

Deep-rooted economic crises challenge investigative journalism worldwide November 11, 2020

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The Media for Democracy Monitor 2020 (MDM) is a longitudinal research project on the performance of the media with regard to democracy. In 2011, communication and political scientists from 10 countries delivered a state-of-the art report, based on relevant indicators, researched by national experts. Results have been published by Nordicom ([free and open access book](#)), and on the [website of the Euromedia Research Group](#).

In 2020, experts from 18 countries applied the MDM indicators to their national media landscape, providing insights on the development of the media performance with regard to democracy over the decade of media digitalization (2010 to 2019). Full results will be released early 2021. The [Dutch Journalism Fund](#) support the research project.

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Introduction

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The task of journalists' fulfilling their watchdog function is mostly hindered by the fact that in many countries resources for in-depth journalistic investigation are few and far between. Moreover, the unavailability of specific teams fully dedicated to in-depth reporting, as a result of newsroom downsizing, as well as the lack of ample time, typically required when covering an investigative journalism news story, have rendered the operation of news media as "watchdogs" an infeasible venture. The CoViD-19 pandemic has only accelerated this erosion.

This is one core finding derived from a survey by researchers of the "[Media for Democracy Monitor 2020](#)" [research project](#), conducted under the umbrella of the [Euromedia Research Group](#) in eighteen countries¹ around the globe in the first half of 2020 (www.euromediagroup.org/mdm).

However, there are cases, such as Finland, Iceland and the Netherlands, where ad hoc resources on investigative reporting is preferred as an alternative. In the Netherlands journalistic projects of a special quality and investigative function of newsrooms have been strengthened by an established subsidy policy. Subsidies oriented to investigative journalism are also granted in Flanders, in a market where media organizations' resources on in-depth reporting are in decline.

Across the Atlantic ocean, due to financial pressures, media organizations in Chile, have substantially cut down on producing investigative journalism news stories and have instead resorted to purchasing news items of in-depth research from freelancers or outsourcing such news topics to companies. The *Centre for Investigative Journalism* in Chile has also developed a model of crowdfunding applicable to the research of high quality news stories and a website is conducting investigative journalism by means of long-term subscriptions.

Among the countries which seem to retain a commitment to investigative reporting are Sweden, Denmark and the UK. In Sweden, a 10% of editorial resources in privately-owned national media organizations is being offered to investigative journalism as opposed to the regional privately-owned media editors who seem incapable of keeping up with that trend.

In Denmark, well-funded investigative journalism is prioritized by most leading news media through the existence of specific task forces and the operation of editorial offices for investigative journalism.

¹ The countries participating in the research project entitled "Media for Democracy Monitor 2020" are Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

In the case of the UK although the tradition of in-depth investigative journalism has been adversely affected by financial pressures (in the commercial media sector), particularly in the local and regional press, the production of significant investigative journalism stories by commercial news organizations remains a dynamic practice.

In Australia, although the research journalism-related investments have been reduced and the conditions are less favourable, the media sector, especially public broadcasting, is still dedicated to investigative journalism.

In some countries, such as Finland, where the watchdog role of journalism is made harder because of limited resources, considerable exceptions are public service media, which are undertaking initiatives to counterbalance deficits of investigative journalism. There, the public service broadcaster YLE entertains a specific group engaged in investigative journalism only.

In conclusion, the existence of investigative reporting is proportional to the financial strength that characterizes the media organizations at the national level. Where economic survival of the media outlets is being set as a first priority or an urgent need, journalistic investigation is currently at a low ebb and vice versa. In some countries, targeted public subsidies demonstrate effectiveness during times of economic crises.

AUSTRALIA

Many of the media companies, even in lean times, invest resources into investigative journalism.

However, the interviewees agree about the costliness of investigative journalism, pointing out that the expense of investigative journalism lies in the time it takes, rather than travel budgets or special technology, occupying staff time that could otherwise be diverted to filling the pages of the paper.

The ABC always had a strong investigative brief, and has a dedicated investigative unit. However, it is now having serious limitations placed on its functioning due to funding cuts. The ABC's Four Corners program, a weekly 45-minute report on television, is Australia's best-known investigative program. Its investigations have caused royal commissions and state premiers to step down. But other segments on ABC television, such as its nationwide 7.30 program, contain diminishing investigative elements as do a number of ABC radio programs.

