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THE INDEX ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT (IMFS) 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Index on International Media Freedom Support (IMFS) evaluates and ranks states based on their support for media freedom beyond their borders. It does this by analysing the contributions that countries have made to international diplomatic, financial and safety / protection initiatives that promote media freedom.

The IMFS Index includes all states that are members of both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) (30 countries). These countries have pledged to promote media freedom internationally, and the IMFS holds them accountable for these commitments.

The Index draws on data from the previous calendar year (2024), except for the ODA figures, which are for 2023, due to the time lag in reporting.

The IMFS Index is produced by an independent research group and is a joint project between City St George's, University of London, and the University of East Anglia.

The results of the 2025 IMFS Index highlight several well performing states:

- **Lithuania (1st)** is the highest ranked country, largely due to its diplomatic efforts, including its leadership of two multilateral initiatives.
- **Sweden (2nd)** spent a far higher proportion of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) on media development in 2023 than any other country (0.91%). It is the only country to get close to the benchmark of 1.0%, as recommended by the Forum on Information & Democracy.
- **France (5th)** is the only country to award funding to all four qualifying multilateral pooled funds in 2024.
- **Latvia (9th)** is the only country to have both an active emergency visa scheme dedicated to supporting journalists at-risk and to support a national initiative that promotes the protection and safety of media workers in exile.

Lithuania is the highest ranked country, largely due to its diplomatic efforts, including its leadership of two multilateral initiatives.

No country performed consistently well across all three areas of diplomacy, funding and safety / protection.

The IMFS Index also identifies several less encouraging trends and performances:

- No country performed consistently well across all three areas of diplomacy, funding and safety / protection.
- Almost two thirds of the 30 countries qualified for the lowest, bronze category, earning only 10 points or less. This includes four members of the G7: the United Kingdom (equal 12th), the United States (equal 12th), Italy (equal 24th) and Japan (28th).
- The lowest ranked countries were Japan (28th), Slovenia (equal 29th) and South Korea (equal 29th), due to their relative lack of support for diplomacy, funding and safety / protection. However, South Korea and Japan do provide support for the wider enabling environment for media freedom in their ODA spending, which is not measured by this Index.
- On average, the 30 states in the IMFS Index allocated just 0.16% of their ODA to media development in 2023. Thirteen countries awarded less than 0.1%, including three – Latvia (9th), Greece (21st), and Slovenia (29th) – which reported giving 0%.
- Only five countries had an emergency visa scheme for journalists in 2024, and only five hosted an assistance programme for journalists in exile. Twenty-one countries had neither.
- New Zealand (24th) was the only country not to be a member of any of the three qualifying multilateral initiatives in 2024.
- Due to time lag in data reporting, the index does not capture recent cuts to international media development support that occurred in 2025 in the United States, the UK, Germany, France and elsewhere. Most notably, those in the United States, which are estimated to be at least \$150 million.

Future iterations of this index will seek to incorporate more criteria and include and evaluate the work of a wider range of states, as well as the European Union.

INTRODUCTION

WHY IS AN INDEX ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT NEEDED?

In 2025, media freedom around the world reached its lowest level in over two decades, according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF). For the first time since 2002, when RSF began its monitoring, the conditions for practicing journalism were categorised as 'difficult' or 'very serious' in over half of the world's countries, and 'satisfactory' in less than one in four. This decline in media freedom poses a profound threat to accountability in public life and contributes to democratic backsliding¹.

In response, many countries have made supporting global media freedom a priority in their foreign policy. This support includes both financial aid given to media workers and news outlets abroad, as well as political, legal and diplomatic interventions designed to promote freedom of expression globally.

Flagship multilateral fora initiatives include the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC), founded in 2019, which has grown to an international partnership of 51 states. More recently, in 2024, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) agreed six guiding principles for media development², designed to increase financial support of the media and to strengthen local leadership and coordination around the world³.

However, the important commitments made by states in these multilateral fora have few enforcement and accountability mechanisms. At present, no states give 1% of their Official Development Aid (ODA) to media development – a figure recommended by the Forum on Information & Democracy⁴. Moreover, few incentives exist to encourage states to follow through on their diplomatic and political commitments. As a result, much needed improvements in funding, co-ordination and diplomatic leadership are not materialising⁵.

This new Index on International Media Freedom Support (IMFS) aims to incentivise states to improve their international support for media freedom. It celebrates states that deliver against their commitments in this area, each year, and highlights those that could be doing more. Although there are already many indexes which evaluate and compare the domestic media freedom environment in different countries, the IMFS Index is the first to evaluate states' support for media freedom in their foreign policy.

WHAT IS THE INDEX ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT?

The IMFS Index evaluates and ranks states based on their international support for media freedom in the areas of diplomacy (theme 1), funding (theme 2), and safety and protection (theme 3). It includes eight criteria and a points-based scoring system, detailed at the end of this report.

These criteria are designed to encompass a range of different forms of international support relating to media freedom and to apply to all qualifying states – without discriminating against those with less capacity. To help distinguish between the relative performance of different countries, the IMFS Index classifies countries according to one of three categories: ‘gold’ (21+ points), ‘silver’ (11-20 points), or ‘bronze’ (0-10 points).

The Index was designed and produced by an independent, academic research team, and is a joint project between City St. George’s, University of London and the University of East Anglia⁶. It receives no funding from any states, companies, private foundations, or civil society organisations. Although the IMFS Index was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, the final design and methodology remain the sole responsibility of the research team. The IMFS Index builds on a theory of change developed through this team’s previous research⁷ which found that states can be encouraged to improve their international support for media freedom by triggering inter-state peer pressure.

The data used in this Index relates to the previous calendar year (2024), except for the ODA figures, which are for 2023, due to the time lag in reporting⁸. The results of the Index should be read with this in mind. For instance, the implications of the wave of cuts to foreign assistance that occurred in 2025 in the US, the UK, Germany, France and elsewhere will not be evident in this year’s Index.

The IMFS Index includes all states that are members of both the OECD-DAC and the MFC. In total, **30 states** qualify for inclusion in this Index. This inclusion criteria was chosen because all members of the MFC sign the Global Pledge, which commits those governments to ‘speak out and take action together’⁹. Similarly, all states within the OECD-DAC have recently committed to the Development Cooperation Principles on Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment, which include commitments on funding and coordination¹⁰. Despite its significant financial and diplomatic role in supporting media freedom internationally, the European Union is not fully included in this index because it is ineligible to join the MFC. However, a snapshot of funding efforts by the EU is discussed in the context of theme 2 (funding). Future iterations of the Index will seek to develop further ways to recognise the activities of a wider range of state and non-state actors.

Due to the challenges of obtaining relevant information from states, the IMFS Index only includes criteria that can be assessed via publicly available data. As a result, it does not currently capture several important aspects of international support for media freedom, such as efforts to improve localisation in funding, states’ media support strategies/policies, or private diplomatic efforts to protect media freedom. Future iterations of this index will seek to recognise a greater range of states and activities.

WHAT DOES THE INDEX ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT **NOT MEASURE**?

The IMFS Index focuses exclusively on states' international support for media freedom. It does not include any measures of state's domestic performance on media freedom, since this is measured by other indexes. However, the results of the Index are presented alongside states' corresponding RSF World Press Freedom Index scores to highlight potential discrepancies between a state's international advocacy and its domestic media freedom practices.

