Federal states, cantons, and municipalities can secure local information ecosystems and strategically close gaps through targeted support. National media policy can establish a reliable framework that safeguards diversity and quality, enables innovation, and addresses structural deficits.

Forms of direct and indirect public funding – whether well-established or currently under discussion – such as tax exemptions, government purchase of advertising space, or distribution subsidies for newspapers, all focus on traditional but increasingly outdated revenue models and are primarily intended as means of bolstering the economy and levels of employment. The challenges currently hindering an informed public sphere in the DACH region call for specific incentives that directly encourage the common-good-function of journalistic media. Examples include the support of particular qualities, fostering innovation or new journalistic ventures that reach additional population groups.

Regional and local pilot programs that promote content-driven and technological innovation as a form of communal infrastructure, and that focus on the common-good orientation of media as well as information deficits among specific population groups currently exist in only a few cantons and federal states. For guidance on how journalistic innovation and digital transformation can succeed both locally and nationally, one need only look at state funding programs in Scandinavia and the Netherlands.

Funding Common-Good-Oriented Journalism: How?

Targeted financial support of common-good-oriented media primarily serves to strengthen the democratic role of journalism. Support should be provided transparently, should foster innovation and long-term financial sustainability, and should be subject to independent evaluation. This entails:

❶ **Transparency regarding funding sources and funding objectives**

Financial support for journalistic media specifies funding objectives and the origin of the funds: What capital, from which source, is a funder investing in, and to what end? Foundations can orient themselves to established standards by adopting, for example, the criteria of the Initiative for a Transparent Civil Society (*Initiative Transparente Zivilgesellschaft*) or by publishing a “Theory of Change” that defines the intended impact goals to be achieved through specific funding for journalism.

❷ **Responsibility for independence, economic sustainability, and diversity**

Funding for common-good-oriented media must be designed such that editorial independence is not compromised in any way. This applies to public posts in particular, as well as to foundations and other private donors. Where media organisations are receiving funds, editorial distance from the donor must be ensured. Financial help must never go hand in hand with political, economic or personal influence over media organisations for the journalistic work they do. To safeguard this independence, funding allocation processes should be in place wherever legally possible. Funding decisions should be made by independent juries or experts who operate and decide free from external influence and based on transparent criteria. Each media outlet should be free to follow its own editorial stance or specific set of societal values as part of a democratic whole. Only this breadth of perspectives can give rise – *a posteriori* (as a result) – to the kind of journalistic diversity that forms the foundation of the common good in information societies. It is crucial to ensure that funding reinforces the sorts of economic structures and sustainability that enable long-term

financing from multiple, mutually independent sources, rather than leading to ongoing dependence on individual funders. Common-good-oriented journalism must therefore develop clear strategies for reinvestment, cost control, and revenue diversification. Funders can do their part by supporting targeted professional consulting, supporting the establishment of journalistic networks, peer exchange, technical or physical infrastructure for media production and professional development, without interfering in terms of content.

③ **Binding goal definition and impact evaluation**

Support for media for the common good must be tied to clearly defined goals and key performance indicators (KPIs). This ensures that an assessment can later be made as to whether the funding has achieved its intended impact, be this in terms of growth, reach, content diversity, audience engagement, or the establishment and further development of editorial structures. Once the funding period ends, a systematic evaluation is required, and its results must be made accessible to the public. This ensures that lessons are learned, the efficacy of funding instruments is improved on, and accountability to the public and civil society is upheld.

④ **Focussing on the needs of the sector and society**

Funders should align their investment with the actual needs of the journalism sector and society. These needs must be identified and regularly reassessed through dialogue with journalists, media organizations, professional associations, civil-society actors, and through engagement with independent research. At present, key investment fields include:

- up-to-date foundational journalism training for diverse population groups
- improvements and further development of journalistic practice, such as, for example, through support for in-depth investigative skills and critical engagement with new technologies such as AI
- support for building innovative and sustainable business and revenue models
- expansion of robust technological infrastructure
- financing legal advice and covering legal costs to protect investigative reporting

If these funding strategies are to be relevant and effective in fostering a high-quality public sphere, they must be capable of the same degree of rapid change inherent to the conditions and challenges of journalism itself.

