SEENPM
South East European Network for Professionalization of Media

MONOPOLIZED OWNERSHIP, FRAGILE TRUST, AND AUDIENCE DISENGAGEMENT

The Future of the Media in Turkey – Considerations by Key Actors

Sinem Aydınlı

OUR MEDIA:
A civil society action to generate media literacy and activism, counter polarisation and promote dialogue

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The second phase of the *Future of the Media* research engaged focus groups with citizens in Istanbul and Mardin, and media workers and citizens with high cultural and social capital and influence. Using the analysis of the focus groups, this study explored perceptions of the media's democratic role, challenges facing journalism, and expectations for the future of the media in Turkey. Overall, participants' visions of the future of the media oscillated between cautious hope and a kind of deep pessimism: while some underlined the need for new spaces, inclusive narratives, and solidarity-based resistance, others stressed structural change, warning that without confronting monopolization and political capture, journalism will remain a struggle for survival. Despite differing perspectives, there was also a shared call to reimagine the media as both an educational space and a strategic field of democratic struggle.

Here, we list the main findings from the report:

• Media freedom is structurally constrained; legal pressure, ownership concentration, and political control shape the field. To safeguard journalism's democratic role, plural ownership and effective enforcement of existing regulations (e.g. the press law) are essential.

• Legal risks (e.g. cases related to the new legislation on "disinformation" or "suspended sentences"), economic fragility, and platform monopolies (ads/distribution) undermine viability. It is vital to diversify revenue (reader support, memberships, grants) and ensure fairer access to public funds as well as establishing collective bargaining and safer working conditions.

• Democracy is seen as present but incomplete. Participation often narrows to elections; daily civic freedoms feel precarious. Protecting access to information and de-criminalizing routine reporting are prerequisites for healthier participation.

• Journalism remains a public service first. Across groups, its core mission is to inform for the public interest. Ethical standards and verification are the practices that rebuild trust and democratic impact.

• Trust has shifted from institutions to people. Audiences rely on X/YouTube and named journalists, while mistrusting "centre media." Transparency (sources, funding), cross-checking, and slow/explanatory formats can rebuild outlet-level trust.

• Representation is still lacking: Minorities, women, and LGBTI+s are under- or misrepresented. Inclusiveness and editorial safeguards against hate speech should be standard.

• Media proliferation is not real media plurality: The number of media outlets may have grown, but uniformity and polarization have deepened.Top of Form Anti-monopoly measures, interoperable distribution, and collaborative editorial desks can turn variety into actual diversity.

• Reader engagement and curiosity are decisive: Specifically media workers underlined that public support is largely absent, many readers expect free news, weakening sustainability. At the same time, a lack of societal curiosity was seen as limiting demand for in-depth journalism. Strengthening reader contributions, subscriptions, and civic engagement is therefore essential for the future of media.

• Future outlook: Despite pessimism, participants see opportunity in coalitions and collaborations among journalists, CSOs, academia, the arts, and in formats that educate and persistently follow issues. Collective action, unions, and audience backing are central to resilience.

The number of media outlets may have grown, but uniformity and polarization have deepened.

I.
INTRODUCTION

The second phase of the *Future of the Media* research includes focus groups with media workers and citizens. The aim is to collect qualitative data on their views and opinions regarding the current situation and trends in media and democracy, and to analyse this data in greater depth by comparing it with the findings from the first phase of the research.

This phase aimed to explore how citizens and media workers perceive the role of media in a democratic society, how they interpret the trends identified in the first phase, and what their expectations are for the future of media and democracy. In addition, a control group was included—composed of individuals with high cultural and social capital and influence who actively engage in public discourse but are not directly involved in media production. This group helped to place media trends in a broader societal context, offering deeper reflections on the media's democratic role, and providing insights into societal changes that could affect media and democracy.

In this context, for the case of Turkey, the first focus group meeting was held in Istanbul with seven citizens aged 18 to 35 on 22 May 2025. The second focus group meeting was held online on 28 May 2025 with media workers. The third session, held on 30 May 2025, brought together ten citizens with high cultural and social capital and influence, serving as a control group of individuals who help shape the country's cultural and intellectual life. The final focus group was conducted in Mardin on 5 June 2025 with citizens aged between 35 and 65. In this group, due to the region's demographics, participants responded to questions by referring specifically to Kurdish media.[1]

In each focus group, after a wide range of views had been expressed, participants shared recommendations and articulated the kind of media they want, both from the perspective of citizens and media workers. The findings from these focus groups will inform recommendations on safeguarding the democratic roles of journalism and the media, and we believe they will contribute meaningfully to media development in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey. This study is a part of the regional project "Our Media: A Civil Society Action to Generate Media Literacy and Activism, Counter Polarization and Promote Dialogue", implemented by nine media organizations from the Western Balkans, Turkey, and Slovenia in the period 2023–2026.

1 More details about the focus groups can be found in Annex 1, which constitutes an integral part of this text.

II.

CITIZENS' OPINIONS ON MEDIA, JOURNALISM, AND DEMOCRACY

The participants' contributions regarding the current state of journalism in Turkey align closely with the findings of the report published within the scope of the Our Media project (Aydınlı, 2024). While the focus groups conducted in Istanbul, Mardin, and with citizens with high cultural and social capital and influence revealed certain nuances, participants' evaluations overall converged with those of media workers. Within this framework, legal pressures, economic fragility, and political control emerged as the key themes, alongside monopolized ownership, fragile trust and audience disengagement (specifically mentioned by some media workers), and persistent gaps in representation and inclusivity.

2.1. ON MEDIA FREEDOM

In Istanbul, views on media freedom varied. Some noted individual effort despite limits: "I don't truly believe the media is very free… but I have witnessed journalists who genuinely put effort" (Female, 21, Istanbul). Others pointed to direct political pressure: "once you touch the edges of power, the sound is cut off" (Male, 25, Istanbul) and ownership conflicts: "Media bosses business interests are not solely the media" (Male, 35, Istanbul). Young participants offered vivid examples of fragility of freedom: "There's actually more freedom than the government allows, but of course, there are limits. During the earthquake, we saw Twitter completely shut down" (Female, 21, Istanbul).

