

Foundation Approaches to Journalism Funding. A JFF Survey

Review of findings

January 2021

Table of contents

- Introduction.....2
- Philanthropies’ missions3
- Foundations’ funding strategies4
- Types of funding6
- Keeping informed about European media philanthropy6
- Learning about worthwhile opportunities to fund.....7
- Key factors in grantee selection.....8
- Grantee’s capacities to be supported8
- Impact assessment9
- Impact on grantee organisations10
- Challenges of journalism grant-making10
- Regulatory aspects.....12
- Key take-aways12

Introduction

This document summarises the findings of a survey the Journalism Funders Forum (JFF) has put into the field over summer 2020 (June-September). The survey aspired to get a better sense of how foundations that already invest in European journalism, as well as those that do not (yet), position themselves towards the sector. Next to foundations based in Europe, it also included foundations based in other parts of the world (which basically boils down to the United States) and engage in Europe.

The goal was better to understand the practices and attitudes of philanthropic foundations towards media funding in Europe, and how they are supporting media and journalism. For the purpose of this survey, 'media and journalism' refer to news, current affairs and information in the public interest. Support may come in the form of grants, and/or assistance beyond the grant to strengthen the infrastructure, professional development, and other needs of media organizations.

The survey consisted of an online questionnaire with 28 questions, which were grouped into four sections:

- 1) Strategy (mission, goals, budget, implementation, geography, timeline);
- 2) Perceived progress in the sector;
- 3) Funding (types, funded capacities, challenges, eligibility, information gathering);
- 4) Impact considerations.

Despite efforts to widen the circle of respondents, only 20 foundations took part, of which merely a single one does not count journalism and media as a part of its remit. The sample includes four US-based and four UK foundations, three from Switzerland, two each from the Czech Republic, Germany, and the Netherlands, and one from Austria as well as another one from Sweden. Accordingly, findings should be considered indicative rather than conclusive.

- This signals that the vast majority of foundations engaged in Europe do not have journalism on their radar at all, and hence could not be enticed to take part in the survey. Conversely, there appears to be a close-knit, yet very small group of foundations habitually supporting journalism.

The survey comes at a time where a large majority of respondents feel that there was little progress over the last five years in strengthening European journalism by way of philanthropic engagement. Merely three are very positive.

- Foundations share a feeling of stasis. One factor is very likely the degradation of media freedom in several European countries, most notably in Hungary and Poland as well as the Western Balkans, Romania, and Bulgaria, further compounded by journalist killings in Malta and the Czech Republic - all that despite stepped-up efforts by foundations and European organisations to counter such trends. Indeed, foundations came under political attack for supporting independent media even inside the European Union. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to remain upbeat. Also, the issues of dis- and misinformation and hate speech have become ever more tangible in recent years.

Another factor can probably be sought in answers to other parts of the questionnaire, in particular respondents' demand for more intensive exchange within the media phil-

anthropy sector, so that not every foundation has to reinvent the wheel on its own. The threshold and required effort to support journalism remain high.

Philanthropies' missions

The foundations sampled in this survey have missions relating to three clusters of topics and issues (in order of prevalence): The first cluster is about democracy, civil society, and community, i.e., the political values of liberal societies. The second cluster focuses on independent journalism in its own right - sometimes with specialisations such as self-determined media, investigative journalism, or journalism education. Third comes the cluster of human rights, peace, and the fight against authoritarian regimes - in other words, a variant or derivative of the first cluster that is perhaps leaning a little more towards advocacy and activism. The remaining respondents have various core missions, ranging from environment and education to global health.

Similarly, the funders quote four clusters of rationales for supporting journalism and news media (in order of prevalence): Most respondents believe that a functioning democracy requires free expression, the actualisation of human rights, an active and unencumbered civil society, the countering of mis- and disinformation, and holding power to account - i.e., pretty much the canonical mission of journalism in the Western world. The second cluster wants to strengthen and empower the journalism ecosystem as such and for its own sake, if probably with a similar underlying rationale as the first cluster. This includes infrastructure and technology. The third cluster intends to create and nourish a supranational European public sphere that sheds national blinders and biases. And a final group of respondents is looking at journalism as a tool to support other issues they have enshrined in their respective missions.