The Index focuses on assessing states' international support for media freedom specifically, rather than wider aspects of the enabling environment upon which journalists rely. For this reason, initiatives which support internet freedom and information integrity, for example, are not included.

It is also important to note that the Index seeks to measure the international activities that states undertake to support media freedom, rather than the quality or outcomes of such support. Therefore, the results of this index should be read alongside research, including by the Global Forum for Media Development and DW Akademie, which analyses commitments to localisation, evidence-based approaches and donor coordination¹¹.

Finally, although this Index focuses on evaluating the positive contributions States make to supporting media freedom internationally, it is important to acknowledge that other aspects of their foreign policy may, at times, undermine media freedom and this Index does not currently capture such actions.

The IMFS Index focuses exclusively on states' international support for media freedom. It does not include any measures of state's domestic performance on media freedom.

RESULTS

TABLE 1: RANKING & SCORING FOR EACH COUNTRY IN THE 2025 INDEX FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT

IMFS INDEX RANKING 2025*	COUNTRY	TOTAL SCORE	DIPLOMACY			FUNDING			SAFETY & PROTECTION		DOMESTIC MEDIA FREEDOM RANKING (RSF 2024)**
			1. Multilateral leadership	2. Multilateral membership	3. Speaking out	4. Aid spent on media	5. Fulfilment of spending commitments	6. Pooled multilateral funds	7. Safe refuge for journalists	8. Journalist protection mechanism	
1st	Lithuania	24	10	3	0	1	3	2	5	0	13th
2nd	Sweden	23	5	3	0	9	3	3	0	0	3rd
3rd	Netherlands	20	5	3	2	1	3	3	0	3	4th
4th	Estonia	19	5	3	2	2	0	2	5	0	6th
=5th	France	17	5	3	0	2	0	4	0	3	21st
=5th	Germany	17	5	2	2	1	3	1	0	3	10th
7th	Czechia	15	0	2	2	1	3	2	5	0	17th
8th	Canada	14	0	2	2	1	3	1	5	0	14th
9th	Latvia	12	0	2	1	0	0	1	5	3	12th
=10th	Australia	11	0	2	2	3	3	1	0	0	39th
=10th	Norway	11	0	3	1	2	3	2	0	0	1st
=12th	Belgium	10	0	1	2	4	3	0	0	0	16th
=12th	Luxembourg	10	0	3	2	0	3	2	0	0	11th
=12th	United Kingdom	10	0	3	2	1	3	1	0	0	23rd
=12th	United States	10	0	2	2	2	3	1	0	0	55th
=16th	Austria	9	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	32nd
=16th	Denmark	9	0	2	1	2	3	1	0	0	2nd
=16th	Switzerland	9	0	1	0	2	3	3	0	0	9th
=19th	Finland	8	0	2	1	1	3	1	0	0	5th
=19th	Iceland	8	0	1	1	1	3	2	0	0	18th
=21st	Greece	7	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	88th
=21st	Spain	7	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	3	30th
23th	Ireland	6	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	8th
=24th	Italy	5	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	46th
=24th	New Zealand	5	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	19th
=24th	Portugal	5	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	7th
=24th	Slovakia	5	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	29th
28th	Japan	4	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	70th
=29th	South Korea	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	62nd
=29th	Slovenia	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	42nd

GOLD (21+ POINTS)

SILVER (11-20 POINTS)

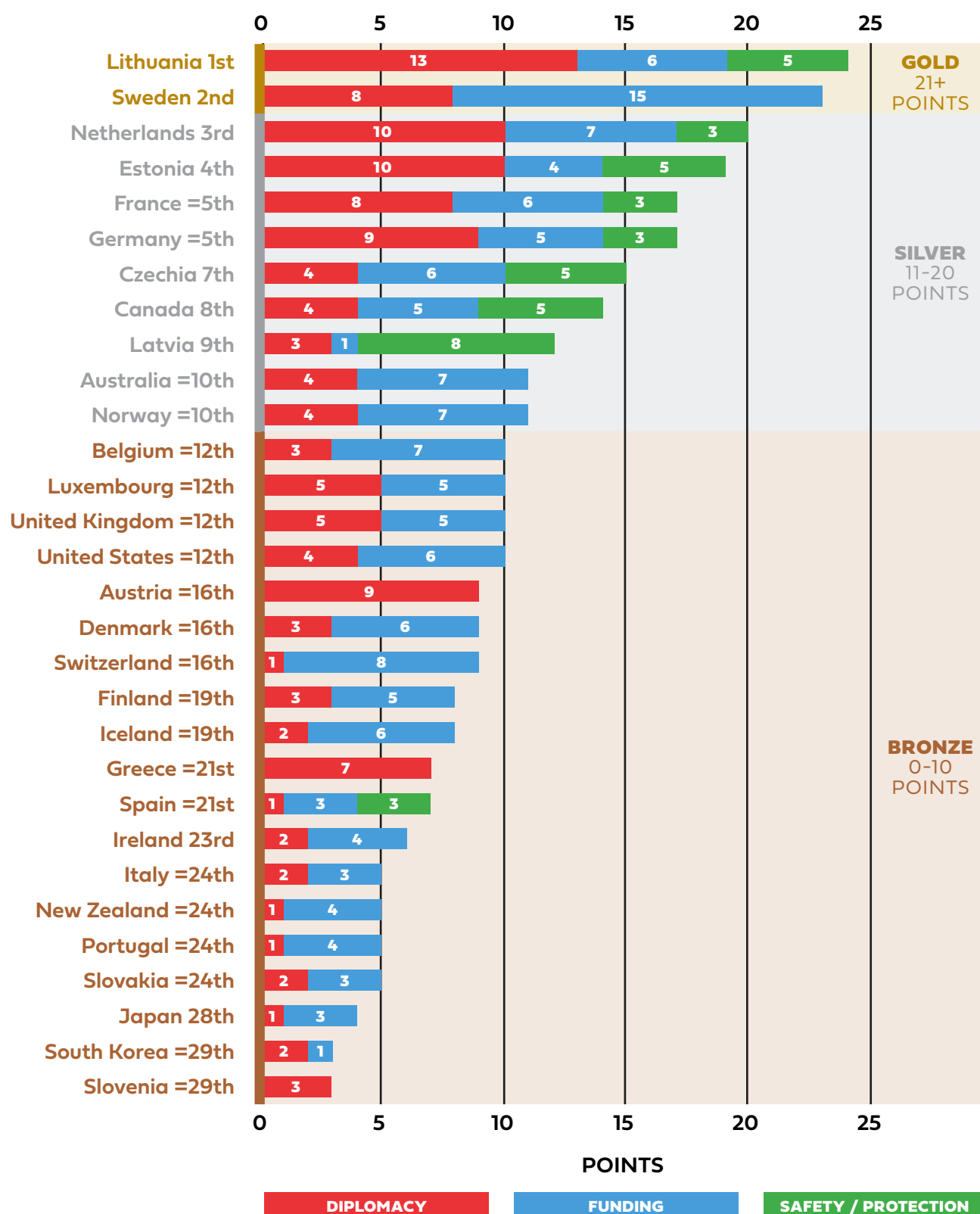
BRONZE (0-10 POINTS)

* The Index draws on data from the previous calendar year (2024), except for the ODA figures, which are for 2023, due to the time lag in reporting.

** Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Global Press Freedom Index ranking for each country in 2024, out of 180 countries and territories.