Some reframed "media freedom" by separating platforms from journalists: the media may be free, but journalists are not; content can be shared instantly, yet reactions and treatment curb the individual's freedom (Female, 20, Istanbul). The gap between being able to speak and bearing the consequences was stressed: "The media is free in Turkey. Because today you can report on *Rudaw* [Kurdish media outlet], *TRT Kurdî* [PSB's Kurdish Broadcasting Channel], or *Habertürk* [centred media]." But afterwards, as the saying goes, "in Turkey

you can say anything [referring to the "freedom of speech"] yet there is no guarantee against the consequences of what you say" (Male, 22, Istanbul). Another view linked the absence of media freedom to algorithmic polarization: feeds keep showing like-minded content, distancing people from others' views and underscoring that "the more this happens, the clearer it becomes that there is no real freedom" (Male, 28, Istanbul).

"In Turkey you can say anything yet there is no guarantee against the consequences of what you say."

Mardin participants aged over 35 said they follow Kurdish media outlets that face heavier pressure and violations, highlighting how media experiences diverge by region, demographics, and politics. One participant observed a sharp decline in media freedom sustained by "monopolies (Female, 55, Mardin), while another argued that the media should be "as independent as the legislature and the executive" - a force that helps hold society together- and described it as an indispensable pillar of coexistence (Male, 43, Mardin). In the Mardin focus group, a commonly shared view was that the media once felt more visible and open to debate, but now even its existence is questioned. As one participant put it, "We're not even sure if the media really exists anymore" (Male, 48, Mardin).

One participant emphasized the role of politics and economics in shaping the position of the media, stating: "The same mechanisms that shape the country, politics, and the economy have also affected the media in the same way [...] I believe there must be a revolution in the media as well" (Female, 39, Mardin). Another also reflected on the audience's role, with one participant asking: "…but is there really a sense of curiosity in society?" (Male, 43, Mardin). What stood out in the Mardin group, however, was the emphasis on courage, revealing the truth, and representing the people.

One participant from the Istanbul focus group described Turkey's media as split into two camps—right and left—with no space where both sides meet, hear each other, and reach conclusions (Female, 20, Istanbul). Some participants drew attention to the weak connection between the media and the street: "The realities of the street do not align with the characteristics of the media… even the opposition media needs to create its own Müge Anlı[2]" (Male, 35, İstanbul); "There is no media that truly covers Turkey, it only reports what happens in Istanbul. Maybe it could look a bit more at the provinces" (Male, 22, İstanbul).

"There is no media that truly covers Turkey, it only reports what happens in Istanbul…"

2 Müge Anlı is a Turkish television presenter, best known for her programme Müge Anlı ile Tatlı Sert, by addressing missing persons and crime cases while shaping public debates around "justice" and "morality".

2.2. THE MEDIA'S DEMOCRATIC DILEMMA

Participants in Mardin argued that as Turkey's democratic framework has slid toward anti-democratic ground, independent outlets trying to operate face heavy censorship and interference (Female, 44, Mardin). They added that the core problem is access to reliable news, "in this country, one must use X to get accurate news," a dire sign (Female, 39, Mardin).

In the focus group with participants of high cultural and social capital and influence, the discussion of the media's democratic dilemma was more conceptual and in-depth; the entanglement of media with capital and politics, as well as ethical violations, came to the forefront. The problematic nature of neutrality and objectivity was also raised. Writer Ahmet Bilge, drawing on his experience of spending 30 years in prison, argued that "there is no neutral media," adding that every media outlet will have a political preference and that neutrality is utopian. In response, actress Tülin Özen argued that neutrality and a common language are indispensable for democracy, stating that she prefers a media that is "informative rather than emotion-driven". Researcher and writer Bilge Çetinkaya and the capital-entangled ownership model of the media was criticized, with the view that outlets like Evrensel, BirGün, and bianet still offer comparatively wider space for free discussion. However, artist and photographer Üzüm Derin Solak pointed out that censorship and self-censorship increasingly force the opposition press into a more political line, which weakens "inclusivity". Writer Ayşegül Devecioğlu emphasized that neutrality cannot be taken as absolute, arguing that the media can only sustain its democratic role if readers themselves participate as "subjects of life". In parallel, artist Nazım Hikmet Richard Dikbaş underlined that this role requires not only speaking out against those currently in power but maintaining the ethical capacity to "speak against all forms of power," noting that during the peace process the media's drift into hate speech showed how easily this criterion can be lost. The academic Sema Erder drew attention to politicization by stating that every media professional has become "a gatekeeper for a political party" and the public conversation reduces "the media" to politics, while most people actually tune into TV dramas. According to her, polarization fatigue is pushing them away from newspapers and news. She also noted that "there is no media ethics". Writer Rober Koptaş explained that the crisis of democracy in Turkey has deeply affected the media, saying, "Unfortunately, our democracy is in a terrible state, and so our media has suffered from it as well". A final note urged the media to avoid over-politicizing daily life, so citizens can stay informed without politics subsuming every moment (Mehmet Mahsum Oral, writer, İstanbul).

Inequality of access was also emphasized with the remark: "When I walk into the grocery store in my neighbourhood, it is very disturbing to see people who

cannot access the information that we struggle to reach on television" (Dikbaş, artist, Istanbul). It was stressed that "ninety-nine percent of the media is in the hands of the government," and that functions are therefore not fulfilled (Ayşegül Devecioğlu, writer, Istanbul). Hate speech and a lack of inclusivity were raised as concerns: "one of Turkey's biggest problems is hatred… How is the media able to engage in self-criticism in this regard?" (Üzüm Derin Solak, artist, Istanbul).

"One of Turkey's biggest problems is hatred… How is the media able to engage in self-criticism in this regard?"

2.3. ON JOURNALISM AND ITS DEMOCRATIC ROLE

Participants offered varied definitions of journalists amid platform diversification: from "people who work with extraordinary patience" to the view that "it's no longer easy to say in one way what a journalist is" (Female, 21; Male, 25, Istanbul).

"It's no longer easy to say in one way what a journalist is."

Journalists active on YouTube or social media were valued for access and interaction, bringing to the fore questions the mainstream overlooks and yielding more direct answers (Male, 28, Istanbul). The gap between the official definition of journalism and its actual influence was also emphasized:

> The Directorate of Communications gives out press cards, I think. But Nevşin Mengü[3] doesn't have this card. Yet she has, what, 1 or 2 million followers. And in fact, she can reach far more people than most journalists. (Male, 22, Istanbul)

The expectation of "neutrality" was expressed: "As a reader, if I really want to follow a journalist, I would expect them to remain a bit more neutral" (Female, 21, Istanbul).

