International Press Institute

MEDIA INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

IMPACT REPORT

2024

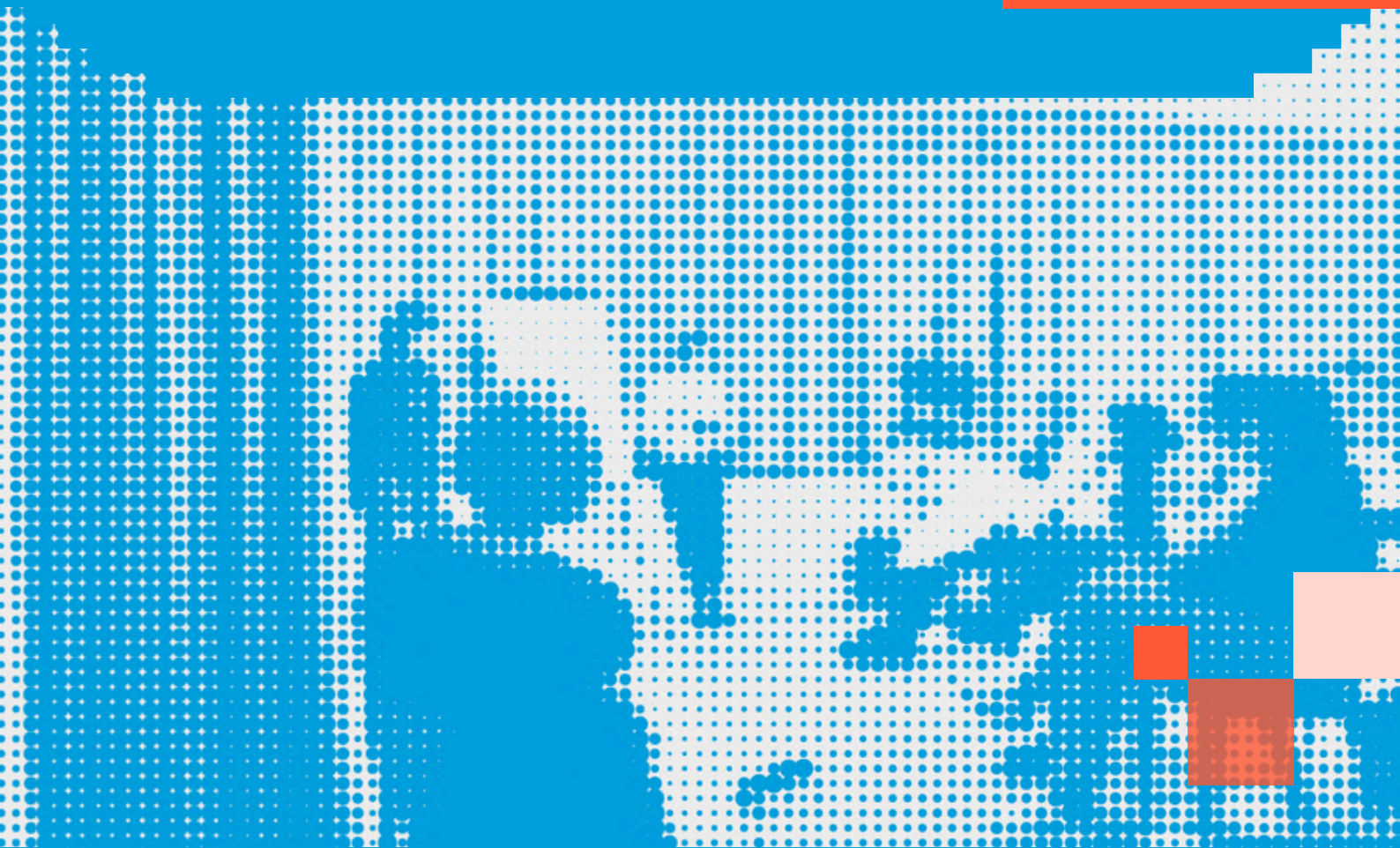


TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 INTRODUCTION 3

02 THEORY OF CHANGE 6

03 REVENUE ROADMAP 9

04 ACCELERATORS 10

05 CASE STUDIES 11

- Recorder
- Oslobođenje
- The Centrum Media
- Health-e News

06 LESSONS ON COLLABORATION 16

07 MEDIA INNOVATION FESTIVAL 17

08 INNOVATION NETWORK & MENTORSHIP 19

09 LOCAL JOURNALISM PROJECT 20

10 MEDIA INNOVATION TEAM IN 2024 21

01. INTRODUCTION

→ ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report highlights the progress made in 2024 on IPI's Media Innovation and Sustainability initiatives, advancing IPI's mission to empower media to achieve editorial independence and financial sustainability. To evaluate our success, we track quantitative impact indicators, such as percent revenue increase, audience growth, engagement in training and coaching, as well as qualitative indicators, like change in creative confidence, access to networks, and technical skills and tools adopted to the operations of our grantees.