Conditions for Funding Journalism:

- 🖱 **Transparency:** Disclose funding origins and objectives

- 🖱 **Needs-based orientation:** Align funding with the current needs of the sector and society

- 🖱 **Independence:** no interference in terms of content. Funding decision juries distinct to funding providers themselves

- 🖱 **Diversity:** Allow for a variety of perspectives and editorial positions while safeguarding pluralism and fair representation

- 🖱 **Sustainability:** Strengthen structures and long-term financing models

- 🖱 **Impact:** Define clear goals and KPIs

- 🖱 **Self-monitoring:** Evaluate and publish outcomes.

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Literature and Links

References and resource links on the state of independent journalism and on the evolution and current status of funding debates surrounding (greater) orientation toward the common good.

The relationship between democracy and journalism continues to be reassessed and redefined. A foundational attempt at such a reassessment was undertaken three decades ago:

McQuail, Denis. 1992. Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest. London: Sage.

... and has since been updated to reflect today's normative expectations of journalism in democratic societies, such as:

Christians, Clifford G., Theodore L. Glasser, Denis McQuail, Kaarle Nordenstreng und Robert A. White. 2009. Normative Theories of the Media. Journalism in Democratic Societies. University of Illinois Press.

What professional journalism entails in everyday practice is outlined in the most widely used U.S. textbook on the subject:

Kovach, Bill und Tom Rosenstiel. 2014. The elements of journalism: What journalists should know and the public should expect. New York: Three Rivers Press.

A recent contribution to the practice-oriented DACH debate underscores the importance of clearly defined standards and structures for journalism — particularly in distinguishing it from parajournalism:

Meier, Klaus. 2025. Was ist Journalismus? Standards und Strukturen als Abgrenzungskriterien. Journal für Rechtspolitik 33(1), 9–16.

<https://doi.org/10.33196/jrp202501000101>

Although the technical frameworks and working methods of journalism have evolved continuously, especially under digital conditions, its core understanding remains stable:

Deuze, Mark. 2019. What Journalism Is (Not). Social Media + Society 5(3).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119857202>

The question of who qualifies as a journalist — and who does not — is not merely academic; it has consequences for research, legal protections, and funding decisions:

Kaltenbrunner, Andy und Renée Lugschitz. 2025: Wahrlich Journalismus. Von der schwierigen Notwendigkeit, Journalismus wissenschaftlich zu definieren und gegen PR und Propaganda abzugrenzen. In: Paulitsch, Luis und Sebastian Laudon (Hg.), Alles Journalismus, oder was? Datum-Privatstiftung.

https://datumstiftung.at/app/uploads/2025/11/Alles_Journalismus_oder_was.pdf

The systematic comparison of different journalistic cultures in the “Worlds of Journalism” project enables the classification of global developments alongside national specificities:

Hanitzsch, Thomas, Folker Hanusch, Jyotika Ramaprasad und Arnold S. de Beer. 2019. Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe. Columbia University Press.

<https://cup.columbia.edu/book/worlds-of-journalism/9780231186438/>

In the DACH region, a troubling decline in public trust has recently been observed — making the question of the future of quality-oriented journalism all the more urgent:

Thomas Hanitzsch, Josef Seethaler und Vinzenz Wyss (Hg.). 2019. *Journalismus in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Declining revenues and rising pressure: economic conditions are becoming increasingly challenging for journalism, often under precarious circumstances:

Rivière, Maude. 2024. Finanzierung der Informationsmedien. In *Jahrbuch Qualität der Medien 2024*, hg. von fög – Forschungszentrum Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft, 105–112. Schwabe.