In the Mardin focus group, discussions were shaped largely by experiences of conflict, repression, and invisibility. Journalism was defined in terms of truth and uncovering hidden realities: "To me, a journalist is someone who can uncover what's being hidden, especially when the victims are vulnerable, like a little girl[4] in the southeast" (Female, 40, Mardin). Another participant described the journalist as a "representative of the public," stressing that they should represent society rather than the state (Female, 55, Mardin). Journalism was seen as shaping public perception, but also as courage and sacrifice, "risking

3 Nevşin Mengü is a journalist who formerly worked in the-then mainstream media and now practices journalism on YouTube.

4 Participant referring to the murder of Eight-year-old Narin Güran in 2024. Narin went missing on August 21, 2024, and her body was discovered 19 days later in a creek near her home. In the ensuing trial, several family members and a neighbor were tried, with the court convicting the mother, uncle, and brother of participating in her murder, though the motive and the exact perpetrator remain disputed in the case. https://bianet.org/etiket/narin-guran-119506

death to expose the truth", with a core task to "make things visible", uncover facts, and "let society interpret them" (Male, 48; Male, 43; Male, 37, Mardin). A further view drew on personal anecdotes: that journalism is less an official status than on-the-ground witnessing, informed by an activist friend, and that pervasive interference has hollowed out the "journalist" label (Male, 46, Mardin). On the other hand, one participant also emphasized that journalism contains ambiguity and contradictions:

> There's what should be, and there's what is. To me, a journalist is a messenger. If you asked me what a soldier is, I could answer more easily—it's the same everywhere. Journalism isn't: some have died for it, some have used it for political gain, some have even made public addresses and got people killed. For example, Tahir Elçi.[5] In the end, it's our lived experience that defines these concepts. […] We see what we see. That's why, in this geography, you won't arrive at a clear definition of journalism. (Female, 39, Mardin)

The ethical dimension was underscored: a journalist is whoever conveys information accurately, grounded in documents and professional ethics (Female, 44, Mardin). One participant in Mardin (Male, 37), who is himself a journalist, noted the ongoing efforts of independent journalists. However, sustaining alternative media was seen as a constant struggle:

> It is the struggle of a handful of people working under precarious conditions… A few committed people try to keep it going, but it's nearly impossible under these circumstances. Hundreds of our colleagues are working in very poor conditions, and most have already lost their jobs. (Male, 37, Mardin)

In parallel, another participant highlighted a particularly significant point—regardless of whether one works in pro-government outlets or in independent media, journalists face the same risks: "If someone working at *A Haber*, someone working at *Sputnik*, or someone working at *bianet* can be dismissed by the same method, then the problem is serious" (Male, 48, Mardin).

One perspective also was added by a participant in the focus group with high cultural and social capital and influence who framed journalism in terms of access to information that shapes our political and social lives: "Despite heavy constraints, democracy means securing that access, and the power to act on it" (Bilge Seçkin Çetinkaya, researcher and writer, Istanbul).

5 Tahir Elçi was a Kurdish human rights lawyer and the president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, known for his advocacy on Kurdish rights and freedom of expression in Turkey. He was assassinated in 2015 while publicly calling for peace, becoming a symbolic figure in the struggle for justice and democracy.

It was emphasized that news is more than something to consume; readers share responsibility—asking what to do with it and which news is necessary—and the media needs internal checks against uniformity and hate speech (Ayşegül Devecioğlu, writer, Istanbul). It was also stressed that the media should be the citizen's voice, not yield to fast, superficial journalism; ratings push quick, emotional content, whereas in-depth files, repeated questioning, and persistent agenda-setting should prevail (Tülin Özen, actress, Istanbul).

It was added that the coming together of citizens from different identities forms an indestructible power and that the media's duty is to enable this encounter and create a shared protective space. At the same time, attention was drawn to disinformation and information pollution: "There is an old saying from the Chinese: if one dog barks at a shadow, 10,000 dogs will turn it into reality. One of our tests today is not to become one of those 10,000 dogs—to resist it, to prevent it from becoming reality, and to question it" (Mehmet Mahsum Oral, writer, Istanbul).

Journalism emerges as both potent and perilous: its historic force in Turkey is such that repression has often targeted journalists precisely because their work matters (Bilge Seçkin Çetinkaya). Participants contrasted a more pluralistic press culture of the 1990s with today's narrower field, arguing that genuine opposition requires openness to diverse voices (Ahmet Bilge). This potency carries a cost, those who insisted "we will publish" paid with their lives, a reminder that press freedom has been won and lost in blood (Mehmet Mahsum Oral). Against this backdrop, the information environment is increasingly shaped by manipulation and performative identity politics (Rober Koptaş). The audience experience suffers too: the relentless "breaking news" cadence fractures attention, erodes deep reading and analysis, and entrenches a paralysing sense of helplessness that turns citizens into passive spectators (Hülya Adak).

Lastly, younger participants in Istanbul commented extensively when asked about the decline in journalism students. They viewed this decrease as both a reflection of broader pressures on the media and a sign of shifting definitions of journalism itself, which is why many considered it "normal." Participants emphasized that pursuing journalism today carries high risks, from precarious employment to the threat of prosecution for even minor social media posts. In such an environment, young people may avoid journalism programmes not only because of state pressure but also because the boundaries of journalism have blurred: television hosts such as Müge Anlı[6] can claim the title of journalist, while anyone with an audience on social media can produce content. This redefinition makes journalism appear less like a stable profession and more like a risky path:

Participants emphasized that pursuing journalism today carries high risks, from precarious employment to the threat of prosecution for even minor social media posts.

6 See note 2 above.

> If I study journalism, today I am in danger when reporting the news… And right now, there are tons of our friends who have been detained just because of a social media post.[7] We keep saying, 'they can't arrest this many people,' but they do. So the decrease is normal. But does it have a negative effect? I don't think so. (Female, 21, İstanbul)

Journalism was also seen as an ambiguous academic path: many graduates pivot to other fields, and mismatches between market demand and graduate numbers deter young people who do not want to study four years and face unemployment (Male, 22, Istanbul).

2.4. DEMOCRACY IN QUESTION

Istanbul participants see democracy with mixed pride and critique: some saw democracy as enduring ("no matter what, there will be democracy" and "the best thing for a country)," yet "incomplete" in Turkey, especially on minority representation (Female, 21; Male, 25, Istanbul). Others said it is largely "democracy-ish," limited to elections and forgotten in daily life (Male, 35; Male, 22, Istanbul).

Voting was the main form of participation, while protests and direct engagement were kept at arm's length, "I voted in all elections… three different parties," versus "We're tired of protesting" (Male, 25; Female, 21, Istanbul).

