

MEDIA INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Impact report

2025





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1. INTRODUCTION

About IPI

[International Press Institute \(IPI\)](#) was founded in 1950 by leading editors who believed that a free press would lead to a freer, better world.

2025 marked IPI's 75th anniversary – a milestone in the fight to protect and defend journalism and press freedom around the globe. As journalism is under pressure worldwide, it is a time for solidarity, collaboration, and reaffirming the essential value of public-interest journalism.

Together with its membership network of media professionals in more than 100 countries, IPI works to defend press freedom, support independent journalism and media innovation, and foster professional exchange.

- [Read more about IPI's anniversary celebrations.](#)

About this report

This report highlights the progress made in 2025 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 or audience growth, as well as qualitative indicators, like change in creative confidence or audience understanding.

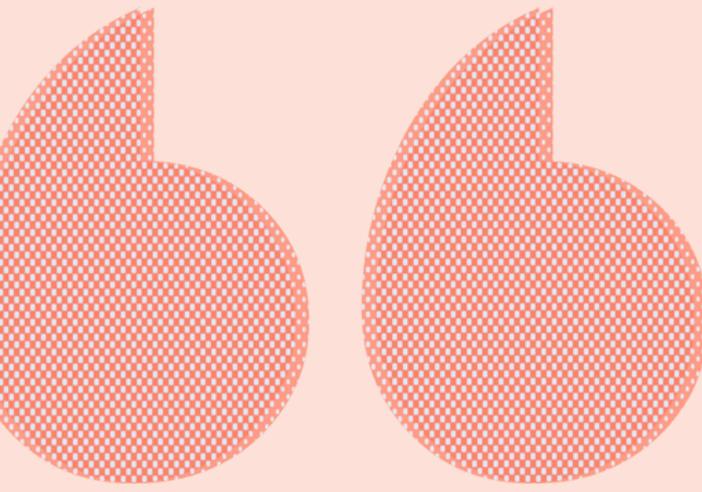


2. WHY MEDIA INNOVATION AT IPI

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, strengthening the information ecosystem by ensuring quality journalism is prepared for increasing frequency of political, technical and market disruptions.

Worldwide, independent media face numerous challenges to their sustainability, including audience fragmentation, threats to credibility, media capture and new technical transformations – from consumer tech to AI. These shifts are overhauling how media build trust, while also revealing new opportunities for growth and audience connection.

Our mission is to support high-quality public interest journalism vulnerable to shifts in politics, technology and business to remain independent, competitive, and responsive to these challenges of our time. Through forward-thinking training, personalized advisory services, funding and collaborative networks, IPI equips media organizations with the tools to diversify revenue, rebuild and strengthen audience relationships, and leverage technology.



“2025 was a critical growth year for IPI’s innovation team, expanding its thematic and geographic work and investing in partnerships to chart a collaborative future. The sector is facing what feels like unprecedented headwinds, but we see promise guided by new benchmarks. Trust is becoming a non-negotiable currency; a commitment to process and inclusivity in innovation and strategy are paramount; while opportunities for entering new markets and doubling down on infrastructure and data capabilities are essential for growth.”

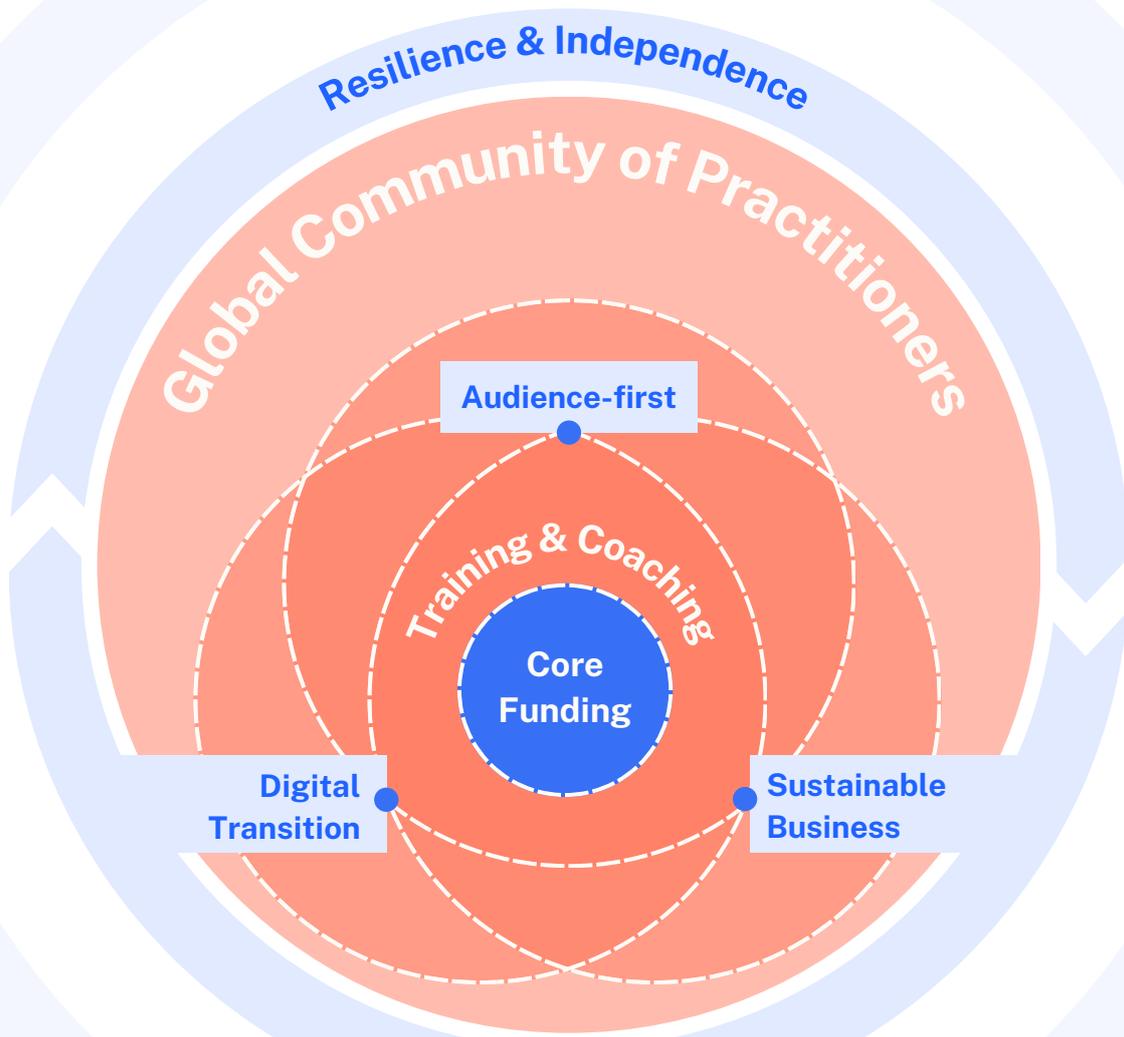
- Ryan Powell,
Head of Innovation and Media Business,
International Press Institute (IPI)