SBS shows investigative programs on international topics often bought in from other providers, and the impact of funding restraints are evident. The commercial television stations, too, have current affairs programs, such as Nine's 60 Minutes (based on a US format) which contain investigative elements, though they are typically cast with an entertainment priority and by the programs' emphasis on the human-interest angle.

AUSTRIA

According to our respondents, and compared to the research results from 2009, more staff and financial resources were invested in investigations in 2019, although figures are not disclosed by the media (and probably do not exist).

All journalists and editors-in-chief confirmed that resources are made available for investigations. In some media, this happens once a month on average, other media have one person permanently seconded to follow investigative researches. Overall, however, funds are strictly limited. Teams are established and financed on an ad hoc basis. One journalists pointed out that investigative journalism at the regional level can take place anyway, and does not necessarily require substantially more funding.

BELGIUM (FLANDERS)

As already stated and emphasized by the chairman of the Flemish Journalists' Union, the resources for investigative journalism have substantially declined (figures are not disclosed by the media). Nonetheless, every leading news media tries to do

investigative journalism. Some media organizations provide additional resources and time to investigate a bigger story of societal importance and/or the possibility to attract attention to their medium. Only a few media organizations have a specific task force for investigative journalism. A 'task force' mostly consists of one or two journalists who get the opportunity to work on longer projects. Participation in international networks of investigative journalists, such as the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which were collaborating in operations such as *Offshore Leaks* and *Panama Papers*, has come more to the front in a few Flemish media organizations. Because of the small size of the Belgian market, start-ups focussing on investigative journalism, such as *Apache*, struggle with generating enough revenues to support their work. The Flemish Government is however still offering project subsidies for investigative journalism through the *Pascal Decroos Fund*.

CANADA

Consistent with Davies' in *Flat Earth News*², the downsizing of newsrooms across Canada has made it tougher for Canadian journalists to fulfill their watchdog function. The reporters left in the newsrooms across Canada told us they are squeezed to produce more. Many journalists are shooting and editing their stories as well as writing their online copy. Reporters complain about the constant grind to report more (sometimes for multiple platforms), as well as churn out a steady stream of social media. These demands, they worry, detract from reporting and advancing stories. As a result, journalists say they are forced to produce more single source stories, more stories based on news releases, news conferences and official statements. Journalists worry they are not doing enough fact-checking. Still, most news workers and newsroom leaders say investigative journalism is important and central to what they do. They stressed that even in financially tough times it is important not to short-change audiences by failing to dig deeper and uncover important truths. CBC News and *The Globe and Mail*, for instance, have committed significant resources to producing investigative news, reinvesting and in investigative units. CBC's *The Fifth Estate* and CTV's *W5* produces a steady stream of in-depth investigative reporting that prompts government reaction and policy changes. The television program has also exposed serious miscarriages of justice in Canada's legal system. The public broadcaster argues its investigative work sets it apart from the rest of Canada's news media, highlighting its important journalistic contribution as part of its mandate and a justification for the taxpayer money spent on the public broadcaster.

² Nick Davies (2009) *Flat Earth News: An Award-winning Reporter Exposes Falsehood, Distortion and Propaganda in the Global Media*, London: Vintage Books.

CHILE

The reduction of journalistic newsrooms due to the economic crisis faced by media has been to the detriment of investigative journalism. However, some media maintain these teams, because they are highly valued. On the other hand, some media have outsourced this to production companies, in other cases they occasionally publish the work of freelancers or have dismantled their investigation units for economic reasons. An editor reflects on this reality: “We started as a medium that did a lot of investigation, but now we can’t, because it is expensive. In 2018 the last people who worked there, left. Now we have a fund to buy articles by freelancers that we know and in whose criteria we trust”. Ciper Chile, the Center for Investigative Journalism in Chile, has grown their section of opinion columns by guests, and it became a foundation, which uses crowdfunding from its readers to finance their high-quality investigations. The website Interferencia has also developed investigative journalism, trying a financing strategy based in long-term subscriptions. These types of projects are forced to try new models of financing and building a readership. A problem is that this long-form journalism, independent from advertising with the chance of high political and social impact, is also harder to monetize. This also opens opportunities for non-corporate media to develop. An example of this is Universidad Diego Portales, which in 2020 inaugurated a Center for Journalistic Projects and Investigations, which includes books and web projects developed by both professionals and students.