The overall mood was also described as one of deep mistrust: "I hate all politicians… we have no safety"; this sentiment also extended to the media, as participants noted that interest in events: One says media "does not create lasting change," and one notes that "there is no collective improvement" without impartial outlets (Female, 21; Male, 22; Female, 21, Istanbul).

In addition to their experiences, they also discussed the definition of media at a conceptual level. For example, one participant considers that media risks becoming a profession detached from society:

> Just as democracy at this moment is so contested, which democracy? The one represented by Putin's bloc, the new neo-fascism represented by Trump since you are talking about things that will be shaped according to these and take positions according to these, they [media] come into a field that is more of a profession not very relevant to society. (Male, 48, Mardin)

7 On 19 March 2025, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu was detained, triggering large-scale protests across Turkey. In Istanbul, the protests centred on Saraçhane Square in front of the metropolitan municipality, with thousands gathering nightly. Police launched harsh crackdowns, and journalists covering the protests faced violence and arrests.This participant was referring to detentions of those protesting Imamoğlu's arrest. See more: https://bianet.org/tag/crackdown-on-imamoglu-120844

Some located Turkey's crisis within global shifts ("Trump-style democracy,"), and judged Turkey "never" democratic (Male, 48, Mardin); others flatly denied the media's existence (Female, 40, Mardin). Lived repression anchored these views: losing a job by decree was cited as proof that "democracy's strings" are pulled by a single hand (Male, 46, Mardin). For some, democracy was reduced to manners and restraint (Male, 43, Mardin), while voting remained its only visible form.

One participant offered a striking personal account, describing democracy in Turkey as a paradox that exists only on paper but punishes those who try to exercise it:

> … Any political party can be founded, any union can be established, but if you become a member, you are expelled; if you join, you end up in prison. Yet it exists. For example, in 2015 there was the ISIS massacre at Ankara Train Station. At that time, the Republic of Turkey declared three days of mourning. The state can declare three days of mourning, but I was expelled for joining its strike. That is democracy, democracy for itself, in fact. I'm unionized, I was dismissed by decree, I was expelled for exercising my democratic rights. We are in fact the outcome of Turkey's democracy. It exists, but if you use it, you're punished. (Female, 39, Mardin)

"I'm unionized, I was dismissed by decree, I was expelled for exercising my democratic rights."

III.

REFLECTIONS OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS ON THE IDENTIFIED TRENDS AND RISKS IN THE FIRST PHASE OF THE RESEARCH

As the latest report (Aydınlı, 2024) has revealed, the media in Turkey is in a multidimensional crisis. Legal pressures, economic fragility, monopolized ownership structures, and the control of digital platforms seriously threaten the sustainability of journalism. The testimonies of media workers both confirm these findings and add some new dimensions.

Participants emphasized that the legal pressures highlighted in the report are among the most exhausting factors in the field. In particular, the practice of suspended sentences (HAGB) and "disinformation" cases[8] are a constant threat for journalists. "I was sentenced to one year and two months because of a tweet… In such a situation, other journalists refrain from showing solidarity" which points directly to legal pressure as a defining challenge" (Burcu Günaydın, Independent Journalist, Antakya).

In parallel with the trends highlighted in the report, journalism was said to be increasingly criminalized. Citing the detentions of reporters at the 19 March İmamoğlu protests[9], one participant noted that "they are trying to count making news as a crime." It was also outlined that the layered forms of repression—ownership changes driving economic pressure, followed by legal pressure, near-daily trials, and weak organizing despite unions—which

8 In October 2024, a new crime was added to the Turkish Criminal Code under the title of "publicly spreading information that misleads." However, the scope of the provision was left ambiguous: See http://bianet.org/haber/turkiye-s-new-disinformation-law-explained-268523

9 See note 7 above. The participant is referring to the detention of journalists following the protests against İmamoğlu's arrest.

ultimately strengthens government leverage (Fatih Aça, Editor, ArtıGerçek, Istanbul).

Similarly, it was noted that nearly everything published in the media is scrutinized line by line, read in bad faith, and then weaponized against journalists under the Anti-Terror Law or other statutes (Uğur Koç, Editor, BirGün Newspaper).

Although this picture looks bleak, journalists stated that the democratic function of the profession is still vital, and that solidarity and organization can be the strongest line of resistance against pressures. One participant summarized it with the following words:

> Journalists are employed under insecure conditions, with low wages and flexible hours. The army of unemployed journalists is constantly growing. There has never been another period in which insecurity and pressure have become so severe. The organized struggle of journalists is essential; stronger contact with press professional organizations is necessary." (Vecih Cuzdan, Responsible Managing Editor, bianet)

These words reinforced the report's findings on the unsustainability of media independent from all power centres.

Similarly, another participant stated that the media is trapped in the government–capital–judiciary triangle, and that in this environment, alternative media initiatives have emerged with the claim of "delivering more accurate and cleaner information to the public" (Burcu Günaydın, independent journalist, Antakya). Recalling that what happens in the Kurdish-populated cities can only become visible thanks to Kurdish journalists, she emphasized that this function is directly connected to democracy. At the same time, she pointed out that re-establishing a relationship of trust with the public is also a fundamental problem. In this way, while the connection of alternative media with democracy was highlighted, the statement, "If truths are being killed somewhere, then what happens to those living tied to those truths no longer even has news value" (Diren Yurtsever, Editor-in-Chief, Mezopotamya Agency, Istanbul), showed that pressures target not only journalists but society as well.

"If truths are being killed somewhere, then what happens to those living tied to those truths no longer even has news value."

It was emphasized that due to political pressures, many local reporters lose their jobs and are forced to continue journalism independently through social media. At the same time, the number of freelance journalists like herself is growing, but the lack of professional identity and press cards makes them even more vulnerable. Therefore, Günaydın argued, there is a need for a separate form of organization for freelancers.

A contrasting view held that the gap with the public has narrowed as journalists now share the same poverty and precarity, yet decades of experience have eroded faith in solidarity. Compared with a more democratic late-1990s and strong early-2000s newsrooms (when even writing "PKK"[10] marked a threshold), today looks worse—though she still believes the profession will outlive platforms: "TikTok will die but journalism will live" (Nazan Özcan, Editor, Agos newspaper, Istanbul).

"TikTok will die but journalism will live."