See <https://rsf.org/en/index?year=2024>

FIGURE 1: RANKING & SCORING FOR EACH COUNTRY IN THE 2025 INDEX FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT*



* The Index draws on data from the previous calendar year (2024), except for the ODA figures, which are for 2023, due to the time lag in reporting.

GOLD: HIGHEST RANKED COUNTRIES

Lithuania is the highest ranked country in the 2025 International Media Freedom Support (IMFS) Index, scoring 24 points. It scored particularly well in the diplomacy theme, as it was the only country to have two diplomatic leadership roles. In 2024, Lithuania served as vice-chair of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and was co-chair of the Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalism at the United Nations in New York. Lithuania was also one of only five countries to have an emergency visa scheme for journalists at-risk. This scheme has allowed mainly Belarusian and Russian independent journalists to enter Lithuania and, often, to obtain long stay visas¹².

As one of the smallest countries included in the Index, its status as the highest ranked country indicates that state capacity is not necessarily an obstacle to exercising a strong commitment to supporting media freedom internationally.

The only other country in the gold category (21+ points) of the Index is Sweden, which came second overall, with 23 points. Sweden performed very well in the funding theme. In 2023, it spent over \$51 million supporting initiatives related to media development, including support for rural radio stations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and for strengthening the quality and quantity of environmental reporting across the Asia-Pacific region. Sweden's total spending on media development made up 0.91% of its total ODA.

This made it the only country in the Index to get close to the benchmark of 1.0% of ODA spent on media development, as recommended by the Forum on Information & Democracy¹³. Indeed, Sweden allocated nearly three times as much of its ODA to media development as Belgium (0.36%) – which was the second strongest performing country in this criteria. Sweden also performed well in the funding theme because its financial support included allocations to three different multilateral pooled funds: the IPDC, UNESCO's Multi-Donor Programme for Media Development and Safety of Journalists (MDP), and the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM).

However, despite their high ranking in the 2025 Index, neither of the two countries in the gold category performed consistently well across all three themes. In relation to funding, Lithuania (0.11%) allocated only a very small proportion of its ODA to media development. In relation to safety and protection, Sweden received a score of 0 because it does not have an active emergency visa scheme dedicated to supporting journalists at-risk, or host a domestic initiative that promotes the protection of media workers in exile. In relation to diplomacy, Lithuania and Sweden both signed less than 90% of eligible public statements published by the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC). For example, neither supported an MFC statement on journalists in conflict situations, delivered at the United Nations Human Rights Council in September 2024¹⁴.

SILVER: MID-RANKED COUNTRIES

To qualify for the silver category in the IMFS Index, countries needed to achieve a score of between 11 and 20 points. Nine countries are in this category: the Netherlands (3rd, 20 points), Estonia (4th, 19 points), France (equal 5th, 17 points), Germany (equal 5th, 17 points), Czechia (7th, 15 points), Canada (8th, 14 points), Latvia (9th, 12 points), Australia (equal 10th, 11 points) and Norway (equal 10th, 11 points).

The four highest ranked countries in this category each held a leadership role in a multilateral initiative supporting media freedom in 2024. Estonia and Germany were the co-chairs of the Media Freedom Coalition at the time, while the Netherlands was vice chair of the IPDC and France was co-chair of the Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists in New York.

Latvia was the only country in the Index to have both an active emergency visa scheme dedicated to supporting journalists at-risk and to support at least one initiative domestically that promotes the protection and safety of media workers in exile. Since 2020, the government of Latvia has supported at least 250 visas for journalists from Russia, and 700 media workers through the media hub it helped establish in Riga¹⁵.

Six other countries within the silver category also had either an emergency visa scheme dedicated to providing safe refuge for journalists at-risk (Estonia, Czechia and Canada) or supported a domestic initiative that promotes the protection and safety of media workers in exile (the Netherlands, Germany and France). For example, in 2021, Canada launched a dedicated refugee stream for human rights defenders, including journalists, as well as their family members, through its Government-Assisted Refugees Programme. Initially, Canada pledged to resettle up to 250 people per year through this programme, but exceeded this goal in 2022, resettling 270 people¹⁶.

Latvia was the only country to have an active emergency visa scheme dedicated to supporting journalists at-risk and to support at least one initiative domestically that promotes the protection and safety of media workers in exile.

Canada exceeded its initial goal of resettling 250 people per year through its refugee stream for human rights defenders.

France was the only country in the Index to award funding to all four multilateral pooled funds.

Regarding initiatives that promote the protection of media workers in exile, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the Journalists' Safe Haven Initiative, which provides temporary safe spaces for journalists at risk¹⁷. Similarly, the German Federal Foreign Office supports the Hannah Arendt Initiative, a network of civil society organisations that protects and supports journalists from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and elsewhere¹⁸.

Despite notable activities in the areas of diplomacy and safety, most states in the silver category gave relatively low proportions of their ODA to media development: Estonia (0.23%), Norway (0.19%), France (0.16%), Czechia (0.14%), Germany (0.11%), Canada (0.08%) and the Netherlands (0.06%). Latvia gave 0% of its ODA to media development. However, Australia gave the third highest proportion of ODA to media development (0.30%). This included supporting the Pacific Media Assistance Programme, Australia's flagship media strengthening programme that supports activities in the Pacific to build a more professional, diverse and independent media¹⁹.

France was the only country in the Index to award funding to all four multilateral pooled funds: UNESCO's IPDC, MDP, Global Media Defence Fund (GMDF), and to IFPIM. France also increased its absolute spending on media development from about \$9 million in 2019 to over \$24 million in 2023, or by more than 2.5 times. It also supported initiatives like the International Partnership on Information and Democracy and played a significant role hosting the legal establishment of IFPIM.

BRONZE

LOWEST RANKED COUNTRIES

Nineteen of the 30 countries (63%) measured in the IMFS Index qualified for the lowest, bronze category, by having 10 points or less. This includes four members of the G7: the United Kingdom (equal 12th), the United States (equal 12th), Italy (equal 24th) and Japan (equal 28th).

The lowest ranked countries in the Index were Japan (28th, 4 points), South Korea (equal 29th, 3 points) and Slovenia (equal 29th, 3 points). In 2024, none had emergency visa schemes for journalists at-risk, supported pooled multilateral funds, played leadership roles within qualifying multilateral initiatives or supported at least 90% of eligible MFC public statements. In 2023, the proportion of ODA given to supporting 'Media and Free Flow of Information' and 'Radio/television/print media' by South Korea (0.08%) and Japan (0.03%) was negligible. Slovenia gave 0% of its ODA to media development in 2023.

However, it is important to note that South Korea and Japan do allocate significant proportions of their ODA spending to other areas which support the wider enabling environment for media freedom, but which are not covered by this Index. In 2023, South Korea gave \$65 million in total to 'ICT' and 'Communications Policy and Administrative Management', while Japan allocated nearly \$56 million to the same categories²⁰. This included supporting projects such as South Korea's digital literacy programme in Rwanda and a digital connectivity programme in El Salvador.

Four countries were ranked joint 12th on the index, with 10 points: Belgium, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom and the United States. All four countries received zero points for multilateral leadership; safe refuge; and journalist protection mechanisms. However, it is worth noting that the United States and the United Kingdom were both members of the MFC's Executive Group in 2024, although the IMFS Index does not currently award points for this role.

The United States (0.21%) allocated a higher proportion of its ODA to media development than Belgium (0.13%), the United Kingdom (0.10%), and Luxembourg (0.04%). However, given the time lag in reporting, these figures do not reflect the cuts to US support for media development in 2025, which are estimated to be at least \$150 million²¹.

