

# A framework for measuring news media markets' financial viability in relation to disinformation

Executive summary of D3.1.1

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**EDMO BELUX is the Belgian and Luxembourgish hub for research on digital media and disinformation.**

It brings together an experienced and extensive network of fact-checkers, media, disinformation analysts, media literacy organisations and academics to detect, analyse and expose emerging harmful disinformation campaigns. Through rapid alerts in the network, fact checks and investigative reporting reach first responders to disinformation (media, civil society, government) in order to minimize the impact of disinformation campaigns. In addition, through media literacy campaigns, EDMO BELUX raises awareness and builds resilience among citizens and media to combat disinformation. Finally, the hub embeds its disinformation monitoring, analysis and awareness into a multidisciplinary research framework on the impact of disinformation and platform responses on democratic processes.

## Introduction

This is the first Deliverable of Task 3.1 of EDMO BELUX: Monitoring of the financial viability of the news media sector in Belgium and Luxembourg. Task 3.1 is part of the Research Mission of EDMO, which aims to assess the impact of disinformation and disinformation responses through research. More concretely, this Deliverable is part of the following research task: Monitor the financial viability of the news media sector in Belgium and Luxembourg and produce a monitoring matrix incorporating indicators related to advertising and subscription revenues, (in)direct public support and philanthropy.

## Theoretical framework

This Deliverable 3.1.1 presents the conceptual building block of this task. It is based on current literature discussions and reports and aims to develop a framework, i.e. a matrix model, that can be applied to monitor the financial viability of the news media sector. This lays the groundwork for the next steps in Task 3.1. Next, the matrix will be evaluated by academics and professionals, and a next iteration of the matrix will be presented in an intermediate internal deliverable.

## Research design

This deliverable is based on a literature review of existing concepts and indicators of news media market viability, and results in a conceptual framework for the assessment of news viability in relation to the spread of disinformation in a given country. In a next step, we will apply the matrix to Belgium and Luxembourg by gathering the necessary data, inputting them into the matrix and investigate whether we see a correlation between viable news markets, the capacity of the media to deal with misinformation and the spread of disinformation in those countries.

## Key Findings

### The state of a country's media market affects citizens' resilience to disinformation

Existing literature suggests that structural factors related to media, such as the use of social media or alternative media, but also including the financial viability of a country's media market affects citizens' resilience to disinformation.

### The viability of the news market should always be considered in relation to commercial *and* public support mechanisms

Acknowledging the fact that news organisations need to revert to an increasingly broad and diverse set of revenue streams, non-commercial income such as subsidies or donations are an integral part of the viability of the news market.

### Assessing the viability of disinformation should involve supply-side and demand-side factors

Having the private or public means to supply the necessary quantity and quality of information is one thing, but without the adoption by the public, the resilience of a country to disinformation remains limited, which is why we also include demand factors in the viability matrix.

## Conclusion

The here proposed framework and monitoring matrix model to identify the financial viability of the media market, gives a first overview of how financial viability can be delineated based on the identified most important impact factors in literature regarding disinformation in media markets. While the matrix covers different financial factors of markets that should be taken into consideration, the applicability of this matrix depends on data availability and robustness. Therefore, different dimensions of the possible data points to be used to fill into the matrix, need to be taken into consideration:

1. Should all financial factors be measurable for Luxembourg and Belgium or should the factors be measurable across all European countries?
2. To investigate sustainability, time-series data is needed, which is only available for a number of variables. Should we only consider these data points?
3. Should we fill unavailable data points not accessible through public and private data sources with a survey?