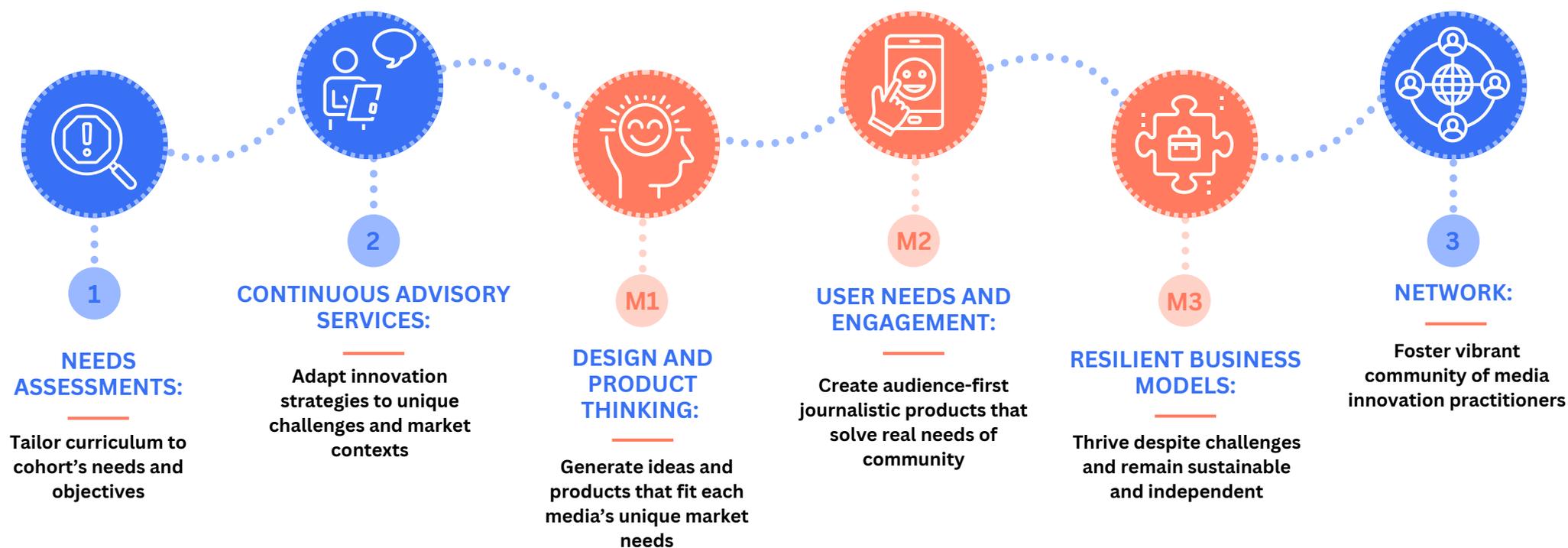
3. OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Our methodology combines technical support tailored to each media outlet's unique requirements and market context with process guidance, shared resources and network access. With the support of leading industry experts, 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 7 core pillars: **1) Organizational audits, 2) Continuous advisory services, 3) Process, strategic planning and creative confidence, 4) User needs and audience engagement, 5) Economic viability and market relevance, 6) Technical infrastructure and data capabilities and 7) Collaborative Network.**