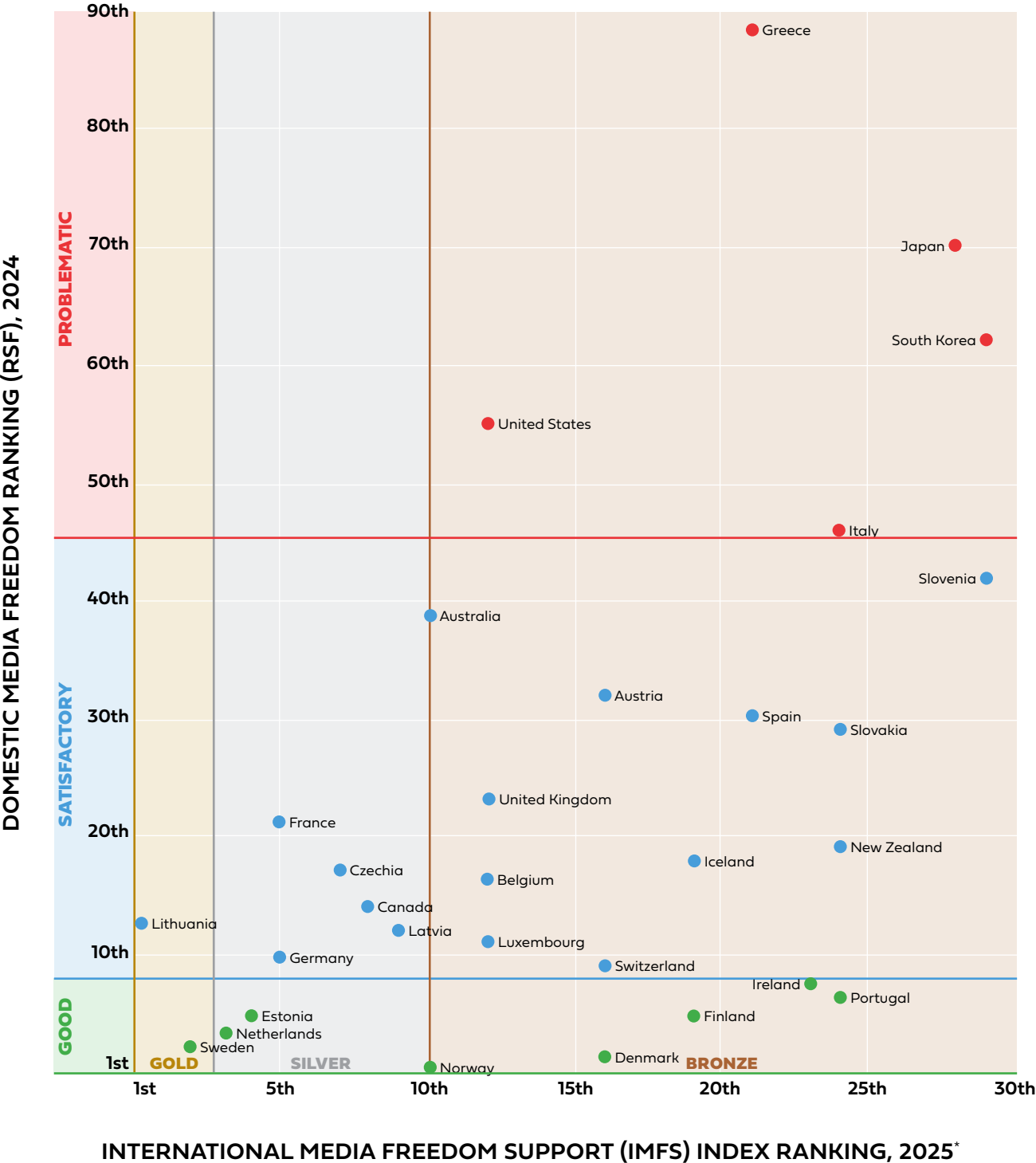
Notably, both Austria (equal 16th) and Greece (equal 21st) only scored points in the diplomatic theme – primarily due to their leadership role in chairing one of the Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists. They scored zero points for funding because they allocated less than 0.05% of their ODA to media development and did not support any multilateral pooled funds. Furthermore, Austria only delivered 47% of the \$9,862,000 it committed to spend on media development in 2023, according to the OECD-DAC database. By contrast, Switzerland (equal 16th) generated eight of its nine points from the funding theme, by supporting three pooled multilateral funds. It also exceeded its commitment to spend \$6.6 million on media development in 2023 by nearly \$2.5 million.

63% of countries in the IMFS Index, including four G7 members, were ranked in the lowest, bronze category for their support of global media freedom.

In general, countries that tend to have relatively high levels of media freedom domestically (as indicated by their RSF ranking), also tend to perform well on the IMFS Index, and vice versa. For example, South Korea, Japan, Greece, Italy, and the United States were classified as having both 'problematic' domestic media freedom environments in 2024, according to RSF, and as 'bronze', or less well performing, in the International Media Freedom Support Index. Similarly, Norway, the Netherlands, Estonia and Sweden all had 'good' domestic media freedom environments in 2024, according to RSF, and were classified as either 'gold' or 'silver' on the 2025 Index in terms of their international support for media freedom. Notably, Sweden was the only country classified as both 'gold' on the IMFS Index and 'good' on the RSF index.

There are some exceptions, however. Denmark, Finland, Portugal and Ireland all have 'good' domestic media freedom environments, according to RSF. However, all four countries are in the lowest ranked, bronze category in the IMFS Index. In 2024, none had an active emergency visa scheme for journalists, none signed 100% of eligible MFC joint statements, nor played a leadership role in any of the qualifying multilateral initiatives. Denmark (0.17%), Finland (0.07%), Portugal (0.11%) and Ireland (0.002%) also all gave very low proportions of their ODA to media development. However, all were members of the International Partnership for Information and Democracy (IPID), an intergovernmental agreement amongst states to promote democratic principles in the global information and communication space.

FIGURE 2: COUNTRY RANKINGS ACCORDING TO THEIR DOMESTIC MEDIA FREEDOM ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR MEDIA FREEDOM



* The Index draws on data from the previous calendar year (2024), except for the ODA figures, which are for 2023, due to the time lag in reporting.

THEMES

THEME 1: DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FOR MEDIA FREEDOM

Within the diplomatic theme of the IMFS Index, the highest scoring country was Lithuania, due to its strong performance in criteria 1 ('multilateral leadership'). The lowest scoring countries in the diplomatic theme, with one point, were Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, South Korea, Spain and Switzerland.

Several countries that play a significant leadership role supporting media freedom internationally are not included in the Index, as they are not members of OECD-DAC and/or the MFC. Chile, for example, is an active member of the MFC and hosted World Press Freedom Day in 2024 – but is not a member of the OECD-DAC. Had they been included, Chile would have scored five points for their 'multilateral leadership' – putting them in joint second place against that criteria, alongside 7 other countries. Similarly, Brazil and South Africa both supported media freedom internationally during their time as chairs of the G20. However, these countries are not members of either the OECD-DAC or MFC.

Regarding criteria 2 ('multilateral membership'), nine countries received the full three points for being members of all three qualifying multilateral initiatives: Austria, Estonia, France, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. New Zealand was the only country in the Index not to be a member of any of the three qualifying multilateral initiatives in 2024.