Digitalization and platform monopoly emerged as a particularly prominent theme. One participant noted that independent media have been weakened by a dramatic drop in newspaper sales, Google's monopolizing power, and cuts to advertising from the Press Advertisement Agency, echoing the findings of the previous report. The same participant stated that union bargaining cannot shield journalists from platform power (Facebook/Google), and that disorganization pushes many toward individual channels such as YouTube; weak copyright and digital rules leave them exposed, demanding new institutional frameworks, while AI raises fears that the "human factor" will be sidelined in news production (Uğur Koç, Editor, BirGün newspaper, Istanbul).

There were also some points raised that opened up new perspectives beyond the report's findings. Özcan highlighted a stark reader-support gap: even opposition audiences resist small monthly contributions, and young people now avoid journalism for fear of prosecution—undercutting both sustainability and the talent pipeline. She also rejected the idea that journalists are "out of touch," noting they face the same economic hardships as the public; the deeper problem is public indifference and collapsing readership. The old habit of buying papers has given way to an expectation that "news is free online," prompting the question "who are we writing for?" and eroding journalists' social value, Özcan stressed.

"The old habit of buying papers has given way to an expectation that "news is free online," prompting the question "who are we writing for?" and eroding journalists' social value, Özcan stressed."

After the earthquake, Bodur said that the local press collapsed economically, "journalists can't get by; local papers can't stay afloat". Aça described rising repression, "we report a journalist's trial almost daily". Yurtsever called the media a public-opinion control tool within the government–capital–state triangle; Cuzdan from bianet underscored agenda-setting power and the journalist Bodur added that in crises, access to information is a precondition for democracy. Overall, experiences converge on legal pressure, economic fragility, and political control, varying in intensity by locale. Bodur also argued that the media's democratic value hinges on informing, without information, its contribution is limited or non-existent, and that trust rests on a public-oriented journalism.

10 The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization in Turkey. Özcan pointed out that in this context they did not use the state's designation "terrorist organization PKK," but only referred to the PKK as the abbreviation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

In conclusion, the insights of media workers largely confirm the findings of the Our Media report: legal pressures, economic crisis, monopolized ownership, state control through public advertising and regulations, and the decisive power of digital platforms. Yet participants also introduced new dimensions to this framework: most notably the absence of reader support, the younger generation's distance from the profession, and the potential threats posed by artificial intelligence, which stand out as original contributions drawn from current experiences in the field.

IV.

CITIZENS' OPINIONS ON MEDIA USE AND TRUST

Young participants from İstanbul showed low trust in "mainstream" (or "pro-government") institutions but relatively higher trust in transparent, source-citing alternatives (e.g. bianet) (Male, 25, İstanbul). Many cross-check news across opposing outlets, trust specific journalists (e.g. İsmail Saymaz, Nevşin Mengü) more than some media organisations, and see economic–political interests as further eroding credibility (Female 2, 21, İstanbul; Female 1, 21, Istanbul). They saw social media as crucial for agenda-setting in crises ("like Ekrem İmamoğlu's being taken away") but noted rising bans and limits ("we constantly use it… but banned content has increased") (Male, 28, İstanbul). Some questioned whether YouTube shifts by ex-TV hosts are innovation or self-interest: "I'm not sure whether this is a social innovation or just something that serves Fatih Altaylı's[11] own personal interest" (Male, 22, İstanbul), while others called the platforms a "garbage dump" that fuels unverified content and mob-style "lynching" (Female, 20, İstanbul).

One participant recalled the journalists who lost their lives in the 1990s, saying they were likely killed because they revealed the truth.

Focus group participants in Mardin also described a shift in media consumption, shaped by declining trust in mainstream media and the rise of digital platforms. One participant recalled the journalists who lost their lives in the 1990s, saying they were likely killed because they revealed the truth (Male, 48, Mardin), and remembered newspapers such as *Yeni Yüzyıl* and *Radikal*. With the advent of the internet, outlets such as *Özgür Politika* came to the fore. A key observation was expressed as follows: "What once provided news has turned into an ideological machine, this applies to Kurds as well as to Turks. It has become a propaganda machine" (Male, 48, Mardin).

11 Fatih Altaylı, who has been active in Turkey's media environment for over three decades, is known for his work as a programme host and news director at various mainstream media outlets. In recent years, he has shifted his focus to running his own news website and YouTube channel, where he continues to engage his large following. He was arrested on 22 June on charges of allegedly threatening the president but continues to draw significant attention despite his incarceration. https://bianet.org/haber/fatih-altayli-tutuklandi-308679

4.1. PROLIFERATION OF MEDIA OUTLETS

Participants in Istanbul said that the proliferation of outlets has broken monopolies and sped up access, but it has also turbocharged disinformation and turned a sizeable share of "journalism" into YouTube-style commentary. Publishers such as *bianet* and *Aposto* were seen as more reliable. One participant argued that the share of uncritical content producers in Turkey is very high and suggested layered oversight to impose light quality limits on this multi-platform environment (Female, 20, Istanbul). Another said, "In one sense it's good; it broke monopolization… But, for example, *MİSVAK*[12] produces a fake story every day or twists a report… disinformation has also increased" (Male, 22, Istanbul). On funding, participants highlighted Google/YouTube's ad monopoly, arguing that if pro-government *Turkuaz* and opposition *Sözcü* had stood together against Google, an alternative model might have emerged (Male, 35, Istanbul).

The diversity is seen only superficial.

Participants in Mardin stated that media diversity remains limited to a numerical increase and that alternative outlets often "resemble one another" (Male, 43; Male, 37, Mardin). The general view emphasized that a large number of media organizations is meaningful only under conditions of independence and democracy. Two participants even described the rise of opposition media outlets as the construction of a counter-partisan media (Male, 48; Female, 55, Mardin) and the diversity is seen only superficial (Male, 46; Male, 43, Mardin). Despite stylistic differences between independent YouTube voices (e.g. Nevşin Mengü) and pro-government TV (A Haber), Kurdish regions remain invisible. If a tree were cut down in Cudi [a mountain in Kurdish-populated region], no one would speak up, showing that it is not the number of channels but media ethics and the political climate that determine what gets covered and how (Female, 39; Male, 46, Mardin).

4.2. CHANGES IN CONSUMPTION HABITS

Participants in Istanbul emphasized that conscious news consumption and the production of quality content are necessary for media diversity to be beneficial. While they generally viewed diversity positively, they shared concerns with participants in Mardin, particularly highlighting the risks of information pollution and disinformation.