DENMARK

Interviews states that investigative journalism is highly prioritized, even more than in the previous years, The Danish Association for Investigative Journalism (since 1989) serves as a base for professional sparring and training; the Association organizes many workshops and conferences to discuss and promote investigative Journalism and awards several annual prizes for Investigative Journalism. Denmark’s most prestigious journalistic award, the Cavling Prize, heavily tilts towards primarily honouring investigative journalism, as well. Most leading news media have installed specific task forces (“gravergrupper”) or even editorial offices for investigative journalism. Tabloid Ekstra Bladet has e.g. in October 2019 increased their focus on investigative journalism by erecting an editorial office with more than 20 journalists dedicated to the purpose. Journalists from leading Danish news media regularly join cross-border investigative journalistic projects. We do however lack data on the amount of financial resources dedicated to investigative journalism.

FINLAND

Most respondents claimed that resources for investigative journalism are too scarce, although all respondents stressed its importance. Some of them underlined that investigative journalism should not be seen as a specific function, separated from other forms of news journalism, but rather a part of everyday journalistic culture. Many respondents also noted that journalists themselves could be more active in pursuing their own ideas and investigative stories. The editors-in-chief interviewed maintained that ad hoc provisions for in-depth investigations are available when necessary. Public service broadcaster Yle, which also has a specific investigative group, has exceptional resources for investigative journalism in the form of documentaries and other current affairs programming. Some newspapers, such as *Helsingin Sanomat*, have also experimented with independent units dedicated to investigative journalism. However, as it appeared that the unit became too disconnected from the daily process of news gathering, investigative journalism is now integrated with daily news journalism. The Finnish Association of Investigative Journalism (Tutkiva) was founded in 1992 to promote critical and thorough reporting in the Finnish media. The association tries to facilitate investigative journalism by spreading information and good practices about research methods, principles of transparency, sources and source criticism by organizing discussions and training, and also by awarding an annual prize for investigative journalism, Lumilapio (the Snow Shovel) prize. Based on the interviews, it seems that there are in fact fewer resources for investigative journalism today than ten or fifteen years ago.

GERMANY

The austerity measures in public service broadcasting challenged the news units and led to a hiring freeze, just when investigative reporting is seen as a way to counter fake news and foster trust in the media. To accommodate the latter, the editor in chief of ZDF introduced a new investigative format, *ZDF Zoom*, and tried not to dismiss editorial staff. In fact, he also equipped the major news format of the TV-station *heute.de* with fact checkers from *Correctiv* and data journalists. Accordingly, a leading journalist of ZDF is convinced that money alone is not a warrant for more investigative reporting. “The linchpin in journalism is staff. [...] No better financial resources will help us there either. [...] if I don’t have the people to [...] research [...] I can’t do anything with the money. Money only translates into value for us if we can either recruit additional staff or reform structures [...] in such a way that the journalistic work force is freed up again. That is the challenge for us at the moment”. Instead, a clever composition of the editorial personnel serves investigative journalism. Also, in print journalism, man- and women power is the core prerequisite for investigative reporting, because it requires time. What it means in practices is illus-

trated by a representative of the weekly *Die Zeit*. In the newspaper, fifteen investigative journalists conduct about 30-50 investigative researches per year, which finally lead to about ten stories. *Die Zeit* operates with an anonymous post box, similar to Wikileaks to protect the sources. The massive amount of data can sometimes only be handled by cross-media teams. A *Zeit*-journalist also critically assesses that TV does not enough in terms of investigative reporting. “Our resources are sufficient. [...] But if television were to use its financial power for investigation, democracy would be served. In terms of their potential, too little happens.” Also the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* cooperates with the public service broadcaster *NDR* and *WDR*, if required. In *Süddeutsche Zeitung* about 8-10 journalists work in the investigative unit. One example of successful stories, in the sense of watchdog function are the *Panama Papers*, where also *Der Spiegel* was involved in editing the data. The important weekly news magazine however, had been itself the subject of investigative research as one of its journalists found out about his colleague’s years long fake investigative reporting. In a nutshell, investigative reporting is, like in 2011, still a question of prestige, but now also of a change in attitudes. After Wikileaks, the news media discovered that the public needed and demanded more in-depth reporting. The time and financial situation seems not too bad for investigative reporting. Commercial as well as publicly funded news media implemented special units and formats to fulfil their function as watchdogs. The staff and organisational structure of investigative units are however, more agile, compared to MDM 2011 and cross-media cooperation seems the best way to tackle the lack of trained specialist personnel in the individual news media, at least for the moment.