<https://doi.org/10.24894/978-3-7965-5200-7>

Andy Kaltenbrunner, Renée Lugschitz, Matthias Karmasin, Sonja Luef, Daniela Kraus. 2020. *Der österreichische Journalismus-Report. Eine empirische Erhebung und eine repräsentative Befragung Wien*: Facultas.

<https://www.mhw.at/journalismus-reports-i-vi.html>

For young and freelance journalists in particular, earning a livelihood has become increasingly difficult. In Germany, the number of journalists has declined by more than a quarter over the past three decades:

von Garmissen, Anna, Corinna Lauerer, Thomas Hanitzsch und Wiebke Loosen. 2025. *Journalismus in Deutschland 2023. Befunde zur Situation und Selbsteinschätzung einer Profession unter Druck*. M&K Medien & Kommunikationsswissenschaft. 73. Jahrgang 1/2025, 3–34.

<https://doi.org/10.5771/1615-634X-2025-1-3>

Two-thirds of journalists have considered leaving the profession at least once during the past year. Women face a particularly high risk of burnout:

Hanitzsch, Thomas, Lisa Brugger, Simon Fettel, Ann-Kathrin Fuchs, Annalena Grotz, Louisa Huckemann, Lina Jung, Nastja Jurin, Melina Lobner, Franziska Müller, Leonie Raum, Vera Rosinger und Katrin Sandgathe. 2025. *Burning (Out) For Journalism: Aktuelle Befunde zur psychosozialen Gesundheit im deutschen Journalismus*. München: LMU München.

<https://doi.org/10.5282/ubm/epub.123416>

A recent foundation-funded study demonstrates that significant information gaps are emerging, particularly at the local level — with consequences for democratic participation:

Wellbrock, Christian-Mathias und Sabrina Maaß. 2024. *Wüstenradar. Zur Verbreitung des Lokaljournalismus in Deutschland und dessen Effekt auf die Funktionsfähigkeit der Demokratie*.

<https://www.wuestenradar.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2024/11/Wuestenradar-2024-web.pdf>

The rise of new “intermediaries” quickly introduced new forms of competition for journalism and, in many cases, dependencies on major digital platforms:

Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis und Sarah Anne Ganter. 2017. *Dealing with digital intermediaries: A case study of the relations between publishers and platforms*. *New Media and Society* 20(4), 1600–1617.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817701318>

In the DACH countries, Alphabet, Meta and similar companies now generate higher advertising revenues than established journalism. This is particularly measurable in countries where platform taxation has been introduced:

Fidler, Harald. 2025. *Neun Prozent mehr Werbung aus Österreich an Google, Meta und Co*. *Der Standard*. 7. August 2025.

<https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000282638/neun-prozent-mehr-werbung-aus-oesterreich-an-google-meta-und-co>

For legacy media, the necessary cultural transformation in strategy and newsroom organization has been, and continues to be, especially challenging:

Küng, Lucy. 2020. *Hearts and Minds: Harnessing Leadership, Culture, and Talent to Really Go Digital*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

<https://www.lucykung.com/books-reports/>

Although willingness to pay for online journalism is gradually increasing, it remains at a comparatively low level in the DACH region. Only around one in six consumers currently pays for online news:

Newman, Nic, Amy Ross Arguedas, Craig T. Robertson, Rasmus Kleis Nielsen und Richard Fletcher. 2025. *Digital News Report*. Reuters Institute.

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025>

...these developments have been systematically documented in the Digital News Reports since 2014/15 for the DACH countries:

<https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>

<https://leibniz-hbi.de/hbi-projects/reuters-institute-digital-news-report/>

<https://digitalnewsreport.at/>

<https://www.foeg.uzh.ch/de/research/projects/digital-news-report.html>

The question of how independent journalism can be supported in ways that are both innovative and sustainable has thus become central — and not merely in economic terms:

Buschow, Christopher und Christian-Mathias Wellbrock. 2020. *Die Innovationslandschaft des Journalismus in Deutschland*. Düsseldorf: Landesanstalt für Medien NRW.