→ ABOUT IPI

The International Press Institute (IPI) is a global network of editors and leading journalists who share a common dedication to quality, independent journalism. IPI was founded in 1950 and has members from over 100 countries. Together, we defend media freedom and the free flow of information wherever they are threatened.

→ WHY MEDIA INNOVATION AT IPI

IPI's Media Innovation and Sustainability portfolio supports independent media organizations through innovation practice and business development to achieve financial, technical and editorial sustainability. **We see media innovation and viability as a key pillar of press freedom** — essential to growing threats facing the industry.

Innovation support complements IPI's advocacy efforts to address the legal, physical and digital threats to journalists. Media organizations across the world face shrinking advertising revenue, saturation of the reader revenue market, dominance of and dependence on big tech platforms, and donor-funded models showing limits. Simultaneously, they must navigate audience fragmentation, rising journalism costs, competition with viral creators and ownership concentration.

Through forward-thinking training, personalized advisory services, funding and collaborative networks, we catalyze digital transformation, enhance audience engagement, and double-down on the sustainability of accountability-focused media. We equip early-stage and established organizations with the skills and tools to **generate revenue and achieve economic viability, rebuild and strengthen audience relationships, and leverage technology — ensuring that they remain independent, competitive, and responsive to social and political shifts.**

We help publishers invest in building with, not for, their audiences – be it national, local, or niche focused. For the media to fulfill their watchdog role in promoting transparency and strengthening institutions, media makers today must be agile in their adaptation to changing consumer behavior and ensure business and distribution strategies are fit-for-purpose in the digital era of publishing.

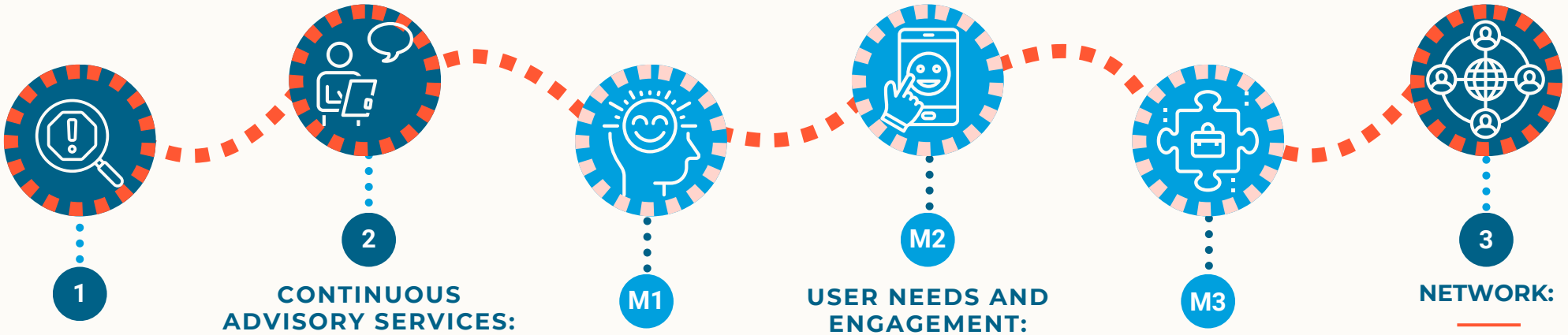
- RYAN POWELL,
HEAD OF INNOVATION
AND MEDIA BUSINESS, IPI

02. THEORY OF CHANGE

Since piloting IPI's accelerator programmes in 2022, IPI has helped **62 media outlets from 37 countries globally** to future-proof their editorial and business models. Our methodology offers both broad capacity-building modules and skills development tailored to specific pain-points. With the support of leading industry experts as trainers, speakers and coaches, we provide a space to experiment, develop, test or freeze ideas, as well as the funding to bring these ideas to fruition.