Regarding criteria 3 ('speaking out'), 10 of the 30 countries in the Index signed all eligible joint public statements published by the MFC in 2024. This included Australia, Belgium and Luxemburg, as well as almost all members of the MFC Executive Group in the Index: Canada, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. The only member of the MFC Executive Group in the Index not to sign all eligible MFC statements in 2024 was Finland. It did not sign the MFC Executive Group Statement on journalists in conflict situations, delivered at the United Nations Human Rights Council²².

One third of the countries in the Index signed all but one (92%) of their eligible MFC joint public statements. The remaining one third of countries in the Index signed less than 90% of statements. South Korea and Slovakia both signed 46% of eligible statements, Greece and Japan signed 62% of statements while France, Spain and Switzerland signed 77% of statements.

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE MEDIA FREEDOM COALITION STATEMENTS SIGNED IN 2024 BY EACH COUNTRY IN THE IMFS INDEX

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE MFC STATEMENTS SIGNED IN 2024*
Australia	100%
Belgium	100%
Canada	100%
Czechia	100%
Estonia	100%
Germany	100%
Luxembourg	100%
Netherlands	100%
United Kingdom	100%
United States	100%
Austria	92%
Denmark	92%
Finland	92%
Iceland	92%
Ireland	92%
Italy	92%
Latvia	92%
New Zealand	92%
Norway	92%
Slovenia	92%
Lithuania	85%
Portugal	85%
Sweden	85%
France	77%
Spain	77%
Switzerland	77%
Greece	62%
Japan	62%
South Korea	46%
Slovakia	46%

*See here for all statements published: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/media/statements/>

THEME 2: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

The countries in the IMFS Index with the highest percentage of ODA allocated to media development in 2023 (criteria 4) were Sweden (0.91%), Belgium (0.36%), Australia (0.30%), Estonia (0.23%) and the United States (0.21%). None reached the benchmark of 1.0%, as recommended by the Forum on Information & Democracy.

Three countries - Greece, Latvia and Slovenia - gave 0% of their ODA to media development in 2023. Ten other countries awarded less than 0.1% of their ODA in 2023 to media development including Canada (0.08%), South Korea (0.08%), Finland (0.07%), the Netherlands (0.06%), Italy (0.04%), Luxembourg (0.04%), Austria (0.03%), Japan (0.03%), Slovakia (0.03%), Spain (0.02%) and Ireland (0.002%). Overall, amongst all states in the Index, an average of just 0.16% of ODA was allocated to media development in 2023.

Although no points were awarded for the absolute amounts of financial support given to media development²³, it is important to recognise those states that made the largest financial contributions. Seven countries gave over \$10 million to media development in 2023: the United States (\$135.9m)²⁴, Sweden (\$51.3m), Germany (\$42.3m), France (\$24.3m), the United Kingdom (\$18.2m), Norway (\$10.7m) and Belgium (\$10.2m). In total, \$343.4 million of ODA was allocated to media development in 2023 from the 30 Index countries.

Regarding criteria 5 ('fulfilled spending commitments'), in 2023, four countries disbursed less than 90% of the financial support to media development which they had committed. These were: Estonia (78%), South Korea (77%), Austria (47%) and France (16%)²⁵. Although no points were awarded for exceeding financial commitments, it is interesting to note that 11 countries distributed more financial support to media development in 2023 than they had originally committed. For example, Spain originally committed \$151,000 but ultimately awarded \$829,000 (+549%). This included support for combatting violence against journalists in Mexico and supporting human rights defenders in Guatemala. Finland, which originally committed to \$224,000, ultimately awarded \$1,143,000 (+510%), including for enhancing free speech in Somalia and access to information in Mozambique.

Regarding criteria 6 ('pooled multilateral funds'), as noted earlier, France was the only country in the Index to give financial support to all four qualifying multilateral pooled funds in 2024. Two countries supported three of the funds: the Netherlands and Switzerland. Seven countries supported two of the multilateral pooled funds. More than one third, or 12 countries did not award funding to any multilateral pooled fund in 2024.

The IPDC received the largest number of contributions from different states in 2024 (11) followed by the Global Media Defence Fund (9). The MDP and IFPIM both received financial contributions from seven different countries in the IMFS Index in 2024. However, it is important to note that the size of each contribution was not included as part of the scoring.

THE EUROPEAN UNION: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

For this Index, the European Union (EU) does not qualify as a state that can be assessed against the criteria of most of the themes. However, the EU, mainly through the European Commission, provides significant resources to media development. According to the OECD CRS public database, between 2016 and 2022, the European Union dedicated more than \$230 million of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 'Media and Free Flow of Information' (code 15153) and 'Radio/television/print media' (code 22030). For 2023, the EU committed nearly \$83.6 million in total across both codes, and disbursed \$47.2 million, or 56% of its commitment. Overall, 0.12% of the EU's ODA spending in 2023 was on media development. These figures include what the European Union reported through the OECD portal, and does not include member states' contributions.

If the EU were ranked alongside states in this Index for criteria 4 and 5, it would have ranked 12th for criteria 4 ('aid spent on media'), after Czechia and New Zealand. For Criteria 5 ('fulfilled spending commitment'), it would have ranked 26th, below Estonia (78%) and South Korea (77%).

The EU's absolute spending amount would have put it in third place, behind the United States (\$135.9m) and Sweden (\$51.3m), and above Germany (\$42.3m)²⁶.

**The EU spent
over \$230
million on media
development from
2016 to 2022 and
committed \$83.6
million more in
2023 alone.**

TABLE 3: OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA) SPENDING ON MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL COUNTRIES IN THE INDEX ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT, 2025.

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE OF ODA ALLOCATED TO MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN 2023	TOTAL ODA SPENT ON MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN 2023	THE DEGREE TO WHICH ODA FUNDING COMMITMENTS TO MEDIA DEVELOPMENT WERE FULFILLED IN 2023	NUMBER OF QUALIFYING POOLED MULTILATERAL FUNDS SUPPORTED IN 2024
Sweden	0.91%	\$51,333,000	158%	3
Belgium	0.36%	\$10,178,000	100%	0
Australia	0.30%	\$9,862,000	100%	1
Estonia	0.23%	\$250,000	78%	2
United States	0.21%	\$135,865,000	94%	1
Norway	0.19%	\$10,680,000	128%	2
Switzerland	0.17%	\$9,101,000	138%	3
Denmark	0.17%	\$5,345,000	160%	1
France	0.16%	\$24,303,561	16%	4
Czechia	0.14%	\$1,105,000	99%	2
New Zealand	0.14%	\$1,051,000	100%	0
European Union*	0.12%	\$47,205,659	56%	0
Lithuania	0.11%	\$227,000	100%	2
Germany	0.11%	\$42,290,553	116%	1
Portugal	0.11%	\$597,000	100%	0
Iceland	0.10%	\$115,000	100%	2
United Kingdom	0.10%	\$18,168,753	100%	1
Canada	0.08%	\$6,657,000	153%	1
South Korea	0.08%	\$2,570,000	77%	0
Finland	0.07%	\$1,143,000	510%	1
Netherlands	0.06%	\$4,130,000	102%	3
Luxembourg	0.04%	\$227,000	100%	2
Italy	0.04%	\$2,401,000	137%	0
Austria	0.03%	\$527,000	47%	0
Japan	0.03%	\$5,378,000	143%	0
Slovakia	0.03%	\$58,000	100%	0
Spain	0.02%	\$829,000	549%	0
Ireland	0.002%	\$43,000	100%	1
Latvia	0.00%	\$0	n/a	1
Greece	0.00%	\$0	n/a	0
Slovenia	0.00%	\$0	n/a	0

*The European Union did not qualify for inclusion in the full Index because it is ineligible to join the MFC. However, it is included in this table to allow for comparisons with states regarding its funding for media development.