In the Istanbul group, news use centred on digital diversity: Instagram (Female, 21, Istanbul), TikTok, YouTube—and even *TRT*, *Habertürk* [TV Channels] and WhatsApp channels (Male, 22, Istanbul) were primary sources. A smaller share

12 Misvak is a satirical online platform in Turkey, known for producing memes, caricatures, and short texts that often align with pro-government or conservative viewpoints.

still read *Cumhuriyet* or *Aposto*, while many relied on alternative outlets and independent journalists (Medyascope, bianet), with video news/commentary part of daily routines (Male, 35; Male, 25, Istanbul). Older participants in Mardin reported a long-term shift from mainstream to digital due to collapsing trust, with social media—especially X—the primary source, saying "people now turn to X just to get accurate news" (Female, 44, Mardin). They cited independent outlets (e.g. *Medyascope*, other YouTube channels) and Kurdish media (*Özgür Politika*, *Yeni Yaşam*) alongside *BBC*, *Reuters*, *AFP*, *DW*, and *Rudaw*, while also relying on peer reporters for off-the-record updates (Female, 55, Mardin).

Many Kurdish outlets are banned or blocked, so they are followed on X (Male, 43, Mardin). A note of nostalgia also surfaced: recalling an earlier media era, names such as Hasan Cemal[13] of *Milliyet* and Mehmet Ali Birand[14] were mentioned, yet participants described low engagement with the media. "I don't interact with any media outlet," said a 39-year-old woman from Mardin. Fear, particularly around following Kurdish media, reinforced this distance: "Everyone is afraid; it's obvious why we're unemployed" (Male, 37, Mardin). Overall, trust clustered around individual journalists and a few independent platforms rather than institutions.

4.3. REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

Participants agreed that media representation is inadequate: minorities are mostly visible only in small independent outlets, while mainstream brands overlook them (Female 1, 21, İstanbul) and there may be a bit of "positive discrimination", one suggested (Male, 25, İstanbul). They also pointed to structural issues—over-centralized control (Male, 25, İstanbul) and to lived experience, noting that women face sexist backlash when they speak (Female 2, 21, İstanbul). Coverage was seen as "Istanbul-centric" rather than nationwide, with calls for more attention to the provinces (Male, 22, İstanbul). Burcu Günaydın, an independent journalist from Antakya, takes a highly critical stance on the issue of minority representation. "I don't know if minorities are represented, but if they are, they are represented incorrectly," she says, emphasizing the problematic language used particularly around Syrians, Armenians, and Greeks. Journalist from Birgün newspaper Fatih Aça draws a relatively optimistic picture regarding the voice of minorities. According to him, although in the last decade mainstream media has completely fallen into the hands of the government and pressures have increased, "a new generation of journalists has emerged who aim to speak on democracy and have developed their own language" (Fatih Aça, editor, Birgün).

13 Hasan Cemal is one of Turkey's leading journalists and authors, generally identified with a pro democracy stance.

14 Mehmet Ali Birand was a pioneering Turkish journalist, TV anchor, and author best known for the influential current-affairs programme "32. Gün."

V.
CITIZENS' NEEDS AND DEMANDS

Views diverged by place and generation; young participants in Istanbul emphasized content diversity, open data, and platform formats, while older participants in Mardin stressed financial/structural independence and safety. Fear of reprisal, opaque funding, and an "Istanbul-centric" news agenda were cited as practical barriers that blunt both participation and trust.

5.1. GENERAL DEMANDS

Young participants in Istanbul focused their content expectations on diversity, transparency, and an approach that would reduce polarization. Another emphasized that the problem of financing affects the quality of content: "How the media's financing is provided… in a world where the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is one of the biggest advertisers, it makes it so that whoever owns the municipality cannot really produce free news about it" (Male, 35, Istanbul). The demand for cultural content also stood out: "I think content in culture and the arts should also diversify. For example, content about chess" (Female, 21, Istanbul); while another commented, "an increase in the number of video news could be beneficial…" (Male, 25, Istanbul). The need for content that would break polarization was also expressed: "Content that will make us believe there are not so many things that should make us break each other or become polarized." The same participant added: "A document should be made accessible to us—anything that isn't private and can legally be shared should be provided" (Male, 28, Istanbul).

There were also concrete demands regarding social issues, as one participant said, "I want more content on women's rights" (Female, 21, Istanbul), while another pointed to the representation of minorities with the words, "Greeks, Armenians… wasn't Istanbul originally that of the Greeks? of the Armenians too" (Male, 25, Istanbul), calling for historical diversity to be brought to the agenda. It was also emphasized that transparency and more space for international content are necessary.

Older participants in Mardin related content quality more to financial and structural independence. A participant said, "I am in favour of financial

freedom… of the media being independent from private capital… an independent state support would make the media freer" (Male, 37, Mardin), thus defending state support. At the same time, some noted that state support is not realistic in Turkey, and therefore international funds and the support of democratic countries are important (Male, 37; Male, 43, Mardin) and added: "the education provided for children with special needs is so limited and short, whereas these children actually need much more. This is what I want to see" (Female, 40, Mardin). In terms of content, participants highlighted especially women's journalism, documentary and cinema, education and programmes for special-needs children, animal rights, and gender inequality. Support should prioritize independent outlets and underrepresented beats—women's journalism, documentary/cinema, education, animal rights, gender inequality—with a special focus on making Kurdish, feminist, and LGBTI+ voices visible (Female, 44, Mardin).

Support should prioritize independent outlets and underrepresented beats—women's journalism, documentary/cinema, education, animal rights, gender inequality—with a special focus on making Kurdish, feminist, and LGBTI+ voices visible.

5.2. CITIZENS DEMANDS FOR INDEPENDENT AND OPPOSITION MEDIA

When asked which media outlets under financial pressure were more important to sustain, young participants in Istanbul predominantly highlighted independent and rights-oriented media. One participant stated this priority clearly: "I think media outlets that protect rights should be supported" (Female, 21, Istanbul). Some participants noted that journalists who moved to YouTube are advantaged through advertising revenue, saying, "especially [journalist] Fatih Altaylı is quite visible, I don't think [journalist] Nevşin Mengü is struggling much either" (Female, 21, Istanbul), expressing that these figures are in a more advantageous position to survive. Others advocated for strengthening "impartial and independent outlets in line with international standards" (Male, 28, İstanbul). One participant pointed to solidarity on a global scale, saying, "all opposition, independent media sides need to be provided with information… you must ensure a common stance against global advertising tracks like Google and YouTube" (Male, 35, Istanbul). Within this framework, participants expressed their reaction to the closure of *Gazete Duvar* [the-then independent media] while outlets such as *Yeni Akit* [pro-government] or *Misvak* [pro-government] continue to exist, stressing that readers also need to develop support mechanisms. The role of the state was also discussed; one participant suggested a fairer distribution of public resources, saying, "just as the state collects taxes for *TRT,* it can also allocate an additional budget for these media outlets" (Female, 20, Istanbul).