Our learning journey follows 6 core pillars: 1) Needs assessments, 2) Continuous advisory services, 3) Strategic planning and creative confidence, 4) User needs and audience engagement, 5) Economic viability, and 6) Collaborative Network.

→ LEARNING JOURNEY



1

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS:

Tailor curriculum to cohort's needs and objectives

→ IPI holds in-depth assessment interviews to identify challenges

2

CONTINUOUS ADVISORY SERVICES:

Continuous advisory services: Adapt innovation strategies to unique challenges and market contexts

→ Regular 1:1 and group coaching
→ IPI monitors progress and arranges additional, tailored coaching

M1

DESIGN AND PRODUCT THINKING:

Generate ideas and products that fit each media's unique market needs

→ Identify pain points, ideate solutions, prototype, test, and iterate
→ Track and prioritize goals using OKR framework

M2

USER NEEDS AND ENGAGEMENT:

Create audience-first journalistic products that solve real needs of community

→ Research and generate audience data to base product design on
→ Foster bond of mutual trust and collaboration with feedback loops

M3

RESILIENT BUSINESS MODELS:

Thrive despite challenges and remain sustainable and independent

→ Implement revenue diversification and financial planning strategies
→ Adopt low-cost operating model optimizing tools and technology

3

NETWORK:

Foster vibrant community of media innovation practitioners

→ Engage in IPI's global alumni and member network

1 **LEARNING JOURNEY METHOD**

M **LEARNING JOURNEY MODULE**

Being a very young news organization, every piece of knowledge on media innovation and sustainability has value for us – everything in the IPI training was up to the mark and was needed.

- WAHID ALI,
THE CENTRUM MEDIA (PAKISTAN)

03. REVENUE ROADMAP

From our experience in supporting innovation work, IPI created a toolkit to **ideate, rethink and develop solutions** to future-proof your media's editorial strategy, technology and business model.

The **Revenue Roadmap** introduces methods and tools to discover and identify, test and deliver the most relevant **innovations and revenue diversification strategies** for your media, in your market.

04. ACCELERATORS

Each of our flagship 5-8 month-long Accelerator programmes is tailored to the pressing needs of new media, media in transition and local media.

→ Transition Accelerator:

Duration: 8 months

Funding, training, coaching and networking programme, including one in-person bootcamp in Vienna. Focused on supporting established independent media with an elaborated digital transition-project proposal in developing audience-centered solutions to organizational challenges.

- **Find out about the 2024 cohort.**

→ Local News Accelerator:

Duration: 5 months

Training, coaching and networking programme. Focused on supporting media who are serving local and underserved communities with skills and strategies to grow their audiences and fill information gaps with quality, user-centric reporting.

- **Find out about the 2024 cohort.**

→ New Media Incubator:

Duration: 8 months

Funding, training, coaching and networking programme, including 1 in-person bootcamp in Vienna. Focused on supporting media with a minimum viable product to identify market gaps, understand audience needs, prototype products and continuously test and maintain business or content models. The next NMI call will open in March 2025.

62
alumni from 37 countries

432
applications from 82 countries

€620k
awarded in grants for participants

05. CASE STUDIES

Coming into the programme, it was almost as though we were seeing things through these very dark-tinted sunglasses, and suddenly we took them off. The training and coaching sessions opened up a clear pathway to think about things differently.

- BIBI-AISHA WADVALLA,
HEALTH-E NEWS (SOUTH AFRICA)

CASE STUDY

RECORDER

Recorder is a media organization committed to uncovering and explaining key issues that shape people's lives, empowering them to make informed decisions about the world they want to live in and how to contribute to it. Recorder's investigative work follows a clear mission statement: "Honest journalism, made with passion, and put into public service".

Main project:
Recorder joined the accelerator to develop a CRM consolidating donors from 5+ different donation platforms. Since 90% of Recorder's revenue comes from its readers, this system will enable clearer audience segmentation and personalized communication across donor categories.

> Our coach challenged our assumption that we could implement a ready-made CRM and be done with it. She guided us to consider what lies behind the decision: What kind of data do we want to gather and why? Will this data be sufficient, or will we need more down the line?
>
> **- ROXANA STAN, RECORDER**

IMPACTS

- The programme provided Recorder with valuable time for analysis and reflection, allowing them to refine their **CRM priorities**. These were distilled into three key objectives, tailored to the organization's needs and the respectful, unobtrusive relationship it fosters with its donors. The team is currently in the process of technically testing two shortlisted CRMs.