GREECE

In leading news media of Greece Investigative journalism is the exception rather than the rule, even in leading news media of the country. Investigative journalism is recognised by journalists as a task of great relevance, confirming the role of journalism as the fourth estate, however they are mostly unaware of the range of the financial resources invested in this aspect of journalism. According to a newspaper editor-in-chief, “investigative journalism should be the dominant element” in the media field, but it is not for either public or private media. Nevertheless, journalists argue that the decade of the financial crisis has raised difficulties and restrictions in newsroom as to performing their watchdog function. As a news director of a commercial TV channel argues, “over the last years in Greece the range and number of journalists involved in investigative journalism have significantly declined”. Therefore, according to another journalist, who works in a private radio station, the truth is that in Greece “it is not so simple to do investigative journalism under the current economic conditions. The economy directly affects mass media and [...] we [as media] had already been destroyed [before the financial collapse of 2009]. One of the

first areas hit by the crisis in Greece, which was a state crisis but the reflection took place in the private economy, was the media". In short, journalists and media owners appear particularly keen on producing more projects of investigative journalism than they actually do, however their strong willingness or desire has necessarily been tempered or suppressed by the economic recession that afflicted the media field and Greek society as a whole. Nowadays, journalists have been turned into a kind of a multitask journalist, something that often deprives them of the possibility to deal with a newsworthy topic for a long time. As a result, today, compared to the past, there has been a decrease in news topics investigated in-depth due to restrictions on the time available for research. Although leading news media have at their disposal trained specialists on given topics, the process of news cross-checking is not equally rigorous on all issues. In websites based on crowdfunding, such as "infowar.gr" or "thepressproject.gr", there is a system of ad hoc provision of funds to specific investigative journalism projects of documentary character. These public contributions ensure the implementation of independent investigations and the sustainability of the news portal. According to a news website chief editor, "based on the money from public contributions the operating expenses are covered first, which is a fixed expense, and the rest [money] goes to research". In leading news media of Greece, the process of news production is mostly based on the model of accredited journalists, required to deliver a news topic by the ministries or other official bodies on a daily basis. This journalistic routine on news composition does not leave much room for journalists to exercise in-depth investigation. This is a privilege enjoyed by fewer and fewer journalists, compared to the past, and in the case of newspapers in-depth and long-lasting journalistic investigation is a mission preferably assigned individually to a highly experienced journalist instead of to a group of journalists, since the available time and money are extremely reduced. In this regard, over the last decade the news workers of investigative journalism usually are perceived as "luxury editors", says a newspaper editor-in-chief. Despite the lack of vital conditions for journalists' exercising their watchdog role through well-funded independent investigation, the incentive in newsrooms remains always strong as well as the sense of encouragement towards journalists on the part of media owners, according to a newspaper editor-in-chief. After all, it is argued that "the control and criticism of those in power is multifaceted" and therefore is not an exclusive matter or mission of investigative journalism but journalism as a whole.

HONG KONG

According to our respondents, most leading companies have made resources available for investigative reports. About half of them have established teams for conducting investigations on a regular basis, although the exact figures are not publicly disclosed. The interviewees said that the investigative teams have more resources,

such as time and funds, to work on the stories. They have more flexible schedules and are not required to submit stories daily. However, the calculation of resources is inevitable. More funds are also available for investigative teams to buy tickets to conduct research overseas. Most of the respondents suggested that reporters in their companies are encouraged to engage in investigative reporting, even though they are not part of the investigative team. Resources and time could become available for them if they have a good story idea.