- The foundations supporting journalism are quite clearly rooted in the tradition of liberal democracy, with an underlying bottom-up empowerment rationale rather than a classical charity approach. Only a small number of the sample see journalism as an amplifier of their non-journalistic purposes, respectively do not necessarily argue for journalism with a democracy argument, yet perhaps more from a public relations and policy advocacy point of view. This may be seen as detrimental to, or dismissive of, journalism; however, done right, it can funnel substantial resources into the sector that, in a knock-on-effect, then promote the very same values espoused by the journalism- or democracy-centric funders. Looking at the broader, multi-thematic European philanthropy landscape, the financial potential where journalism and media could tap into appears much greater than that of dedicated 'journalism only' supporters.

As for geographical scope, most of the funders focus their efforts on their own countries or Europe - which, looking at the specific countries mentioned, in practice boils down largely to the UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and the Visegrád countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia). Others have a global focus or a particular interest in Central Asia.

- Once again, the responses show that philanthropic European journalism funding remains restricted to a handful of countries, which essentially fall into two categories: On the one hand, rich countries with stable democracies, robust journalism traditions and press freedom, and, in fact, sustainably funded news and current affairs media landscapes as a whole. This could be called 'sophisticated media devel-

opment' - experimenting with new and different forms and configurations of journalism on the basis of highly developed media landscapes and, indeed, media industries.

On the other hand, countries where free media have recently come under specific threats, or where media's purpose for the public sphere and journalism's financial precariousness was recognised as an issue for political reasons.

Falling by the wayside are pretty much all media and journalism ecosystems that exist, or should exist, in middle- to low-income as well as smaller European countries, and dysfunctional media systems in countries that for various reasons escape the attention of global politics. In journalism parlance, one could say: 'countries that lack news value'. This might indicate that funders do not necessarily implement their strategies based on impartial research and stock-taking of needs and issues, but reflect what global powers, the European Union, or strong lobby groups have put on the agenda.

Foundations' funding strategies

Out of the sampled foundations, eight quote journalism as their core remit, while the remaining eleven engage with journalism as a means to support their broader mission. Ten state that they have a dedicated, stand-alone European media or journalism programme in place, and eight funders say that they implement journalism actions as a part of other European programmes. Almost all count journalism among their programmatic goals.

- The survey reveals that there are currently at least 19 journalism funding programmes run by philanthropies based or active in Europe, most of which are specifically for the purpose of supporting journalism in and of itself. The majority of these programmes are implemented by foundations whose core mission is journalism and media.

This should be seen against the context of European philanthropy overall, which comprises almost 150 000 foundations spending over 60 billion Euro per year¹. While the survey on hand is neither representative, nor comprehensive, it nevertheless indicates that journalism remains a niche topic among philanthropies; despite targeted outreach efforts, it did not manage to elicit statements from additional foundations that they were even considering to add journalism to their portfolio in the near or distant future.

Accordingly, there is much work to be done explaining and substantiating why quality news and current affairs coverage is indeed a social and charitable cause of systemic relevance.

The majority of foundations responding to the survey have been supporting journalism and media for 5-20 years already. Only two programmes were older than 20 years, which indicates that this funding area has emerged in Europe in particular since the turn of the century - or, in other words, does not have the long tradition it enjoys in the United States. At the same time, by far most of the funders have no plans to stop their engagement with journalism ever again; only a few intend to leave the sector within the next five or ten years.

¹ <https://www.alliancemagazine.org/opinion/state-european-philanthropy>

- Journalism funding in Europe appears to have emerged broadly in parallel to the rise of the Internet and the concurrent financing crisis of large parts of the journalism and current affairs-oriented media sector. In parallel, awareness of the societal importance of independent journalism seems to have risen, perhaps spurred on in particular by the negative trends in Central and Southeast Europe as well as issues such as mis- and disinformation and hate speech in highly partisan media outlets and on social media. Funders realise that negative developments are unlikely to go away on their own or anytime soon, and are thus committed to long-term engagement.

About two thirds of the sampled foundations report to have updated their media funding approach in the last 24 months, most more specifically during the last year. Part of that was motivated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which put additional pressure on the financial viability of many media organisations. Several foundations have therefore stepped up their spending and added new grantees to their portfolios. Another trend is a renewed or increased focus on Southeast Europe including the Western Balkans and the Visegrád countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), i.e., the very regions where a free press has come under threat and where media capture is on the rise.