LEARNING JOURNEY



1 LEARNING JOURNEY METHOD

M LEARNING JOURNEY MODULE

4. INNOVATION SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

IPI's accelerators offer funding, training, coaching and networking to participating media. Each accelerator is tailored to the pressing needs of new media, media in digital transition or local media. Since 2022, we have supported 83 media organizations from 47 countries, awarding €982.000 in funding. [Learn more about our alumni organizations here.](#)



New Media Incubator Bootcamp in Vienna, 2025 . ©Dinara Satbayeva

4. INNOVATION SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Accelerator programme	Edition	Applications	Duration	Media selected
Transition Accelerator: Supports established independent media with an elaborated digital transition-project proposal in developing audience-centered solutions to revenue and operational challenges.	2022	47	8 mo	15
	2024	77	8 mo	14
Local News Accelerator: Supports 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.	2023	150	5 mo	12
	2024	81	5 mo	10
	2025	143	5 mo	10
New Media Incubator: Supports media with a minimum viable product to identify market gaps, understand audience needs, prototype products and continuously test and maintain business or content models.	2023	78	8 mo	10
	2025	156	8 mo	12
Coming soon: AI Accelerator for Global Majority Supports newsrooms in global majority countries seeking to experiment with AI and new technology to invest in the medium and long-term viability.	2026	205	8 mo	15

5. CASE STUDIES



5.1 New Media Incubator (ends in April 2026)

- Case Study 1: EU Made Simple (Germany)
- Case Study 2: From the Republics (Poland)

5.2 Local News Accelerator (ended in February 2026)

- Case Study 3: Maldives Independent (Maldives)
- Case Study 4: ZaNTimes (Afghanistan)

5.3 Lessons on collaborating on media innovation

- [New Media Incubator 2025](#)

CASE STUDY 1: EU MADE SIMPLE (GERMANY)



“We aim to demystify the EU for everyone”

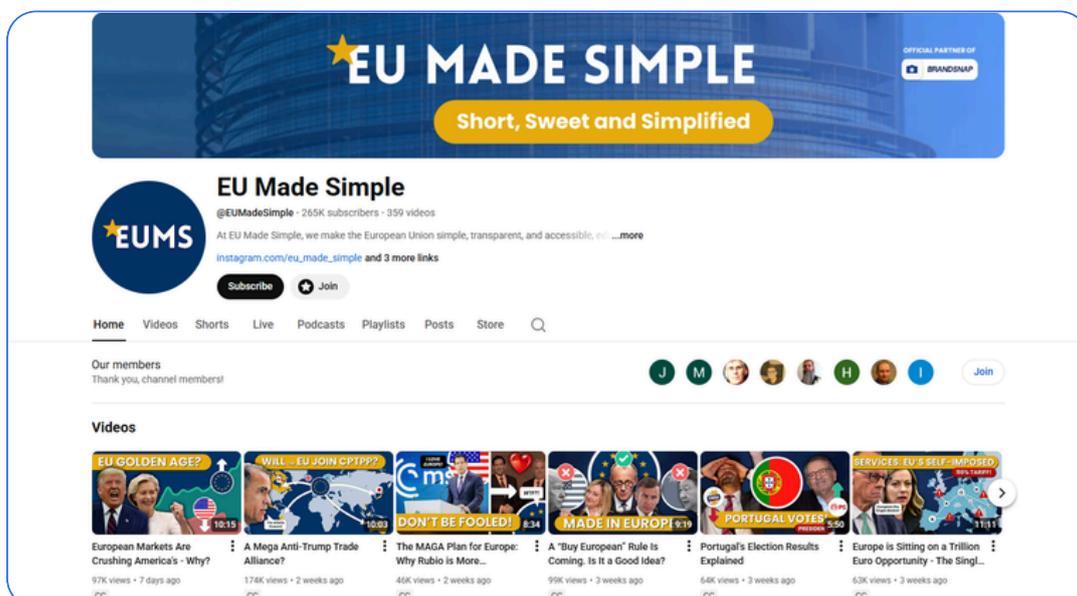
Description

[EU Made Simple](#) is a pan-European platform that provides EU news and explainers designed to inform young Europeans to engage, participate, and vote in elections. Their core product is YouTube video content available in 8 languages: English, German, French, Greek, Italian, Romanian, Polish, and Bulgarian.

Main project

EUMS joined the NMI to expand their coverage of EU news in the native languages of Spain, Poland and Romania, alongside efforts to support local teams creating original content.

EUMS YouTube channel



- [New Media Incubator 2025](#)

CASE STUDY 1: EU MADE SIMPLE (GERMANY)