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-69718-6>

The EU Parliament sees a number of necessary support measures in an “action plan” –and calls for strict observance of journalistic independence and the “arm’s length principle” between the state and the media.

European Parliament, 2021: Report on Europe’s Media in the Digital Decade: an Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0278_EN.pdf

Comparative analysis of 100 case studies from the DACH region, the UK and Spain demonstrates that democratically relevant journalistic innovation is challenging – but possible:

Meier, Klaus, Jose Alberto García Avilés, Andy Kaltenbrunner, Colin Porlezza, Vinzenz Wyss, Renée Lugschitz und Korbinian Klinghardt (Hg.). 2024. Innovations in Journalism. Comparative Research in Five European Countries. Abingdon, Oxon, New York, NY: Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032630410>

As a result, expectations toward state media regulation and funding frameworks in Germany, Switzerland and Austria are increasing:

Gundlach, Hardy (Hg.). 2025. Medienregulierung. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

<https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748914969-1>

Austria deploys substantial public funding for media. The risk of misallocation remains high where funding criteria lack qualitative clarity or future orientation:

Kaltenbrunner, Andy, Renée Lugschitz, Anja Noster und Answer Lang. 2025. Austrian media funding from the perspective of innovation in journalism: an analysis of national programmes and a comparison with innovation funding strategies in other European countries. MedienJournal, Jg. 49 (1): 1-30.

<https://netlibrary.aau.at/medienjournal/periodical/titelinfo/11599343?>

Results of (public) funding with a clear focus on innovation for legacy media and start-ups have been evaluated scientifically in Denmark:

Kammer, Aske und Mark Blach-Örsten. 2025. Subsidized news-media innovation: outputs, outcomes, and impact. Frontiers in Communication. Vol. 10 (2025).

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1578463>

Several countries are currently experimenting with combinations of financial support and qualitative, infrastructural assistance for independent journalism:

Noster, Anja, Christopher Buschow, Andy Kaltenbrunner

und Renée Lugschitz. 2025. The Role of Policy Mixes in Enabling Journalism Innovation: A Transnational Study Across Five Countries. International Journal of Communication. Vol. 19 (2025)

<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/23372>

Already after the first wave of the economic (media) crisis in the early 2010s, discussions emerged about the opportunities and risks of philanthropic funding:

Bergmann, Knut und Leonard Novy. 2012. Chancen und Grenzen philanthropischer Finanzierungsmodelle. Politik und Zeitgeschichte 29–31/2012: Qualitätsjournalismus.

<https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/140231/chancen-und-grenzen-philanthropischer-finanzierungsmodelle/>

In the 21st century, foundations have increasingly acted as funders — though primarily in the form of individual fellowships and journalism awards:

Frühbrodt, Lutz. 2019. Die Bedeutung von Stiftungen für die Finanzierung von Journalismus in Deutschland – ein Überblick. In: Zur Ökonomie gemeinwohlorientierter Medien. Massenkommunikation in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz, hg. von Jan Krone und Andreas Gebesmair. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

<https://www.nomos-shop.de/de/p/zur-oekonomie-gemeinwohlorientierter-medien-gr-978-3-8487-4811-2>

The broader concept of “orientation toward the common good” was normatively reconnected to democratic structures beginning in the 1960s:

Fraenkel, Ernst. 2011. Deutschland und die westlichen Demokratien. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Buchstein, Hubertus. 2007. „Gretchenfrage“ ohne klare Antwort – Ernst Fraenkels politikwissenschaftliche Gemeinwohlkonzeption. In Gemeinwohl und Gemeinsinn: Zwischen Normativität und Faktizität, hg. von Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. 217–240.