Several foundations say that they have increased, or are currently looking to increase, the total financial volume they spend on journalism. Others have amended their strategies in order better to cover specific journalistic approaches such as participatory or community-oriented media activities, or to cultivate investigative capacities and competences as such. Only four respondents state plans further to adapt their strategies in the coming twelve months.

- While the intention to increase funding is good news per se, it also shows that foundations indeed do observe current developments across media landscapes. This can be construed as a favourable quality - showing adaptivity to changing circumstances and responding to emerging threats -, but also as a lack of a long-term strategic understanding of journalism - merely reacting to highly publicised outside pressures and conspicuous trends rather than fundamental demands. In any case, foundations are taking their responsibility as funders of last resort during the Covid-19 crisis seriously.

The typical foundation active in Europe has spent 1-5 million Euro on journalism and media over the last two years; many are also active in a tier below 500 000 Euro over the same time period. No foundation reported disbursements of 5-10 million Euro, and only a single one more than 10 million Euro. This suggests that the gaggle of foundations which answered the survey - presumably largely identical with the entire universe of foundations supporting journalism in Europe - spend to the tune of around 20 million Euro annually, or 0.03 per cent of overall philanthropic donations. And a large proportion of this funding comes from a single donor to boot.

- This funding range is, as such, favourable for journalism, seeing that with annual spending in the low single-digit millions, substantial impact can already be achieved. Those foundations spending less can at least in part be assumed to contribute to pooled funds, which in total then match the spending of the larger foundations.

Non-pooled grant volumes below 250 000 Euro per year may in some cases be insufficient to deliver a relevant contribution to quality journalism, in particular if

they are divided across several grantees; however, they can compensate their relatively small size by selecting and supporting specialised or niche journalism initiatives.

The total spending seems, however, inadequate to the European media landscape, and the imbalance of one foundation contributing broadly as much as all others combined suggests that there remains much room for improvement. For comparison, Google's 'Digital News Innovation Fund'² alone spent an average of 37.5 million Euro per year from 2016-20.

Types of funding

The responding foundations award most of the funding as core, operational support, with project support coming in second. This being a European survey, financing of cross-border collaboration ranges in third place. Several foundations also provide non-financial support, while others funnel money into media organisations via service contracts, or use an organisation as an intermediary to redistribute smaller grants, such as to individual journalists. Other forms of support, such as investments in the equity of media outlets or loans are exceptions.

- The survey includes 13 foundations which at least occasionally provide operational support to media organisations, and 11 working - inter alia - with project funding. One of the most frequently mentioned demands by journalism outlets is precisely core rather than project funding - it appears that the majority of the sampled funders have recognised this demand. The proportion of core funding, though, is not clear from the responses; it could well be that it is few and far between.

Keeping informed about European media philanthropy

When asked about how they would prefer to keep abreast of the state of philanthropic media funding in Europe, respondents highlight in particular two closely connected approaches: First, they would appreciate if the sector in Europe shared data more liberally and comprehensively, and second, they are after increased and improved sharing of lessons learned across the media philanthropy landscape.

This includes the demand for a comprehensive mapping of European media landscapes, with a special focus on public-interest news providers. Many also emphasise that it would help if funders could agree on standardised and consistent metrics, so that achievements and progress were more easily comparable across foundations and actions. Scientific research was rated as a middling information source.

- These statements point towards clear actions: There should be a central data repository for European media philanthropy that comprises financial data and offers more transparency about who funds whom and what, but that ideally also features a standardised set of impact indicators - which, of course, would need to be developed and agreed first. The prerequisite would, however, be that European journalism funders committed themselves to such transparency.

² <https://newsinitiative.withgoogle.com/dnifund/>

Second, there is a strong demand for a forum for the exchange of best practices and lessons learned between foundations, but perhaps also between foundations and representatives of the journalism sector itself.

Learning about worthwhile opportunities to fund

In order to learn about initiatives and projects they could fund, foundations most appreciate talking to their grantees, followed in equal measure by two closely interconnected means: Conferences and similar networking opportunities on the one hand, and lessons learned by fellow foundations on the other. Second-most important are, once again in equal measure, foundations' own desk research and scientific papers, followed by the use of resources made available in the sector (e.g., guidelines and manuals, databases).