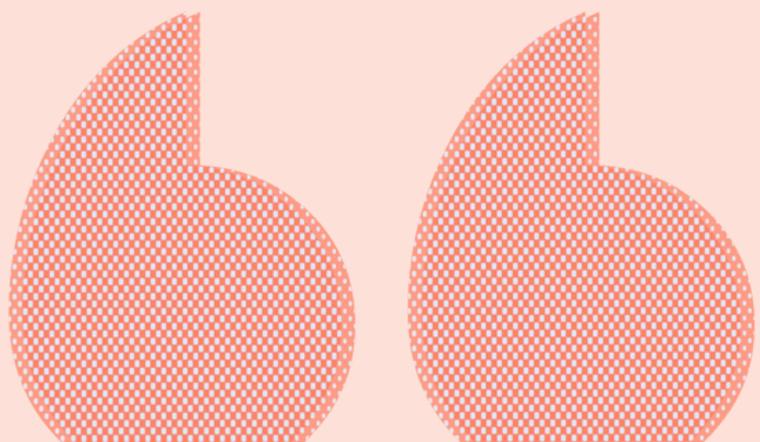
Impacts

- Guided by their IPI coach, EUMS realized that they had already built an engaged audience, motivated to support a European community by helping to build EUMS. Taking this learning to the next step, they started to build out ways for financial support and **launched a successful [Patreon](#) campaign** to cover the rent of their studio. In turn, supporters get perks – such as exclusive Discord access or voting on video topics.
- EUMS’s **donation income has doubled** since the start of the Incubator. However, since payment cuts on Patreon are significant, and many audience members are reluctant to use big tech services, the team is experimenting with custom donation solutions.
- The team’s mission of driving European cooperation and representation translates into how they engage audiences in co-creating locally representative content: Modelling a federalized system, **audience members translate and adapt content into their regional contexts**. Contributors can follow a low-threshold, standardized production process and get a cut of the video revenue.
- Drawing inspiration from Incubator peer [WATIF TV](#), EUMS is exploring reducing video production costs and boosting a stronger community connection by **tapping into livestreams** to complement their original approach of prerecorded videos.

Are you interested in the work of EU Made Simple? Check out eumadesimple.eu or let us know if you’d like IPI to connect you.

“The training we received on audience engagement and feedback loops really paid off – learning how to define your audience, look for their struggles and motivations, and then see what keeps them engaged was fantastic. With a versatile channel like ours, we now apply this knowledge a lot when we target different segments for different content and activities”

– **Paul Bekaert**,
Head of French Channel,
EU Made Simple (EUMS)



- [New Media Incubator 2025](#)

CASE STUDY 2: FROM THE REPUBLICS (POLAND)

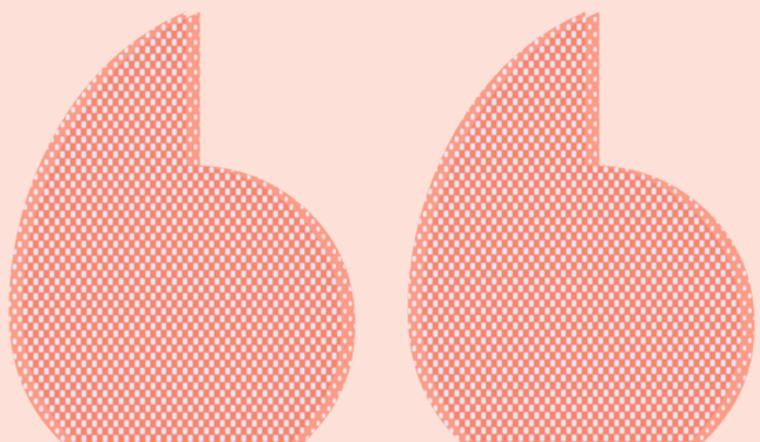
Impacts

- During the Incubator so far, FtR **refined how they work with external contributors**: The team scouts for interesting leads – for example, in comment sections and profiles of personalities in indigenous movements – then reaches out to potential authors to publish their opinion pieces. This way, they have published multiple well-performing articles, onboarded three regular authors, and are exploring training contributors in journalism basics.
- Operating in a very repressive environment, FtR realized that authenticity of content, perspective and language are key prerequisites for making their audience feel comfortable to engage. By **analyzing the performance of different contents and formats**, they have been able to decipher what performs well with different geographic, ethnic and ideological audience segments, and how to balance different content to diversify audience bases.
- FtR's content has been sparking ongoing, productive discussion in their community. In October, **FtR Instagram generated more 5+ million views**.
- Attending the NMI bootcamp and Media Innovation Festival in Vienna gave the team confidence that their unique perspective might be interesting to people outside of Russia. In the longer term, FtR is planning on tapping into this potential with an **English-language version of their outlet**.

Are you interested in the work of From the Republics? Check out fromtherepublics.com or let us know if you'd like IPI to connect you.

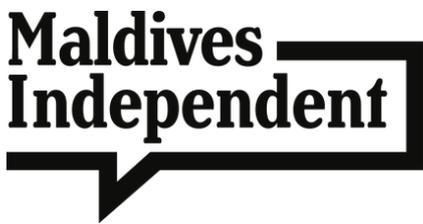
“Establishing a new media outlet, you face a chicken and egg problem: to get more funding, you need to have more experience to show – but then, to get this experience, you need to find the resources to publish. Being invited to the Incubator was a groundbreaking moment for us. It was the first step to move from being a volunteer project towards turning it into a fully functioning media outlet.”

– **Bektour Iskender,**
Co-founder,
From the Republics (FtR)



- [Local News Accelerator 2025](#)

CASE STUDY 3: MALDIVES INDEPENDENT (MALDIVES)



“We provide independent news, analysis, and investigative journalism from the Maldives.”

Description

[Maldives Independent](#) –relaunched in February 2025 –is the only independent outlet in the Maldives not aligned with political or business interests. Blending daily reporting, investigations, explainers, podcasts and multimedia storytelling, it connects local stories to regional and global audiences while focusing on accountability journalism, civic literacy and public-interest reporting in a context where independence is costly and trust is fragile.