Participants in Mardin evaluated financial sustainability from different perspectives. One participant noted that even supporting the media has

become risky in Turkey, framing democracy as the freedom to stand by the press you value:

> Frankly, if they are publishing for us, it places a responsibility on us to support them. But you can't take the risk, because there's no guarantee that even the help you give won't be turned against you with insinuations of terrorism. Yes, this outlet is publishing for me. I, too, feel responsible. But you're not only taking a financial risk. […] You can't even access the website, let alone help. […] In a way, this is what democracy is: the freedom to support the media outlet you value. (Male, 48, Mardin)

Frankly, if they are publishing for us, it places a responsibility on us to support them. But you can't take the risk, because there's no guarantee that even the help you give won't be turned against you with insinuations of terrorism.

Another participant said that sustainability should be ensured not through public resources but directly through the demand and support of society: "Financial support should be based not on a public resource but on the understanding that is in demand…" (Female, 55, Mardin). Another participant argued that the media should also be independent from private capital: "Independent state support would make the media freer" (Male, 37, Mardin). However, those who thought this is not realistic in Turkey pointed to the importance of international funds and the support of democratic countries (Male, 37, Mardin; Male, 43, Mardin).

VI.

OPINIONS ON THE FUTURE OF MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

Young participants from İstanbul were split between cautious optimism and deep pessimism about the future. Some stressed the value of small gains and personal responsibility, arguing progress can spread even if Turkey "was never a paradise of democracy" (Male, 25, Istanbul). Others warned that when authorities perceive threats, restrictions intensify, and that "one-man" control over institutions, including the media, places fundamental freedoms at risk (Female, 21; Female, 20, Istanbul).

Mardin's 35+ participants framed the media's future around structural public-interest principles: bringing the rights of society and nature rights to the forefront, preserving a permanent watchdog role that questions any government, and dismantling monopolization that produces copy-paste headlines (Male, 46; Male, 37, Mardin). They called for a plural, non-monopolistic system and an independent media that can regain public trust and reputation (Female, 39; Female, 44, Mardin).

The group with high cultural and social capital and influence voiced stark pessimism: the world is worsening and no human-centred turn is expected; yet youth-driven workarounds to censorship—such as collective, unsigned internet fanzines—were seen as promising. Journalism is often reduced to survival, which calls for renewing the Utopia/Dystopia debate and articulating a line of resistance. Political and economic risks stifle expression: "if citizens speak as they wish, they are taken away", prompting demands for structural change: "the system must change". Participant also cites Spotify's removal of Grup Yorum's[15] songs, it was argued that older formats (cassettes/records) still matter (Nazım Hikmet Richard Dikbaş, artist, Istanbul).

15 Grup Yorum is an Istanbul-based political and revolutionary music group. On the grounds of protecting "national security and public order," at least 454 of the group's videos—published across 56 different YouTube channels between 2006 and 2024 and viewed a total of 205 million times—were blocked and made invisible in Turkey by YouTube. See https://bianet.org/haber/grup-yoruma-youtube-ve-spotify-da-erisim-engeli-son-sarki-kalana-kadar-307916

Another view tied the future of the media to life as a whole: with communication channels saturated by manipulation, answers lie in queer/feminist manoeuvres, "street language," and ground-level solidarity, keeping this voice permanent, and in art/media practice as both survival and social struggle (Üzüm Derin Solak, artist, Istanbul). It was argued that 22 years of rule have reshaped the media in the interest of power, assimilating free expression and breeding social mistrust; the remedy proposed was self-critique and breaking perception management through feminist methods and street-level language (Üzüm Derin Solak, artist, Istanbul).

The media's educational mission was underscored—"it teaches what we do not know", with a call to restore thinking skills and conceptual tools by rebuilding an appealing learning space. It was also described as a strategic arena to expose injustices in global supply chains through campaigns that blunt corporate ad budgets, turning media into a site of struggle and solidarity (Bilge Seçkin Çetinkaya, researcher and writer, Istanbul).

A strand of pessimism surfaced—idealizing a "more perfect" past—yet the proposed remedy was solidarity against discriminatory language, with a Kafka-inflected call to recognize and protect whatever is "not hell" (Mehmet Mahsum Oral, writer, Istanbul). The future of media and journalism in Turkey is seen likely to unfold under the shadow of populist authoritarianism—marked by closed-loop ties with institutional politics, deepening public distrust, polarized alternative outlets, and a shrinking public sphere where access to reliable information continues to erode (Sema Erder, academic, İstanbul). In response, a counter-argument stressed keeping hope alive through struggle, locating media within a tradition of resistance ("against the pessimism of the mind, take refuge in declared optimism"), using the "moss on rock" image to frame collective solidarity as a way to overcome individual vulnerability, and posing a forward-looking question: what alternative spaces beyond universities can attract young people to journalism and connect would-be changemakers to each other? (Rober Koptaş, writer, Istanbul).

The future of media and society was framed around coalition and solidarity, with the pandemic cited as proof that crises demand creative methods: "from every darkness, a light can emerge." Bridging civil society, academia, the arts, literature, and business, it was argued that ossified methods must give way to new solutions suited to new technologies and crises, alongside a shift from long-form to shorter, more accessible content (Hülya Adak, academic, Istanbul).

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VII.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The comparison across focus groups provides important insights into the different modes of participation and discussion dynamics. On the one hand, there are serious criticisms regarding current pressures, political polarization, and economic dependency. On the other hand, there is a belief that with a change in power, a more independent, impartial, and free media order could become possible. In addition, there is also hope in the opportunities that technological transformation and new media formats may bring.

On the one hand, there are serious criticisms regarding current pressures, political polarization, and economic dependency. On the other hand, there is a belief that with a change in power, a more independent, impartial, and free media order could become possible.

Young participants in Istanbul offered sharper, state-focused critiques, while those in Mardin interrogated "the media" itself calling for transformative change and noting that what was once visible and debatable is now concentrated in a few monopolies. While participants in Mardin framed the future of media through principled frameworks such as oversight of power, breaking monopolization, and ensuring independence, participants in Istanbul spoke more about the emotional climate of the future: some expressed hope for renewal, while others feared that pressures would only intensify. Lastly, the Mardin focus group, centred largely on regional and politically rooted historical discussions. The participants' higher average age and broader historical knowledge allowed for comparative analyses between past and present media. As a result, the debate moved beyond immediate concerns and took on a long-term perspective.