At the same time, however, respondents are split in their assessment of the factors. For instance, desk research is neither regarded as essential, nor considered pointless, by the majority, while most see it as an activity of medium relevance. Nobody considered scientific papers highly relevant, even as many appreciate them as a helpful tool on a case-by-case basis, or occasionally commission them proactively. Pretty much the same goes for sectoral tools and resources and the involvement of external consultants.

One foundation mentioned that, under pandemic-free circumstances, they would embark on scoping trips and visit potential grantees in order better to understand the field and identify relevant opportunities.

- The responses reflect that on the one hand, foundations prefer long-term relations with their grantees over one-off engagements. It makes sense for them not to perform due diligence with new candidates all the time, but rather to rely on tried-and-tested grantees who delivered successful projects. This effect is amplified by the foundations' focus on exchange with their peers, looking for recommendations and best practice they might want to replicate. Many prefer to identify new candidates by desk research rather than a public call for proposals.

All this is a natural and an obvious tactic, which, however, may render it more difficult for newcomers to break into the field, and lead to the impression that a limited set of 'usual suspects' or 'donor darlings' always gets the funding.

On the other hand, the relatively lacklustre appreciation of scientific input, sectoral tools, and external consultants possibly has to do with the actual lack of such resources. Academic research efforts of media philanthropy are few and far between, and, where they exist, predominantly focus on the UK and US rather than continental Europe.

Similarly, there are not many useful tools specifically for journalism funders available; for instance, Europe lacks an equivalent to the US-based database managed by Media Impact Funders (MIF)³ in cooperation with Candid⁴ and is, despite MIF's efforts, not comprehensively reflected in it. Also, consultants with a good overview about funding-worthy journalism initiatives across Europe are rare.

³ <https://mediaimpactfunders.org/>

⁴ <https://candid.org/>

Key factors in grantee selection

Almost all foundations consider the grantee's specific request for support (i.e., presumably the quality of their proposal) as well as the grantee's geographic focus the most relevant eligibility and selection criteria. Second in line is the question to what extent the grantee is instrumental to achieving the foundation's programmatic goals; a good relation with the main contact at the grantee organisation is appreciated as well. Funders also look closely at the developmental stage of the candidate organisation, i.e., whether they are well established in their field or a newcomer, and their resulting 'absorption capacity', i.e., capability to implement sizable projects.

In contrast, funders claim not to rely very much on top-down criteria, such as their own or external assessments of what would be beneficial for the recipient organisation, or what it would need. Neither do funders admit to much of a 'herd instinct': Only few say that they prefer to support organisations that are already beneficiaries of other funders they trust. A majority of foundations also rely on their own journalistic expertise in order to make their selection.

- Next to pretty much self-evident selection criteria such as geographic focus, goal alignment, or 'absorption capacity', the responses highlight the crucial importance of the combination of excellent grant proposals with personal relations. Accordingly, efforts to broaden journalism funding would likely benefit from better and more regular opportunities for funders and journalism representatives to network with one another, and also from greater availability of qualified grant writers.

On another note, funders' claims not to follow a 'herd instinct' seem slightly inconsistent with their keen interest in the advice and best practices of other foundations, as expressed in various parts of the questionnaire.

In general, the foundations follow a hands-off approach when it comes to the internal affairs of their grantees, i.e., they are reluctant intentionally to steer grantees' strategic direction or meddle with their missions. This is of particular importance in the field of journalism, because otherwise, conflicts with the beneficiaries' independence or editorial charters might arise. At the same time, as seen in responses to a different question, the funders are aware that their engagement certainly does impact the development and destiny of grantee organisations.

Grantee's capacities to be supported

In the perception of foundations, there is a strong alignment between the capacities the funders believe should be strengthened in grantees and what the beneficiaries ask them for. While this is, obviously, a one-sided and therefore possibly biased perspective, it still yields relevant insights. Most prominently mentioned are fundraising and staffing support, which are equally highly ranked by both funders and beneficiaries. In comparison, almost all other aspects are in much less demand by either side. One respondent highlighted that constructive and solutions journalism were missing from the questionnaire.