- Building on insights from the accelerator's user needs and community engagement training, Recorder is preparing **user interviews** with 2 distinct donor profiles and readers who do not currently donate. Their goal is to ultimately develop a professional **"donor care" process** to improve retention and strengthen financial support.

- To enhance long-term strategies, the team is integrating **user needs and OKR framework** across departments beyond the CRM project, including social media.

Follow Recorder and learn more about their work:

Romania

redactia@recorder.ro

Recorder.ro

YouTube

CASE STUDY

OSLOBOĐENJE

Founded in 1943, **Oslobođenje** is one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most respected and enduring media outlets. Their mission is to provide accurate, independent, and insightful journalism that informs, educates, and connects their audience.

Main project:
During the Transition Accelerator, Oslobođenje has been working on digitizing its vast 81-year archive of newspaper publications, complete with tagging and captions for accessibility. Once completed, the archive will support journalists in their research and serve as a sustainable revenue source for the organization.

> Everything is working fine in offline mode – but creating a product that will actually reach people in real life is very tricky. In building this digital archive, I'm trying to think of how to respect the time that our users give us.
>
> **- NIHAD KATICA, OSLOBOĐENJE**

IMPACTS

- The team has so far scanned and digitized one-third of the material. They are exploring cooperations with librarianship and archiving students to get support with categorization and tagging.

- Oslobođenje's main challenge is turning the vast amount of digitized information into a functional and useful product. With the support of IPI coaches, they are currently **AB testing on user-friendliness, searchability and user-registration models**. A first version will be online at the end of February 2025.

- Inspired by subscription schemes adopted among the **Accelerator cohort**, the team is developing a multi-tiered model for monetizing their archive. They plan on segmenting data access in thematically sorted packages of photos and articles. Expanding the potential subscriber base, they are exploring new audiences in academia and the private sector.

Follow Oslobođenje and learn more about their work:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

redaction@oslobodjenje.ba

Twitter

Facebook

CASE STUDY

THE CENTRUM MEDIA

The Centrum Media (TCM) is Pakistan's first digital news network and one of its first independent news outlets. TCM was formed by a group of journalists who wanted to disrupt the way mainstream channels often censored narratives. In a complex political, social and cultural landscape, they aim to highlight unheard voices, bring new perspectives and present all facts.

Main project:
Starting the Local News Accelerator, TCM recognized the need to address financial sustainability before focusing on their initial goal of engaging hyperlocal audiences. To adapt, TCM shifted strategies and developed a crowdfunding campaign as an additional revenue source.

> Before the Accelerator, we did not have much of an idea of who our core audience was and what content they actually consumed. The data-driven approach that we learned through the Accelerator was really helpful.
>
> **- WAHID ALI, TCM**

IMPACTS

- With the help of their coach, TCM adopted a **comprehensive crowdfunding strategy**, including online campaigning and website redesign to optimize engagement. They successfully adapted their approach to accommodate an environment of limited trust in digital transaction platforms and low internet connectivity.
- Using Google and Meta Analytics, TCM did **data-driven audience research** to determine core content segments. Mapping reach and engagement, they adjusted their strategy to put more resources into content well-performing and remodeled their outputs to be more appealing to Gen Z and Gen Alpha.
- The IPI training helped TCM to identify the actual challenges they are facing and align priorities on tackling them using the **OKR framework**.

Follow The Centrum Media and learn more about their work:

Pakistan

Online contact form

Twitter

LinkedIn

CASE STUDY

HEALTH-E NEWS

Health-e News is a non-profit, public-interest publication specializing in health news. Their mission is to provide accurate and relevant health information that addresses public health challenges, promotes health equity, and amplifies the voices of underserved populations.

Main project
Health-e News joined the accelerator wishing to expand its network of community journalists (CJs), a key pillar of its editorial strategy. This went hand in hand with efforts to produce more community-centered content and deliver relevant stories for underserved populations, particularly in rural areas.

> We realized we were doing too much of everything, but we can't cover every health story. Our strategy now is to refocus on what made us unique in the first place: community-based stories that we know are relevant for the audiences we want to reach".
>
> **- BIBI-AISHA WADVALLA, HEALTH-E NEWS**

IMPACTS

- During the accelerator, Health-e News conducted a **needs assessment for their CJs.** In response, they implemented a schedule for monthly training workshops to strengthen skills and confidence in pitching stories. They also identified a need for structured communication, and introduced check-ins with clear agendas and guidelines for community involvement.