ICELAND

Investigations are expensive, and the media outlets are most often run with a loss. There are no official funds to apply to and few journalists working at most outlets. Both editors and journalists highlighted the fact that there are little resources available for in-depth or investigative reporting in Iceland. On a daily basis, investigative reporting is mostly based on ad hoc resources. Editors might on occasion ask a particular journalist to look into certain matters and journalists can ask for time to work on a specific story. But this often means that the journalists end up spending considerable time working on the story in their own time. The Public Broadcasting Service (RÚV) was most often mentioned as an important exception. Overall, the consensus in the interviews was that there are far too little resources available at the newsrooms of the Icelandic media, and particularly the private media, to produce quality in-depth and investigative reporting.

ITALY

The financial situation of the Italian media is generally weak, especially after the economic recession of the late 2000s, which caused a decline in investments in advertising space and, therefore, less resources for newsrooms³. The information market is not particularly profitable⁴, as newspaper circulation is not so high and profit margins are low. In a context such as this, where even media survival is questionable, it is unlikely that funds will be allocated to investigative journalism, which is one of the most expensive journalistic activities. To make matters worse, we must also consider that in Italy investigative journalism, apart from official statements or obligations imposed by professional ethics, has no real tradition and has never been developed.

³ Alessio Cornia (2016) *TV-centrism and politicisation in Italy: Obstacles to new media development and pluralism*. *Media, Culture & Society*, 38(2): 141–158; Václav Stetka and Henrik Ornebring (2013) *Investigative journalism in Central and Eastern Europe: Autonomy, business models, and democratic roles*. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18(4): 413–435.

⁴ Wan-Ifra (2016) *World Press Trend*. Darmstadt: Wan-Ifra.

Despite this situation, Italian journalists interviewed recognise the importance of investigative journalism. As the *Repubblica* editor-in-chief states: «Investigative journalism is the so-called non-fungible journalism, which allows us to make a difference towards the most demanding readers who come to look for something they may not find elsewhere. This is important to safeguard the role of information and the media in keeping attention on certain issues high, but it also becomes a strategic asset when the business model changes». In this regard, as the journalist of *Il Fatto Quotidiano* underlines, investigative journalism is the core of the news organisation's mission itself: «Il Fatto Quotidiano started out as an investigative newspaper and we almost always apply the same rules to political journalism. For each event, we never just ask ourselves the problem of reporting the news of what is happening. We also try to dig into the nature of the facts, doing things that, in general, other newspapers do not do out of "complacency" towards power [...]. Our goal is to combine the history of the facts with meticulous care and to discover what is behind it also from the economic point of view». Nevertheless, the financial resources and dedicated professional teams within the editorial offices are very limited among the leading news media selected (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Repubblica*, *Sky Tg24*). Hence, investigative journalism behaves changes in the newsrooms' organisation and professionals' routines, so producing an impact on both the budget resources and the time management. As the *Sky Tg24* editor-in-chief explains: «On some investigations there is an investment of time and money which is generally established in advance. Therefore, we try to think of it also as an investment in terms of intellectual and monetary assets. Obviously, it's not an unlimited budget, but there is enough to decide what to do [...]. First of all, there is a work on the dossiers. Once the attention is focused on that fact, one or several colleagues are commissioned to start working on it, putting together documentation. [...] This needs some weeks or sometimes even months. In the sense, we have annual deadlines, three or four, in which we have spaces of inquiry plus those that are potentially added on the wave of topical issues».

In general, according to the professionals interviewed, investigations remain only a privileged and expensive niche within the newsrooms' daily work and no specific rules have been codified to conduct them. The public service broadcasting encourages investigative journalism in its mission, but the editorial format and the hierarchical regimentation of the tv newsrooms restrict the leeway. There are in any case some positive exception, for example, the tv program "Report", broadcast on RAI 3 channel, that is recognised to be one of the most significant examples of investigative journalism in Italy by many of the journalists interviewed. Moreover, transnational partnerships are in place. For instance, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* has established a convention with the French investigative journal *Mediapart*, publishing their contents weekly; and *Repubblica* is one of the eight media partners of the European organisation LENA (Leading European Newspaper Alliance), born to improve journalism in Europe by sharing common investigations. Another positive example of international partnership is the "European Investigative Collaboration" established in 2016,

with the aim of promoting investigative journalism in a joint way with a focus on European topics to understand how power structures affect European communities.