Main project

Maldives Independent joined the LNA to build financial sustainability while maintaining editorial independence. During the programme, they set out to launch a membership model and strengthen their audience research and engagement systems.

Maldives Independent Instagram page feed @maldives.independent



- [Local News Accelerator 2025](#)

CASE STUDY 3: MALDIVES INDEPENDENT (MALDIVES)

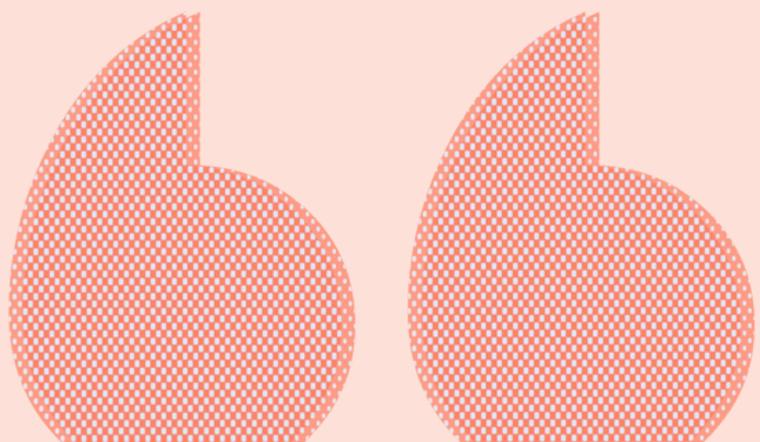
Impacts

- **In November 2025**, during the LNA, Maldives Independent **launched a [membership scheme](#)**. With limited capacity to build entirely new premium products, the team made a deliberate strategic decision: instead of creating additional content that would stretch newsroom resources, they focused on articulating the value of their existing mission more convincingly. With 20 paid members and 550 non-paid members, this revenue stream is now covering part of the team's monthly website hosting and infrastructure costs. They continue to iterate on pricing and institutional membership tiers.
- Rather than offering additional content behind a paywall, the team developed **technology-based membership benefits that strengthen user experience**: Members can play Dhivehi-language puzzle and crossword games, use dark mode customisation, follow topics and get personalised homepage recommendations.
- In the Accelerator, the team **refined how they think about audience engagement across products**. Key improvements include custom-designed article layouts for major stories; more personal, conversational newsletter introductions; interactive infographics and explainers; and deliberate balance between investigative reporting and lighter, culturally relevant stories. These changes have led to stronger newsletter open rates and improved engagement across platforms.
- Publishing one article a day, the team relies on **Trello boards, daily editorial alignment meetings, and flexible content planning** to maximise limited resources.

Are you interested in the work of Maldives Independent? Check out maldivesindependent.com or let us know if you'd like IPI to connect you.

“Having strong content will not cut it as a strategy for being sustainable. The Accelerator helped my team and me understand that there has to be a cyclical relationship between good journalism, audience-centred reporting, product design and communication. One cannot work without the other”

– **Nur Thoufeeq**,
Co-founder and CEO,
Maldives Independent



CASE STUDY 3: ZAN TIMES (AFGHANISTAN)



“We provide news about women from the most hostile environment for women by having a foot on the ground.”

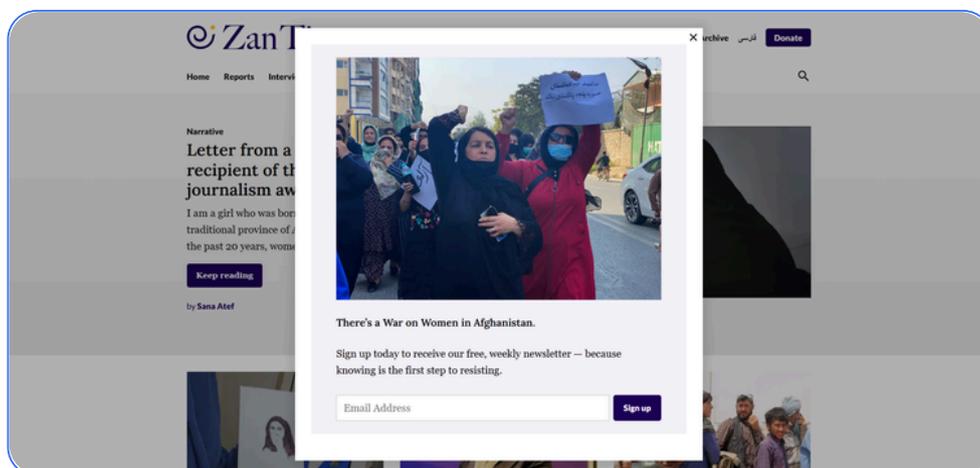
Description

[Zan Times](#) is an award-winning media outlet dedicated to delivering reliable, first-hand reporting on the lives and rights of women and LGBTQI+ individuals in Afghanistan, aiming to be a catalyst for change by raising awareness, fostering empathy and inspiring action.

Main project

Before the LNA, ZanTimes launched a [weekly newsletter](#) covering key news about women in Afghanistan to expand their audience reach. During the programme, they focused on further growing their audience and solidifying conversion pathways from newsletter readers to financial contributors.