The focus group with media professionals was marked by a revisiting of existing problems and a critical examination of their root causes. Alongside this, questions regarding potential structural solutions were raised. While these discussions did not fully generate solution-oriented outcomes, they served a meaningful role in redefining problems and exploring possible ways forward. It was emphasized that the erosion of the media's public-interest function threatens the right to information for both journalists and society. A key finding was media workers' identification of declining reader interest and support as a core problem.

On the other hand, citizens with high cultural and social capital and influence focused more on politicization within the media, "neutrality", ethics, and power relations. In the latter, a broader societal evaluation emerged. Academics offered sociological frameworks; artists shared personal experiences that illustrated the media's impact on everyday life; and writers contributed

perspectives that combined realism with metaphor. In this way, the group highlighted the intersections between individual experiences and broader social processes.

All groups, however, shared the view that the media's function of informing the public and serving the public interest is a fundamental precondition of democracy, and that its weakening endangers the right to information for both journalists and citizens.

Recommendations:

• The Parliament should decriminalize routine reporting and amend provisions used to punish journalism; the Justice Ministry should instruct prosecutors to drop cases against reporters covering current events; regulators should apply existing laws (e.g. Law No. 212; Law No. 195) in line with international standards.

• The lawmakers should introduce and enforce new regulations on media ownership and concentration, and require media outlets to fully disclose their finances—particularly those involving public contracts.

• Independent outlets should diversify income (subscriptions, memberships, reader contributions); the Press Advertising Agency and public bodies should distribute ads transparently and fairly.

• Editors should prioritize ecology, gender, labour, and minority rights using video, photo, and alternative formats.

• Unions, media associations, and newsrooms should replace precarity with collective agreements on fair pay, social security, and safety/survival protocols.

• Newsrooms should adopt and enforce anti-discrimination guidelines; the Press Council should offer rapid redress and publish binding decisions.

• Newsrooms should institutionalize fact-checking desks and shared verification workflows; fact-checking experts and academics should train reporters/editors.

• The Education Ministry, unions, teacher's networks and rights organizations should expand citizen media-literacy programmes.

• Public broadcasters, universities, and rights organizations should co-produce explanatory journalism and curricula that foster critical thinking and democratic engagement.

• Media workers and journalists, together with rights organizations, academia, schools, and the arts, should build durable coalitions and community desks that connect citizens, amplify constructive solutions, and sustain a space of democratic renewal.

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Annex 1 – Description of the focus groups

Table 1: **DATA FOR THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOCUS GROUPS WITH CITIZENS**

City and age group	Date	Ratio: male/ female	Political engagement	Level of education	Average age	Media habits	Media Engagement
İstanbul / 18–35	22 May 2025	4M/3F	Two mentioned they vote. One is a member of a legal party. Half of them mentioned that they attend protests but some of them mentioned that they choose which protest they are participating in.	High School – 1 University – 6	24.57	Mainly social networks (X, TikTok, YouTube channels) and online portals	There was mainly no interaction; only one participant mentioned frequently filing complaints on Instagram.
Mardin / 36–65	5 July 2025	4M/4M	Only two said that they vote. None of the participants is a member of any political party, and while they had joined protests in the past, they now participate less frequently or only when they feel courageous enough.	High School – 1 University – 6 Post Graduate – 1	44	Social media (mainly Twitter); no one mentioned TV.	There was no membership or any other engagement, except for one participant who continued to support a newspaper as a family habit.

Focus group 1 with younger citizens, İstanbul, 22 May 2025.

Participants:
Male, 35, İstanbul
Male, 28, İstanbul
Male, 25, İstanbul
Male, 22, İstanbul
Female 1, 21, İstanbul
Female, 20, İstanbul
Female 2, 21, İstanbul

Focus group 2 with older citizens, Mardin, 5 July 2025.

Participants:
Male, 48, Mardin
Male, 37, Mardin
Female, 44, Mardin
Male, 46, Mardin
Female, 39, Mardin
Female, 40, Mardin
Female, 55, Mardin
Male, 43, Mardin

Focus group 3 with media professionals, conducted online in İstanbul, 10 June 2025

Participants:
Vecih Cuzdan, Responsible Managing Editor, bianet, İstanbul
Diren Yurtsever, Editor-in-Chief, Mezopotamya Agency, İstanbul
Burcu Günaydın, independent journalist, Hatay
Nazan Özcan, editor, Agos newspaper, İstanbul
Fatih Aça, editor, ArtıGerçek, İstanbul
Uğur Koç, editor, BirGün newspaper, İstanbul
Akın Bodur, journalist, Antakya newspaper, İskenderun

Focus group 4 with citizens with high cultural and social capital and influence

Participants:
Rober Koptaş, writer, İstanbul
Nazım Hikmet Richard Dikbaş, artist, İstanbul
Üzüm Derin Solak, photographer, İstanbul
Ayşegül Devecioğlu, writer, İstanbul
Tülin Özen, actress, İstanbul
Hülya Adak, academic, İstanbul
Bilge Seçkin Çetinkaya, researcher and writer, İstanbul
M. Mahsum Oral, writer, Mardin
Ahmet Bilge, writer, İstanbul
Sema Erder, academic, İstanbul

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MONOPOLIZED OWNERSHIP, FRAGILE TRUST, AND AUDIENCE DISENGAGEMENT

The Future of the Media in Turkey – Considerations by Key Actors

This publication is the result of research undertaken as part of the project **"Our Media: A civil society action to generate media literacy and activism, counter polarization and promote dialogue."** The second research cycle was conducted in the thematic framework titled "The Future of the Media in the Western Balkans and Turkey" in 2025 and focused on analysing the views and opinions of media professionals regarding the current situation and trends in media and democracy in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.

The project **"Our Media: A civil society action to generate media literacy and activism, counter polarization and promote dialogue"** is jointly implemented by nine media development organizations from the Western Balkans and Turkey, with the financial support of the European Union. The coordinator of the three-year project is the Foundation Mediacentar Sarajevo. Partners in the project are the Albanian Media Institute in Tirana; bianet in Istanbul; the Macedonian Institute for Media in Skopje; the Montenegro Media Institute in Podgorica; the Novi Sad School of Journalism; the Peace Institute in Ljubljana; the Press Council of Kosovo in Pristina; and the South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM).

SEENPM
South East European Network for Professionalization of Media