THEME 3: SUPPORT FOR JOURNALISM SAFETY AND PROTECTION

More than 1,000 emergency visas have been issued to exiled journalists since 2020 under dedicated schemes in just five countries.

As discussed above, Latvia achieved the highest score in theme 3 - safety and protection - because it was the only country to have both an active emergency visa scheme dedicated to supporting journalists at-risk and to support at least one initiative that promotes the protection and safety of media workers in exile. According to the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom's 2020 Report "Providing Safe Refuge to Journalists at Risk," progress reports, and Free Press Unlimited's 2023 report "Relocation of Journalists in Distress in the European Union," only four other countries in the Index had a dedicated emergency visa scheme for journalists in 2024: Canada, Czechia, Estonia, and Lithuania (criteria 7: 'safe refuge for journalists')²⁷. More than 1,000 visas have been issued to media workers in exile under these schemes since 2020²⁸.

It is worth noting that several countries in the index have visa schemes for humanitarian rights defenders, and these have been used to issue visas to journalists, for example, in Ireland, Spain, France and Germany. These could be built upon further, with the recommendation of the MFC's High Level Panel of Legal Experts, to provide specific affordances for journalists.

In 2024, 21 countries in the Index had no legal mechanism for safe refuge or supported a national programme for journalists in exile.

Regarding criteria 8 ('journalist protection mechanisms'), aside from Latvia, only four other countries in the Index supported a domestic initiative that promotes the protection and safety of media workers in exile in 2024: France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. These programmes provide a range of services from relocation and housing support to professional mentoring and training on new business models.

In 2024, according to the data sources consulted for this report, 21 countries had neither a dedicated legal mechanism for providing safe refuge for journalists at-risk or supported a national assistance programme for journalists in exile.

METHODOLOGY —

METHODOLOGY OF THE INDEX FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT —

THEME 1: DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FOR MEDIA FREEDOM

States' diplomatic support for media freedom is assessed through measures of their leadership, membership and advocacy within multilateral initiatives. As members of the MFC, all states assessed in this Index have signed the Coalition's Global Pledge which commits them to 'speak out and take action together' and 'reinforce international initiatives to champion media freedom'²⁹.

Criteria 1, Multilateral leadership: States are awarded points for holding executive roles in multilateral initiatives focused on media freedom. Qualifying leadership roles include serving as a chair, vice-chair, or rapporteur for UNESCO's IPDC, serving as a co-chair of the MFC and serving as a co-chair of at least one of the Groups of Friends on the Safety/Protection of Journalists at UNESCO in Paris, the UN in New York or the UN in Geneva. States that host global observances for World Press Freedom Day (May 3rd) and the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (November 2nd) also qualify for leadership recognition. States are awarded five points for each leadership role they hold, up to a maximum of 25 points. Leadership of these multilateral initiatives is determined via the relevant UN, UNESCO, and MFC websites.

Currently, recognition is not given to states that play a leadership role in regional or country specific donor support groups or MFC Embassy Networks because this information is not publicly available. Despite their importance, initiatives like the Team Europe Democracy Network are also not included because membership is not open to all states in the Index. Finally, recognition is not currently given to states that play a leadership role in multilateral initiatives which focus on supporting different aspects of the wider enabling environment for journalism, rather than media freedom specifically, such as the Freedom Online Coalition, the Open Government Partnership and the Community of Democracies.

Criteria 2, Multilateral membership: States can also demonstrate their diplomatic support for media freedom via membership of relevant multilateral initiatives. In this Index, qualifying initiatives include the International Partnership for Information and Democracy (IPID), UNESCO's IPDC and the Groups of Friends on the Safety/Protection of Journalists in Paris, New York and Geneva. States are awarded one point for membership of the IPID and one point for membership of the IPDC. States also receive one point if they are a member of at least one of the three Groups of Friends on the Safety/Protection of Journalists. States can be awarded a maximum score of three points for this criteria. Membership of these multilateral initiatives is determined via their public websites and statements.

Currently, recognition is not given to states that are members of regional or country specific donor support groups or MFC Embassy Networks because this information is not publicly available. Recognition is also not currently given to states that are members of multilateral initiatives that focus on supporting different aspects of the wider enabling environment for journalism, rather than media freedom specifically.

Criteria 3, Speaking out: States can also demonstrate their diplomatic support for media freedom by signing joint public statements or resolutions on journalism safety or media freedom adopted or published by multilateral initiatives. States are awarded two points if they sign all the joint public statements made by the MFC in the previous calendar year, which they were eligible to sign³⁰. States that sign between 90% and 100% of the MFC statements they were eligible to sign are awarded one point. States that sign less than 90% of such statements receive zero points. States are also awarded two points if they sponsor or co-sponsor a resolution or declaration on media freedom or journalism safety at the UN General Assembly or the UN Human Rights Council³¹. The data sources for this criteria are the relevant UN, UNESCO and MFC websites.

THEME 2: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

States' financial support for media development is assessed through measures of their funding levels, fulfillment of financial commitments and contributions to pooled multilateral funds. As members of the OECD-DAC, all states assessed by this Index have committed to 'increas[ing] financial and other forms of support to public interest media', as part of their endorsement of the Development Co-operation Principles on Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment³².

Criteria 4, Aid spent on media: States are awarded points for the percentage of ODA they allocate specifically to media development. Assessing the percentage of ODA allocated to media development, rather than the total amounts, allows for fairer comparisons between states with different economic capacities.

The data source used for this criteria is the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database, which is a publicly available database that captures states' reporting on types of aid (grants, loans, development finance, etc.), recipient countries, sector and channel (NGOs, public sector, multilateral organisations, etc.), amongst other data. Due to lags in reporting at the granular level by states on the public-facing database, this Index must rely on data from two years prior, so the 2025 Index uses data from 2023.

Following a methodology used by the Global Forum for Media Development, the funding codes used to identify ODA spending on media development are: 'Media and Free Flow of Information' (code 15153) and 'Radio/television/print media' (code 22030³³. Funding codes for Communications Policy and Administrative Management (22010); Telecommunications (22020); and Information and Communication Technology (22040) are not included because they focus on broader areas like strategic communications, telecommunications policy and equipment, and internet access. While such support can contribute to the wider enabling environment, they fall outside of the scope of media freedom specifically.

Following the methodologies used by the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) and the OECD-DAC Governance Network (GovNet), funding allocations for 'international broadcasting' by Germany, UK, and France within these codes are excluded³⁴. While international broadcasting makes an important contribution to ensuring citizens' access to independent news and information – especially when it is largely absent or extremely limited in a country – it is generally excluded from calculations of ODA spending on media development because it does not directly contribute to the development of an domestic independent media sector.

It is important to note the limitations of this publicly reported data. Public donors must try to collect and standardise information that may be spread across several government agencies or bureaucracies, such as the foreign ministry, aid/assistance ministry, and defence ministry. Additionally, not all donors have a common understanding of media development or media assistance, and may include funding for development communication, public diplomacy, or open government data in their reporting³⁵. Finally, the figures may exclude confidential (and thus, non-reported) data, or support for election-related reporting or investigative journalism which may be reported as part of election programming or anti-corruption efforts, respectively.