Zan Times newsletter subscription



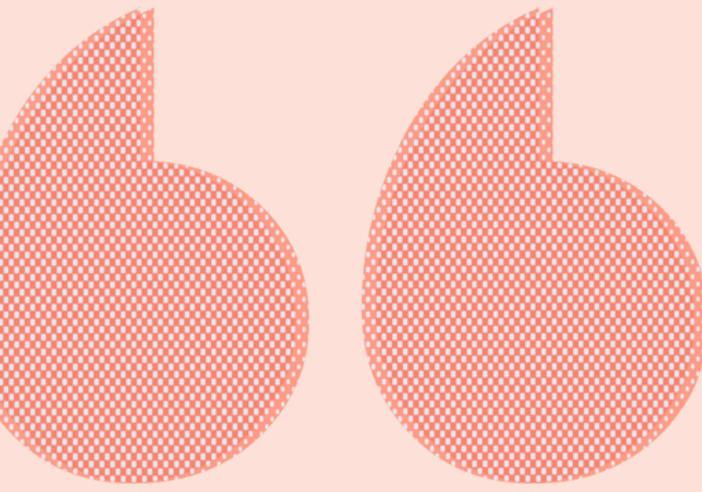
- [Local News Accelerator 2025](#)

CASE STUDY 3: ZANTIMES (AFGHANISTAN)

Impacts

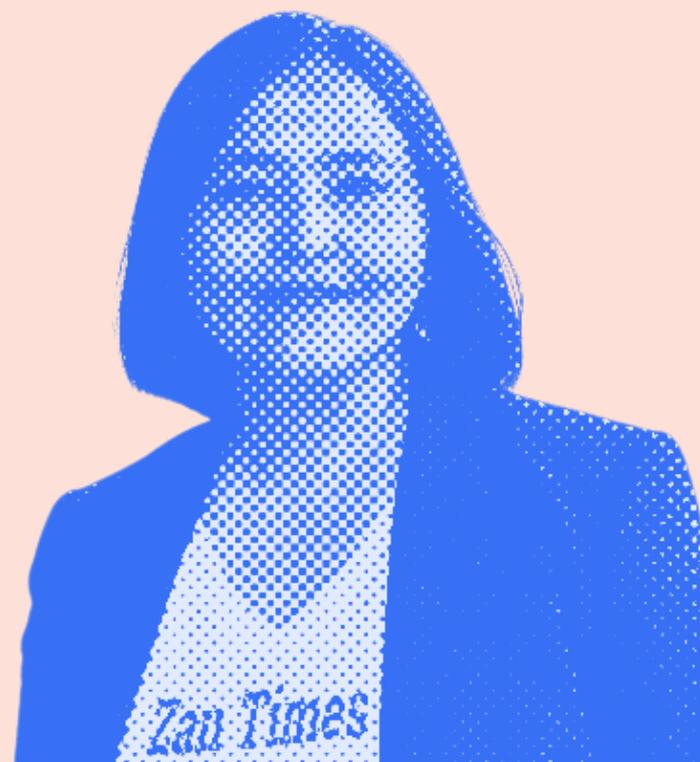
- During the LNA, ZanTimes added a pop-up to their website, prompting visitors to sign up for the newsletter. **Since September 2025, they gained 1000 new subscribers** – before the pop-up, the newsletter reached 2000 subscribers over two years. Using the newsletter to strengthen fundraising channels, they raised CA\$8000 in January 2026.
- In early 2025, after losing US funding to train Afghan women journalists, ZanTimes launched a community crowdfunding campaign and raised CA\$116,000, fully covering the project costs. This pivoted them into a **reader-supported newsroom** and provided flexibility to change their original training plans into a more sustainable, focused fellowship programme for Afghan women waiting to tell their stories. The team received 860 fellowship applications from 31 out of 34 Afghan provinces.
- After receiving audience donations, the team followed up with a thank-you letter and a request to talk to donors and find out why they chose to support ZanTimes. **More regular outreach to previous donors is in the plans**, keeping them in the loop on how they helped keep the organization alive and created opportunities for Afghan women on the ground. Maintaining relationships with supporters has been an important source of empowerment, empathy and solidarity for the team.

Are you interested in the work of ZanTimes? Check out zantimes.com or let us know if you'd like IPI to connect you.



“2025 was an empowering year for ZaNTimes. We learned that there are so many people who care for Afghanistan, for journalism, and the rights of Afghan women. There are people who are going to support us – our job is now to go find them and bring them to our community”

– **Zahra Nader,**
Editor in Chief,
ZaNTimes



LESSONS FROM COLLABORATING ON MEDIA INNOVATION

- **Reliable growth comes from solving a problem for your audience.**
With each piece of content you publish or product you develop, ask yourself how it fills a gap for your community, and who exactly it is filling this gap for. Delineating different motivations, struggles and consumption patterns into audience segments goes a long way to increase engagement, retention and community connection.
- **Integrate experimentation into your daily operations.**
Whether you are researching audience segments, brainstorming new formats or setting up a donation campaign, A/B tests can help you fine-tune your offers. Run simple, low-stakes tests to see how different types of content, messaging or UX perform in comparison – then stick with what works.
- **Community building is more than improving reach and engagement.**
Do not just think about what would perform well with your audience, but also how to connect your brand and mission to their motivation, create opportunities for solidarity action and build two-way communication pathways to express concern, gratitude and empathy.
- **Self-efficacy is an important motivational factor for reader support.**
Once you are effectively communicating your mission, impact and the value of your community, supporting your outlet with money, time, or feedback might be a natural next step for readers who want to see you thrive and do their part in supporting your cause.