To conclude, it is important to mention that, even though the initiatives undertaken to safeguard investigative journalism are inadequate, there are few positive exceptions, as the journalistic observatory *Ossigeno* demonstrates. This association reports cases of threats against Italian investigative or citizen journalists as well as photoreporters - especially those who deal with organised crime - collaborating with Italian and European institutions⁵.

NETHERLANDS

According to our academic interviewees, more staff and financial resources have been invested in media investigations of late, although no figures have been disclosed. Traditional news media have come to understand that in a time characterised by large volumes of freely accessible content, the need to be distinctive becomes that much more pressing, as indicated by our expert interviewee Jo Bardoel. According to Piet Bakker, so-called time or money constraints are poor excuses for an unwillingness to take a hard look at priorities. All journalists and editors in chief confirmed that resources can be and are made available for investigations. Overall, however, funds are limited. Teams are established and financed on an ad hoc basis and based on subsidies such as those of the *Fonds voor Bijzondere Journalistieke Projecten* ('Fund for Special Journalistic Projects'), which enables journalists and writers in general to set up projects of a special nature or quality. The Fund seeks help explore new angles based on which special news projects can be carried out. Another subsidy fund is an 'Investigative Journalism Fund' intended to structurally strengthen the watchdog role of the news media by increasing the investigative journalism function in the Dutch newsrooms. No less than 75% of its budget goes to regional or local news media because, as mentioned earlier, they are the most vulnerable of all. This explains the Government's decision to set up a temporary support fund for local and regional news media in response to the current COVID-19 crisis. The other 25% is allocated to national news media. An annual contribution of approximately EUR 5.0 million from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science goes to the Dutch Journalism Fund in a bid to share knowledge, facilitate research, and stimulate collaboration and innovation.

PORTUGAL

The financial situation of the Portuguese news media is generally rather weak, and seems to be much worse in 2020 when compared with 2010 (the dramatic conse-

⁵ Ossigeno per l'informazione, an observatory promoted jointly by the Italian National Press Federation (FNSI) and the Order of Journalists (OdG) to monitor threats and serious abuses against Italian journalists carried out to obscure news of general interest to the public opinion <https://www.ossigeno.info>.

quences of the Covid-19 pandemic are still to be fully evaluated). Economic survival is their first priority, because most of them actually lose money every year, and the situation is evolving negatively. A small market, not much advertising, low rates of news media consumption, an increasing presence of free Internet sites... All these factors help to explain the crisis. When it comes to budget cuts and to downsizing measures, the first area to suffer is usually human resources. With smaller newsrooms, news media have increasing problems to invest in investigative reporting, because such reporting takes more time and more money. Several editors interviewed for this report complained more or less about this situation: “We have limitations as far as material resources are concerned, but we try not to depend too much on news agencies” (*Rádio Renascença*); “The ambition and mission of a newspaper like ours would require many more resources, both human and material” (*Público*). More optimistic are the views in *Expresso* and *Correio da Manhã* (both with a better economic situation): “We have enough resources for our work, including our own investigative reporting” (*Expresso*); “We have all the necessary resources to produce our model of newspaper. Never has an investigative story been abandoned due to lack of material resources” (*Correio da Manhã*). Even in television channels, as we heard both from the public *RTP* and the private *SIC*, some room for investigative work developed in recent years, because longer formats (pieces of reporting with 10-15 minutes) are now common, and with good audience results, in the evening newscasts. They also have weekly programs (and the corresponding teams) specifically devoted to investigation. Furthermore, the participation of Portuguese media in some of the recent international networks of investigative journalism also increased attention on these issues and brought interesting public support. The fact is all the recent political and economic scandals in the country have been uncovered and publicly denounced by journalists. In general terms, and looking further than our sample of leading news media, the fact is that Portuguese newspapers, television and radio stations still depend a great deal on news agencies. Investigative reporting is not as expanded as it would be required, and tends to concentrate mostly in four or five news media. Coverage of international affairs (with the exception of football games and very big disasters) is also mostly dependent on news agencies as well. Again, the small dimension of Portuguese media outlets and their lack of resources has its responsibilities in this domain.