States are awarded one point per 0.1% of ODA allocated to code 15153 or code 22030. States committing less than 0.05% of ODA to these codes are awarded zero points. There is no limit to the number of points a state can be awarded in this category.

Criteria 5, Fulfilled spending commitments: States are also awarded points for delivering the funding amounts they previously pledged to media development. This is also assessed via the OECD CRS database, which records them under "flow type," separating funding commitments – amounts of planned and approved funding – and disbursements – funding actually paid out to the recipient. As there can be a delay between when commitments are finalised and when disbursements are made, there can sometimes be a lag time beyond two years in disbursing a commitment³⁶. States are awarded three points if they deliver at least 90% of the funding they committed, and they are awarded zero points if they deliver less than 90% of their financial commitment. States do not receive additional points for exceeding the financial commitments they made. The maximum number of points a state can be awarded in this category is three points.

Criteria 6, Pooled multilateral funds: States are also awarded points for contributing to pooled multilateral funds dedicated to supporting media freedom or media development. Such funds are, in principle, an effective way of coordinating resources, and can provide core support to local entities, reduce the earmarking of contributions, and support the principle of multilateralism³⁷.

The pooled multilateral funds recognised in the IMFS index include three funds administered by UNESCO: the IPDC, the GMDF, and the MDP. In addition, the Index recognises IFPIM in this category. This is because IFPIM's governance structure is multilateral (with representation from more than three nation states), and its financial contributions are pooled together into a single financing mechanism overseen by a centralised governance structure and distributed in alignment with a collective strategy.

States are awarded one point for each of these pooled multilateral funds they contributed to in the previous calendar year, up to a maximum score of four points. Funding allocations are determined by the websites of the relevant fund and corroborated by the fund managers themselves. Multilateral pooled funds focused on supporting media freedom in a single country are currently excluded because they may not be open to all states within the Index, and because the funding data is often not publicly available.

THEME 3: SUPPORT FOR JOURNALISM SAFETY AND PROTECTION

States' support for the safety and protection of journalists at-risk or in exile is assessed through their commitment to providing safe refuge and assistance programmes. The issue of safe refuge to journalists at risk has consistently been designated a key priority for the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom - the MFC's independent advisory arm. The High Level Panel has provided MFC states with a clear plan to fulfil this commitment, via its advisory Report on Safe Refuge for Journalists at Risk, with the key recommendation being to create an emergency visa for journalists at risk³⁸.

Criteria 7, Safe refuge for journalists: States are awarded points for having a dedicated emergency visa scheme or residence permits that explicitly include provision for media workers in exile. In line with the recommendations of the High Level Panel, these visas/permits should be open to journalists in need of immediate or urgent protection due to an ongoing threat to them and/or their families and continue to be available until the risk subsides³⁹. All states with an active visa/permit scheme for journalists at risk receive five points.

The existence of such a scheme is determined by relevant public reports including from the MFC and the High Level Panel. It is important to track how visa/residency schemes for media workers are implemented in practice. However, this is not currently possible, as there are no publicly available data sources to track or verify this data.

Criteria 8, Journalist protection mechanisms: States are awarded points for supporting programmes or initiatives that promote the protection and safety of media workers in exile, as recognised in UNESCO's Global Repository of National Safety Mechanisms for Journalists and/or tracked by the High Level Panel's progress reports⁴⁰. These initiatives are run domestically, but offer mechanisms that address the safety of exiled journalists in one or more of the three areas of prevention, protection and prosecution. Such initiatives can focus on policy, advocacy, fellowships, training, or grant assistance to at-risk journalists, media professionals, and defenders of freedom of expression in exile. All states supporting at least one such scheme will receive three points, with a maximum score of three points.

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EXISTING INDEXES WHICH MEASURE LEVELS OF MEDIA FREEDOM DOMESTICALLY

Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) World Press Freedom Index

surveys the level of press freedom in 180 countries and territories, including the ability of media workers to select, produce, and disseminate news in the public interest independent of political, economic, legal, and social interference and in the absence of threats to their physical and mental safety.

IREX's Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE) is an annual report

that analyses how information is produced, spread, and used across four dimensions, including information quality, legal frameworks, information consumption and engagement, and the use of information.

Freedom House's "Freedom in the World" report

includes media freedom as a key indicator within its broader assessment of political rights and civil liberties. The reports cover developments in 195 countries and 13 territories based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. FH also publishes Freedom on the Net, an annual survey and analysis of internet freedom in 72 countries.

Committee to Protect Journalists' (CPJ) Impunity Index

focuses on the issue of impunity in journalist murders around the world, highlighting countries where the killers of journalists have gone unpunished.

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Indicators

is a comprehensive dataset that includes a dedicated Media section with variables evaluating different aspects of media freedom and quality, such as government censorship of traditional media, presence of critical media, harassment of journalists, and media corruption.

UNESCO's Media Development Indicators (MDIs)

aim to enable a comprehensive assessment of media landscapes at the national level. The framework is not a fixed methodological approach, nor is it designed to provide a longitudinal analysis over time or a means for comparing different countries. Rather, it is a set of diagnostic indicators that can be selected in part or in whole to guide the formulation of media-related policies and improve the targeting of media development efforts.

TABLE 4: CRITERIA AND SCORING FOR THE INDEX ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FREEDOM SUPPORT (IMFS)

THEME	CRITERIA	SCORING
Diplomatic support for media freedom	1. MULTILATERAL LEADERSHIP Leadership of multilateral initiatives supporting media freedom. — Media Freedom Coalition (MFC) (Co-chair), UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) (chair, vice-chair, or rapporteur), and the UNESCO/UN Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists (Geneva, Paris or New York) (co-chair). — Hosting World Press Freedom Day and the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists.	5 points for each leadership role.
	2. MULTILATERAL MEMBERSHIP Membership of multilateral initiatives supporting media freedom. — IPDC, Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists and the International Partnership for Information and Democracy.	1 point for each membership.
	3. SPEAKING OUT Publicly supporting joint statements relating to media freedom. — Percentage of eligible MFC public statements supported. — Sponsoring or co-sponsoring a resolution or declaration on media freedom or journalism safety at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) or the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).	2 points for 100% of MFC statements signed. 1 point for 90–99% of MFC statements signed. 2 points for (co) sponsoring a UNGA / UNHRC resolution.
Financial support for media development	4. AID SPENT ON MEDIA Percentage of total Official Development Assistance (ODA) spent on media development.	1 point per 0.1%.
	5. FULFILLED SPENDING COMMITMENTS Fulfilment of funding commitment of ODA spending for media development.	3 points for 90% or more. 0 points for below 90%.
	6. POOLED MULTILATERAL FUNDS Financial contributions to pooled multilateral media development funds. — UNESCO's Global Media Defence Fund, the International Programme for the Development of Communication, and the Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists; and the International Fund for Public Interest Media.	1 point for each fund.
Support for Journalism Safety and Protection	7. SAFE REFUGE FOR JOURNALISTS Existence of a dedicated emergency visa scheme or residence permits for media workers at risk.	5 points
	8. JOURNALIST PROTECTION MECHANISMS Support for domestic programmes or initiatives to promote protection and safety of media workers in exile.	3 points

ENDNOTES

1 – RSF’s index analyses the domestic operating environment in 180 countries and territories across the political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context and safety. The 2024 scores are available here: <https://rsf.org/en/index?year=2024>

2 – The Index defines media development as support to independent news media and civil society organisations that work to improve the legal and regulatory environment for independent journalism, and support that aims to foster development, good governance and democratic accountability outcomes via media. See this Center for International Media Assistance report: <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/are-donors-taking-the-journalism-crisis-seriously/>

3 – OECD report 2024: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/development-co-operation-principles-for-relevant-and-effective-support-to-media-and-the-information-environment_76d82856-en.html

4 – Forum Information & Democracy, A New Deal for Journalism: Designing a Policy framework 2021 report <https://informationdemocracy.org/publications/a-new-deal-for-journalism/>

5 – DW Akademie 2025 Report, The State of Media Development: <https://akademie.dw.com/en/the-state-of-media-development-vis-%C3%A0-vis-the-oecd-principles/a-71897327>

6 – The Index was financially supported by: City St George’s Higher Education Impact Funding; and the University of East Anglia’s AHRC Impact Accelerator Account (IAA). The wider theory of change underpinning the Index was developed with support from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/V006118/1).