6. MEDIA INNOVATION FESTIVAL 2025



630+

**PARTICIPANTS
FROM 90+
COUNTRIES &
TERRITORIES**

184

**SPEAKERS
FROM 60+
COUNTRIES**

50

**PANELS &
SIDE
EVENTS**

Under the theme “Defending the Future of Free Media,” the IPI World Congress and Media Innovation Festival 2025 was a moment for journalists and media thinkers to reflect on [75 years of defending press freedom](#), to strengthen our collective resilience and solidarity, and to work together on a shared vision for the future of public interest journalism.

The Media Innovation Festival 2025 brought together newsroom innovators and product thinkers from local, regional and niche media across the globe in panels, fishbowl sessions, workshops, lightning talks, networking events and more. The programme featured innovative newsrooms’ formulas for adapting to the fast-changing landscape of digital publishing, exploring how media can innovate to nurture a relevance and authentic connection with audiences of today and tomorrow.

6. MEDIA INNOVATION FESTIVAL 2025



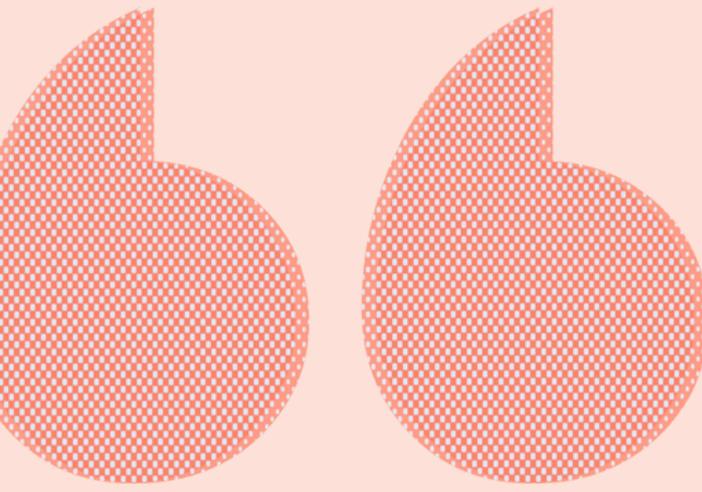
Revisit
Recorded
Sessions

- [Cautiously optimistic: Balancing the promise and risk of AI](#)
- [Revenue and press freedom: Lessons from publishers](#)
- [News product innovation: meeting user needs](#)
- [Digital independence: Building alternatives to Big Tech](#)
- [The new newsmakers: Transforming access to information](#)
- [Story Matters: News entrepreneurs in a disruptive age \(Part 1\)](#)
- [Story Matters: News entrepreneurs in a disruptive age \(Part 2\)](#)



Save the date:
5th Media Innovation
Festival
Vienna,
6-7 May 2026



Two large, orange teardrop-shaped graphics with a halftone dot pattern are positioned at the top left of the page. They are oriented vertically, with the top point of each teardrop pointing towards the top of the page.

“The International Press Institute (IPI) World Congress and Media Innovation Festival, held in Austria last week, reminded me that journalism, at its best, is an act of faith. Faith in people’s capacity to see, to feel, and to change. Sitting among media leaders from across the world, I was struck by how our stories, though born of different soils, echo the same longing for truth and dignity.”

– **Ivor Price**,
co-founder and editor-in-chief,
Food for Mzansi



7. INNOVATION NETWORK

Local News and Innovation Network

Counting over 450 members in 2025 (an increase from 350 in 2024), IPI's Local News and Media Innovation Network continued to foster collaboration and networking among media professionals across the world.

Mentorship

In 2025, IPI connected 30 journalists and media innovators with peers and experts for an eye-level exchange on challenges around media innovation.

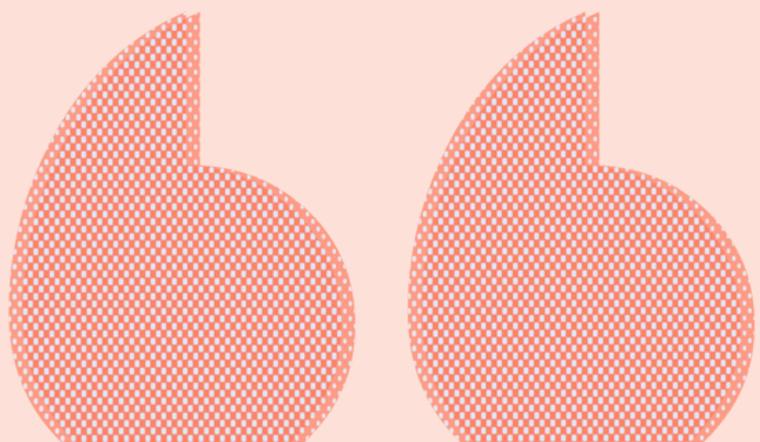
Virtual Newsroom Visits & Case Studies

In 2025, we hosted three virtual newsroom visits and published a case study on media outlets that developed innovative and sustainable business models, survived in media environments where press freedom is threatened, and kept serving their audiences.