- Before the accelerator, Health-e News spent considerable time debating what stories aligned with their mission. To structure the pitching process, they created a **rubric with examples** for reporters to evaluate what stories to pitch and which formats would be most accessible.

- Coaching helped the Health-e News team align their contrasting working styles—one spontaneous and visionary, the other structured and detail-focused—, leading to better collaboration between ideation and execution.

Follow Health-e News and learn more about their work:

South Africa
Website
Twitter
Instagram

06. LESSONS ON COLLABORATION

1

TAKE A STEP BACK:

Take time to analyse needs, challenges, pain points, and failures before jumping to solutions.

2

HONE IN ON INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE CHALLENGES:

Offer tailored guidance on specific pain points & facilitate mutual learning on common challenges.

3

ALIGN GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

Use methods such as OKRs, north-star-goals and value propositions to create a transparent structure and strategy.

4

GET COMFORTABLE WITH THINGS NOT WORKING:

Rethinking and iterating are the backbone of innovative work.

07. MEDIA INNOVATION FESTIVAL

SAVE THE DATE
for 2025 IPI WoCo & MIF Vienna on October 23-25, 2025

In 2024, IPI's Media Innovation team hosted the second edition of the Media Innovation Festival, a flagship event designed to offer a vital platform for media startups, professionals, thought leaders and innovators to critically discuss the role of media in addressing today's most pressing challenges.

Held under the theme **"Navigating Crises: Journalism at a Turning Point"**, the festival took place alongside IPI's World Congress in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina. It offered a unique blend of panels, workshops, and networking opportunities, creating space for a global community of local news practitioners and media innovators to network, build community and learn from one another.

375
festival attendees

104
speakers from 43 countries

7
innovation panels, with 12 press freedom panels & activities

→ INNOVATION PANELS

- Investigative journalism's profit puzzle: Going beyond breaking even.
- Putting communities first: How local media are engaging audiences – and keeping their trust.
- Pivot under Pressure: How Media Innovate Through Crisis.

- Audience-first Journalism: Innovative Strategies to Build Trust in Your Brand.
- The Revenue Roadmap: An Insider's Playbook to Driving Impact and Paying for Your Journalism.
- Bursting Bubbles: Feminist Media Innovate to Reach Wider Audiences.
- AI's impact on journalism: Evaluating risks and opportunities.

08. INNOVATION NETWORK & MENTORSHIP

→ LOCAL NEWS AND INNOVATION NETWORK

To foster collaboration and networking among media professionals across the world, IPI's media innovation team established the Local News and Media Innovation Network. In 2024, the network grew to over 350 members, fueled by the success of the media innovation programmes and the participants' desire to stay connected with IPI in the long term.

→ MENTORSHIP

The Media Innovator's Mentorship connects journalists and media innovators to share expertise on topics ranging from media management to audience engagement and product development. In 2024, we expanded the programme into two tracks:

- **Expert Mentoring:** offers 1:1 sessions with industry experts to share knowledge, experience, and lessons with individuals or newsrooms seeking guidance.
- **Peer Mentoring:** pairs newsrooms at similar stages of development to facilitate the eye-level exchange of knowledge and experiences.

100+
new members in the Innovation Network

10
expert mentorship matches

10
peer-to-peer mentorship matches

9. LOCAL JOURNALISM PROJECT

In 2024 and 2025, IPI hosted 3 virtual newsroom visits, combining a behind-the-scenes look into innovative newsrooms with an open Q&A for all participants. These events created a space for independent, local publishers to share how they manage operations, build tools for their community, strategize for growth, navigate crises and more.

IPI also published 3 case studies on media outlets from around the globe that developed innovative and sustainable business models, found resilience in unstable media environments, and provided their audiences with quality journalism.

→ Scrolla.Africa: How can AI turbocharge the delivery of high-quality news in Africa

→ Vlast: Building independent media business in Kazakhstan

→ El Clip: NINA and how to build a collaborative database for investigations in Latin America