SOUTH KOREA

Some of the leading news media explicitly stipulate financial support for investigative journalism in their codes of ethics, but most do not. The need to increase investigative journalism is certainly accepted, but active investment is still long way to go. Overall industry cutback on overseas network has also decreased the number of already scarce foreign correspondents. The interviewees portray a similar picture: For-

Foreign correspondents are shrinking and they are not so active either. Independent online news service, such as *'Newstapa'*, is gaining reputation as an investigative reporting focused service. It is run based on donations and subscription, and does not accept any sponsorship of funds from the government or corporations in order to ensure its autonomy.

SWEDEN

Interviews with editors in leading media organizations gave an unanimous result: Investigative reporting is No 1 on their list of priorities. After a period ten years ago with a somewhat uncertain perspective on the future for journalism, now a new sense of purpose is visible. Democratic, professional and commercial values converge – unique reporting on matters of importance to society and democracy is what makes readers willing to pay for digital news. Editors in privately owned newsrooms estimate that about 10 percent of their editorial resources are devoted to investigative reporting. “We pretty much try to give them the software and the time they ask for”, one top editor declared. Interviews with reporters do not contradict this picture. “This is a good time for investigative reporters”, a journalist explained. The public service broadcaster *Sveriges Television* (Swedish Television) has a weekly flagship show for investigative journalism called *Uppdrag Granskning* (Mission Investigation) that alone counts for 7 percent of the nationwide company’s budget. But with the strategy to spread knowledge and practice of investigative methods within the company to specialized parts of the newsroom (sports, culture, economy, environment etc.) and to some 20 local/regional newsrooms, the share of the budget rises to 20–25 percent. Regional private-owned media house editors show the same enthusiasm and need for investigative reporting, but also admit that they are not always able to fulfill their watchdog function in local municipalities due to limited personal and economic resources. The journalists’ union applauds the resources given to investigative journalism, but criticizes the long period of time it took publishers, educated in finance more than journalism, to realize the commercial value of watchdog journalism.

SWITZERLAND

The central issue is to assess the extent to which media professionals are able and willing to assume their role as a "fourth power" in terms of criticism and control of illegitimate power by means of appropriate research. The perception of the media as "watchdogs" or so-called "attack dogs" fighting against abuse of power and corruption has long been part of journalistic self-image. However, there is no distinct culture of investigative journalism in Switzerland. On the other hand, it seems undis-

puted that journalistic quality is based on research and requires careful and elaborate work. This places limits on research in everyday professional life. Every newsroom must think carefully about how to use the scarce resources available. It is true that research techniques have been further developed in the newsrooms. But also the companies, associations and administrative offices that have important information at their disposal make efforts to be able to avoid journalistic access and possible scandal in the event of unpleasant or problematic incidents. In addition, state institutions and private sector organisations try to develop and maintain a positive public image by means of media monitoring and continuous public relations. Due to the growing importance of social media, business enterprises, associations and administrations, but also civil society groups have begun to communicate more directly with their customers instead of maintaining a dialogue via the daily media. On the basis of our discussions with media professionals, investigative and research journalism in Switzerland is not primarily about a daily struggle against the illegitimate exercise of power by outstanding institutions and organisations in a liberal society. Investigative journalism, which is critical of power, is not the measure of all things, but at best has a permanent but not prominent place in newsrooms. Daily journalism in particular focuses on topics that are on the agenda of political, economic, cultural and social institutions and organisations and are usually produced within the organisation. Additional research by media professionals often does not serve to control power, but to maintain and assert it. Economically and socially well-established institutions and organisations often find allies in newsrooms who willingly and uncritically convey messages to their "clients", as they are not able or willing to take their own, journalistic or foreign view of the topic. However, since editorial offices are only occasionally able to present or critically address all stakeholders with their objectives and interests, the hurdles of attention for less prominent groups have become even higher. In other words, the growing organization of civil society means that less journalistic personnel and less journalistic space are available. It is true that there is a certain journalistic and entrepreneurial desire to do more investigative work and to devote more time and professional resources to important stories that can be scandalized and make a big splash in the public eye. However, most editorial offices have neither sufficient personnel nor financial resources for long-term and sustainable investigative journalism. After all, the *Tages-Anzeiger* and *SRG SSR* have permanently established research teams, while the *CH Media Group* dispenses with this measure. Overall, however, the availability of reporters who have the necessary resources and indispensable know-how over time and who also enjoy the institutional backing to carry out investigative journalism effectively and efficiently is likely to decline.