“Experimentation is not just an opportunity — it is part of our culture and growth strategy. The main limitation is not money or fear, but time and team resources, so we are learning to balance experimentation with operational work through better planning and systematization.”

– **Alona Serhienko**,
CEO and co-founder,
Cukr.city, Ukraine



8. NEWSLETTER: THE OUTLOOK

In 2025, we continued to publish our bi-weekly media innovation newsletter, *The Outlook*, covering the latest developments in media innovation, storytelling, audience engagement, and sustainable revenue streams.

- 27 editions in 2025
- 26,778 overall sends
- 1,170 subscribers
- 15% subscriber growth in the last 12 months
- 43.5% open rate and 2.6% click rate

Being “delightful” when making the news



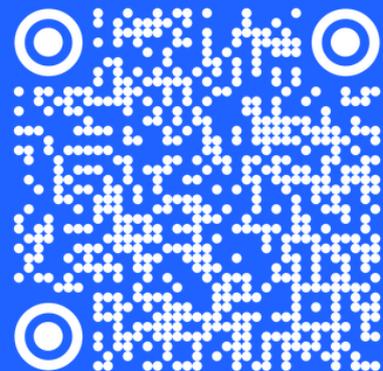
“The conversation around journalism often tends to focus on tools and what tools are gonna make us work faster, better, harder. But journalism actually starts with the people who are living through the stories, and it ends with the people who are reading the stories, and it’s really important for us to keep that human connection throughout.”

Madeleine Schwartz (Editor-in-Chief, [The Dial](#)).

Focusing on the human is harder in a world full of news fatigue, disinformation and digital noise. For Schwartz, “... that comes with having a bit of personality and bringing other kinds of perspectives”.

The Dial – publishes investigative journalism, essays and literature from writers and reporters around the world, primarily outside of the Anglosphere, catering to an audience seeking connection beyond local coverage. What it looks like in practice involves a lot of collaboration, talent-spotting, mentorship and creating offline spaces for connection.

“I think it’s important to be delightful in the work that we publish”, which can take



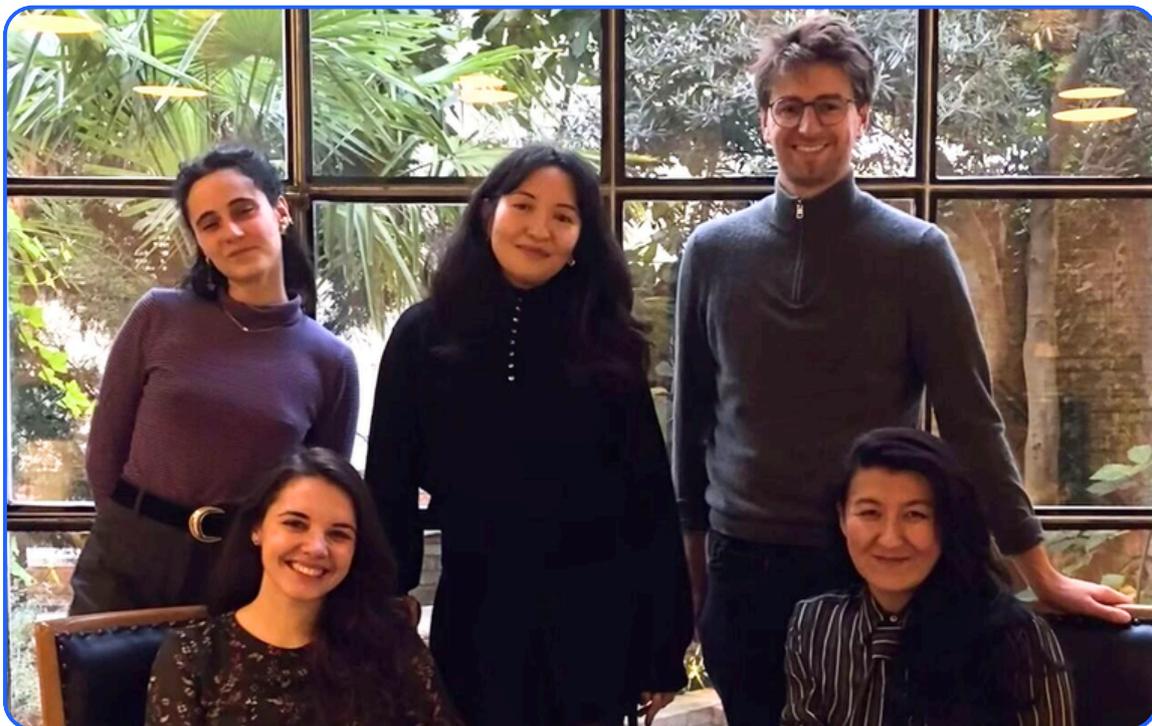
Subscribe

9. 2025 MEDIA INNOVATION TEAM

Below are the people who have helped shape this year's journey:

Ryan Powell (Head of Innovation and Media Business), Alina Živanović (Project Manager), Nicky Deluggi (Innovation Projects Officer), Alina Cristea (Innovation Projects Officer), and Dinara Satbayeva (Communications Officer).

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 and let's start a conversation! Email us at innovation@ipi.media



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**WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED
SUPPORT IN OUR PROGRAMMES!**

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