→ Mekong Eye: A Platform for Local Journalists shaping the Mekong Narratives

→ BehanBox: Transforming Indian Media through a Gender Lens

→ In-Depth Solomons: Pioneering Investigative Journalism In The Solomon Islands

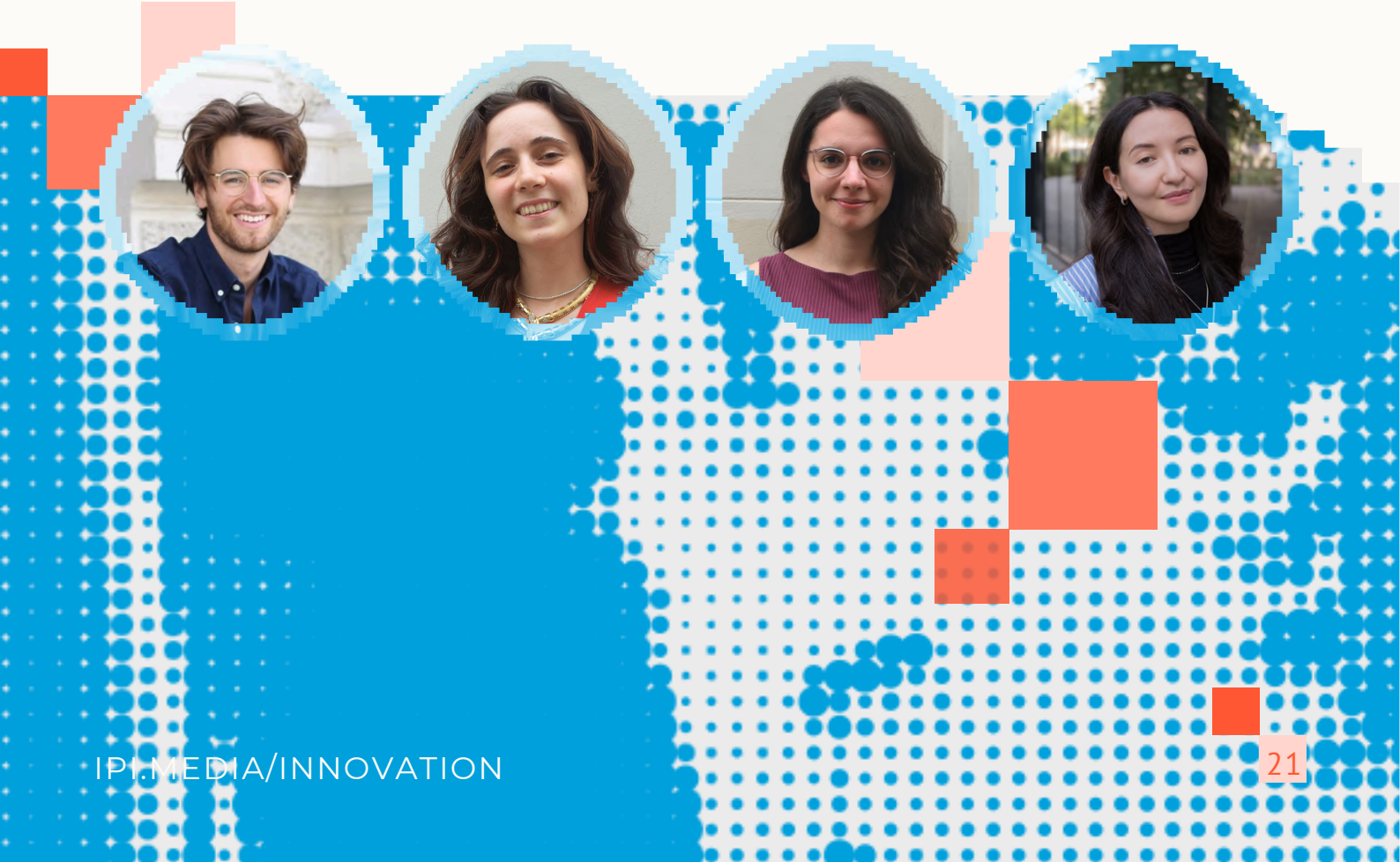
10. MEDIA INNOVATION TEAM IN 2024

2024 was a transformative year for the Media Innovation team. As our projects grew in complexity and reach, we expanded from a two-person team to five.

With the new additions, we have been better equipped to guide, support, and innovate alongside the media organizations we serve. Below are the people who have helped shape this year's journey: from left to right, Ryan Powell (Head of Innovation and Media Business), Nicky Deluggi (Innovation Project Officer), Alina Cristea (Innovation Project Officer), and Dinara Satbayeva (Communications Officer). Alina Živanović (Project Manager) is joining us in early 2025.

Do you have questions, comments, doubts or constructive feedback about our work and methodology? Are you interested in being part of our programmes, either as a participant or an expert?

Reach out to us at **innovation@ipi.media** and let's start a conversation!



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