UNITED KINGDOM

UK journalism has a longstanding reputation of producing in-depth investigative journalism and a commitment to international and conflict journalism. Both activities have been affected by economic pressures (in the commercial sector), particularly in the local and regional press. However, there is still a commitment to in-depth investigative journalism across the British news media. A House of Lords Communications Committee inquiry in 2012 investigated the state of investigative journalism in the UK and the effects of economic pressures on the ability of news organizations to devote resources to journalism of that type. The report concluded that economic pressures were having a direct negative impact on the capacity of newspapers to devote resources to investigative journalism, especially at the local and regional news level, but noted that: It is difficult to find reliable time-series data following the amount of investigative journalism in the printed press in order to be able to conduct a comprehensive analysis of whether the amount of investigative journalism has decline over the most recent decades. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that this is very much the case⁶.

Unfortunately, this remains the case, given the fact that investigative journalism often does not result in the publication of stories. The UK government-commissioned report into the sustainability of local public-interest journalism found much anecdotal evidence of pressures on the delivery of investigative journalism in UK non-broadcast media, but did not produce empirical data on the decline⁷. UK national print and online journalism continues to produce high-profile investigative journalism stories, such as the *Guardian's* 2016 investigation into offshore tax havens in conjunction with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, or the *Sunday Times* Insight team of investigative journalists which has produced a series of high-profile investigations, including on corruption in sport. International reporting, however, has been in decline in print journalism for some time. A 2010 study monitored the decline at that stage of dedicated foreign coverage in the UK national press⁸. Although digital convergence has made some aspects of foreign reporting more affordable, there is little evidence of increased spending in that area. While economic pressures on the local press have been profound, the sector is still capable of conducting significant investigative journalism. Local newspapers have been shortlisted for the UK's main investigative journalism award – the Paul Foot Award – in seven of the

⁶ House of Lords. (2012) *Select Committee on Communications, 3rd Report of Session 2010-12: The future of investigative journalism*. London: HMSO, p. 19. Retrieved on 10 June 2020 from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201012/ldselect/ldcomuni/256/256.pdf>

⁷ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2019) *The Cairncross Review: A Sustainable Future for Journalism*. London: DCMS, pp. 18-21. Retrieved on 5 April 2020 from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779882/021919_DCMS_Cairncross_Review_.pdf

⁸ Martin Moore (2010) *Shrinking World: The decline of international reporting in the British Press*. London: Media Standards Trust. Retrieved on 10 June 2020 from <http://mediastandardstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2010/11/Shrinking-World-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

eight occasions in the last decade that the award has been made, including a reporter for independent paper *The Hackney Gazette* winning the award in 2017⁹. There have also been new entrants since 2010, with The Bureau of Investigative Journalism launching in that year, focusing specifically on detailed investigative journalism on selected topics, such as government use of personal data and tobacco lobbying. The Bureau is not-for-profit and funded by charitable donations and grants (Bureau of Investigative Journalism, n.d.). On investigative journalism by public service broadcasters, the House of Lords report did not identify any significant concerns about commitments to investigative reporting¹⁰, and broadcast news organizations still have significant resources to devote to investigative journalism. BBC funding across all news and current affairs programming in 2018/19 was £355 million, and ITN's revenue from news at the same time was £89 million; both news providers also offer a range of news and current affairs formats, including investigative journalism. This combined expenditure is significantly higher than the £307 million allocated to news and current affairs programming by all public service broadcasters in 2010¹¹. However, some former employees of the BBC have criticized the Corporation's lack of clearly defined investigative news teams, as employed in certain national newspapers¹².

⁹ Private Eye (2017) The Paul Foot Award 2017. Retrieved on 10 June 2020 from <https://www.private-eye.co.uk/paul-foot-award/2017>

¹⁰ House of Lords. (2012) *Select Committee on Communications* (cited above), p. 21.

¹¹ Ofcom (2011). *Public Service Broadcasting Annual Report 2011*. London: Ofcom, p. 10. Retrieved on 10 June 2020 from https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0028/74791/psb-summary-a.pdf

¹² Meirion Jones (2016) *How the BBC Abandoned Investigative Reporting*. Retrieved on 10 June 2020 from <https://gijn.org/2016/02/15/how-the-bbc-abandoned-investigative-reporting/>