7 – The research project is described at: Researching Media Freedom in a Time of Crisis <https://pressfreedom.co.uk/>. The most relevant publication is “Whose media freedom is being defended?” published in the Journal of Communication. <https://academic.oup.com/joc/article/73/2/87/6964696>

8 – We are grateful for the assistance of Kayonaaz Kalyanwala for reviewing the data and scoring of the 2025 Index.

9 – See here for more information about the MFC Global Pledge <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/about/global-pledge/>

10 – See [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC\(2024\)15/FINAL/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC(2024)15/FINAL/en/pdf)

11 – See DWA’s 2025 report on The State of Media Development here: <https://akademie.dw.com/en/the-state-of-media-development-vis-%C3%A0-vis-the-oecd-principles/a-71897327>; and GFMD’s IMPACT and Briefings pages: <https://impact.gfmd.info/> and <https://gfmd.info/briefings/>

12 – See Free Press Unlimited’s report on Relocation of Journalists in Distress in the European Union: <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/sites/default/files/documents/MFRR-relocation-of-journalists-in-distress-report.pdf>

13 – The Forum on Information & Democracy New Deal for Journalism report 2021 https://informationdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ForumID_New-Deal-for-Journalism_16Jun21.pdf?eTtype=EmailBlastContent&eId=293944ec-8bd2-4e52-a475-a67cd87b72c8

14 – See Media Freedom Coalition Statement: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/executive-group/2024/journalists-in-conflict-situations/>

15 – <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/news/2022/safe-refuge-for-journalists-recent-progress-from-mfc-members/#:~:text=The%20government%20of%20Latvia%20also,models%20to%20the%20new%20circumstances>

16 – <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2021/07/providing-protection-to-human-rights-defenders-at-risk.html> and <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/news/2022/safe-refuge-for-journalists-recent-progress-from-mfc-members/>

17 – <https://sheltercity.org/> and <https://nias.knaw.nl/fellowships/safe-haven-fellowship-for-scholars-at-risk/>

18 – https://hannah-arendt-initiative.de/?page_id=2935&lang=en

19 – <https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/pacmas-about/102240758>

20 – As Myers has noted in a previous study of media development funding, ‘virtually all of Japan’s aid to media was delivered to the public sector, with very little support channelled to civil society, NGOs, academic institutions, or multilateral organisations. See here: <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/are-donors-taking-the-journalism-crisis-seriously/>

- 21 – See Internews analysis here: <https://internews.org/new-report-reveals-global-fallout-from-u-s-government-funding-cuts/#:~:text=The%20report,%20Crisis%20in%20Journalism,order%20suspending%20most%20foreign%20assistance>
- 22 – See Media Freedom Coalition Statement <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/executive-group/2024/journalists-in-conflict-situations/>
- 23 – Assessing the proportion of ODA allocated to media development, rather than the total amounts, allows for fairer comparisons between states with varying economic capacities.
- 24 – As noted earlier, the United States made dramatic cuts to its ODA spending in early 2025, with profound implications for the media development field.
- 25 – As there can be a delay between when commitments are finalised and when disbursements are made, the Index acknowledges that there can sometimes be a lag time beyond two years in disbursing a commitment.
- 26 – It is important to note that other reports come to different figures for spending by the EU on media development. For example, the OECD report for 2024, [Mapping ODA to Media and Information Environment Integrity](#), calculates that the EU spent around \$420 million of its ODA on media and information between 2016 and 2022. That figure, however, includes the communications policy and administrative management code (22010), which this Index does not include, as it tends to include strategic communications projects. For example, during that time period, the EU provided an estimated \$190 million for projects like increasing the visibility of EU assistance and improving awareness of the EU accession process and membership benefits. Another researcher who analysed data for 2023 and 2024 for an internal working paper found a higher level of spend across funding code 15153 than what the OECD CRS public-facing portal provides. That report relies on data the European Commission provided—data that is tied to the OECD funding codes, but not necessarily correlated to the OECD data, and to which the Index authors do not have access.
- 27 – For the 2020 High Level Panel report, see this link: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Report-on-Providing-Safe-Refuge-to-Journalists-at-Risk.pdf>; For the 2022 progress update, see this link: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/news/2022/safe-refuge-for-journalists-recent-progress-from-mfc-members/>; and for the FPU report, see this link: <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/sites/default/files/documents/MFRR-relocation-of-journalists-in-distress-report.pdf>
- 28 – <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/news/2022/safe-refuge-for-journalists-recent-progress-from-mfc-members/>
- 29 – MFC's Global Pledge can be found here: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/about/global-pledge/>
- 30 – MFC signed statements can be found here: <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/media/statements/>
- 31 – Note that there were no resolutions signed in 2024.
- 32 – OECD Principles can be found here: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/05/development-co-operation-principles-for-relevant-and-effective-support-to-media-and-the-information-environment_e8c617a4/76d82856-en.pdf
- 33 – See GFMD's methodology here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/14FjW-qED2q8kuiELXhHD0WL_e5VnBALmCYvLxs9s965w/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.59ilattled7. GFMD's reference to three codes (not two) acknowledges that code 15163 was the "free flow of information" code until 2008, and was revised to 15153 after that.
- 34 – See CIMA's report here: <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/are-donors-taking-the-journalism-crisis-seriously/>. And the GovNet report here: https://thepolicypractice.com/web/sites/default/files/2024-03/Session%203_Mapping%20and%20analysis%20of%20ODA%20to%20media%20and%20the%20information%20environment.pdf
- 35 – See CIMA reports for 2017 and 2024: <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/slowly-shifting-field/> and <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/are-donors-taking-the-journalism-crisis-seriously/>.
- 36 – See this FAQ on data from the OECD CRS portal: <https://aid-atlas.org/about/data>.
- 37 – See these reports on best practices by the OECD: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/05/development-co-operation-principles-for-relevant-and-effective-support-to-media-and-the-information-environment_e8c617a4/76d82856-en.pdf and GFMD: <https://gfmd.info/h-content/uploads/2023/09/Transforming-Media-Development--gfmd.pdf?x65855?x90963>
- 38 – <https://www.ibanet.org/Safe-Refuge-report-launch-2020>
- 39 – The High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Report-on-Providing-Safe-Refuge-to-Journalists-at-Risk.pdf>
- 40 – UNESCO <https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/un-plan-action/national-safety-mechanisms> and <https://mediafreedomcoalition.org/news/2022/safe-refuge-for-journalists-recent-progress-from-mfc-members/>

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