<https://edoc.bbaw.de/frontdoor/index/index/year/2007/docId/337>

Following the economic crises of the 21st century, the concept of the common good also found expression in economic policy guidelines aimed at improving equal opportunities:

Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie. 2024. Nationale Strategie für Soziale Innovationen und Gemeinwohlorientierte Unternehmen. Pressemitteilung. 25. September 2024.

<https://www.bundeswirtschaftsministerium.de/Redaktion/DE/Pressemitteilungen/2024/09/20240925-soziale-innovationen-und-gemeinwohlorientierte-unternehmen.html>

This aligns with EU positions framing the common good as a sustainable economic model counteracting social segregation:

Amtsblatt der Europäischen Union. 2016. Stellungnahme des Europäischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialausschusses

zum Thema „Die Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie: Ein nachhaltiges Wirtschaftsmodell für den sozialen Zusammenhalt“ (Initiativstellungnahme) (2016/C 013/06).

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52015IE2060>

Internationally, the decline of local journalism — often described as the emergence of “news deserts,” particularly in the United States — is regarded as a threat to the common good and democracy:

Heese, Jonas, Gerardo Pérez-Cavazos und Caspar David Peter. 2021. When the local newspaper leaves town: The effects of local newspaper closures on corporate misconduct. *Journal of Financial Economics* 2021.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3889039

Where local media have disappeared, political polarization has also increased in Germany, as detailed data analyses since the 1980s demonstrate:

Ellger, Fabio, Hanno Hilbig, Sascha Riaz und Philipp Tillmann. 2024. Local Newspaper Decline and Political Polarization – Evidence from a Multi-Party Setting. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 54 (4).

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000243>

A recent study by the Heinrich Böll Foundation outlines how public funding in Germany could counter further erosion of local journalism in ways that are independent of the state and oriented toward actual needs:

Wellbrock, Christian-Mathias und Matthias Künzler, Leyla Dogruel, Gergana Baeva. 2025. Demokratie beginnt im Lokalen: Zeit für eine neue Medienförderung. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/2025-09/e-pa-per_demokratie-beginnt-im-lokalen_zeit-fuer-neue-medienfoerderung.pdf

The practice-oriented DACH discourse on funding models for journalism oriented toward the public interest is part of an ongoing international debate:

Padania, Sameer und Francesca Silvani. 2023. National Funds for Journalism. *Global Forum for Media Development*.

<https://gfmf.info/h-content/uploads/2023/10/National-Journalism-Funds-policy-paper-gfmd.pdf>

Why dedicated funds for “public interest journalism” are crucial is analyzed in a policy paper by scholars at Columbia University:

Schiffirin, Anya und Brigitte Alfter. 2023. Creating National Funds to Support Journalism and Public-Interest Media. *Global Forum for Media Development*.

<https://gfmf.info/h-content/uploads/2023/10/Creating-National-Funds-Policy-Brief-gfmd.pdf>

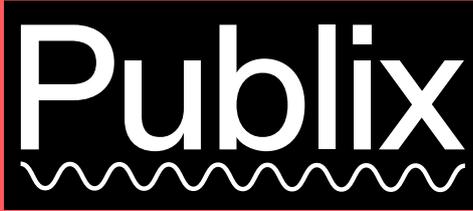
In recent years, pooled foundation initiatives have

demonstrated how joint efforts can protect or enable independent journalism oriented toward the common good. “Civitates,” launched in 2017 in response to democratic backsliding in Eastern Europe, initiated philanthropic programs that define independent media development as a central need:

<https://civitates-eu.org/about-us/>

The Media Forward Fund, comprising 20 participating foundations, has since 2024 focused its DACH funding calls on supporting independent quality media committed to the common good. By autumn 2025, ten journalistic projects had been funded following differentiated criteria and independent expert jury decisions. Approximately 350 applications from media organizations across the DACH region in the first funding rounds illustrate the substantial demand.

<https://www.mediaforwardfund.org/>



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