Looking at capacities with a noticeable (if consistently small) differential between funders and grantees, it appears that foundations to some extent miss strategic planning, collaboration with third parties, diversity, and leadership skills in their recipient organisations - all aspects that media and journalists do not seem to ask for at all, or only in passing. Conversely, grantees express an unmet need for support primarily in communications, followed by financial management, legal assistance, and cybersecurity.

Comparing this to foundations' statements of what they in actual fact do fund, it emerges that support is distributed relatively evenly across the whole spectrum of capacities, with only few outliers. For instance, while many foundations directly finance staff at grantee organisations, there is incidental support to diversity, legal assistance, performance measurement, and the development and engagement of talent as well as volunteers.

Once again, the small sample on hand imposes limitations on the interpretation of the data. In particular where foundations contribute to pooled funds (in most cases Civitates⁵), they relinquish direct control or first-hand knowledge of the spending details.

- The data do not surprise in their highlights: Fundraising is the main *raison d'être* for foundation-grantee relations, and therefore the area where different needs and approaches collide. This results in a feeling on both sides that more efforts are required to align fund-seekers' capacities with the expectations harboured by foundations. And naturally, a substantial part of financial support goes into the staffing of beneficiary organisations.

Perhaps more interesting are two outliers. First, grantees seem to have a deficit in communications, which may be surprising in the light of the fact that they are media organisations. However, there are obvious fundamental differences between journalism and public relations, and the two do not mix easily. Apparently, some grantees differentiate between their funded work proper - i.e., journalism - and talking about their work *vis-à-vis* the foundation landscape and the general public.

Moreover, it appears that foundations are keen on cooperation of their grantees with other organisations, while beneficiaries never mention this aspect to them. Indeed, experience from the field suggests that direct collaboration between media organisations, especially across borders, tends to be rather difficult to organise, if often desirable. It is also noticeable that grant-seekers do not seem to refer to diversity on their own accord, yet that some foundations have identified room for improvement in this area.

Impact assessment

Out of the 20 respondents, three have developed their own toolsets to measure the impact of grants across various dimensions, thereby striving to draw comparable and comprehensive information from their respective pools of grantees. One foundation specifically mentions that they are looking for the public resonance and external references their funded projects generate. All others perform internal evaluations and/or rely on reports from the grantee organisations, sometimes supplemented by surveys or interviews.

⁵ <https://civitates-eu.org/>

- The answers confirm that the field of impact assessment of journalism projects remains fragmented, despite quite intensive discussions in this area over the last decade or so. The larger foundations are trying to put impact measurement on a more systematic footing, but there are no indications that they do much to coordinate with one another. This chimes with responses to other questions of this survey, where foundations indicate that they are dissatisfied with the lack of comparable and standardised impact information.

Impact on grantee organisations

As a rule, respondents want to know whether and how their grant contributed to the further development of the grantee organisation, and follow up accordingly. Only a few are selective in their follow-up and make it dependent on the circumstances. Nobody said they were not interested at all.

- There is a strong awareness that grants do change the recipient organisation. Foundations seem keen to ensure that their engagement in project funding or operational support contributes to their own and the grantees' long-term strategies and development.

Challenges of journalism grant-making

The survey asked philanthropies to name the top-3 challenges and obstacles they encounter in their efforts to support journalism in Europe.

The most frequently mentioned concerns revolve around organisational and funding-related topics. Several foundations state that they notice shortcomings in the managerial and operational capacity of their existing and prospective grantees. This starts at the proposal drafting stage, where many candidates struggle to develop a good-enough project plan and rationale, continues through the implementation phase - including grantees' internal and external communication skills as well as governance issues -, and ends with an understanding of impact measurement that is deemed insufficient.

This contributes to funders' difficulties identifying and developing suitable candidates for support, which are sufficiently aligned with the foundation's own mission and objectives, able to demonstrate the intended impact, and can deliver on some donors' more specific demands. Such advanced demands are, for instance, a community-oriented and participatory approach, scaling up to the supranational European level, funding collaboration between media organisations rather than media directly, or connecting small and large media projects in a meaningful way.

As a result, funders report an insufficient of trust in the capability of some beneficiaries to run funded projects to their specifications. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why there are only few philanthropies around that do fund journalism, which seems to make respondents' feel that they are out on a limb with their activities. The Covid-19 travel restrictions are mentioned as an additional aggravating circumstance: Not being able to meet funding candidates in person and visit their premises deprives funders of a valuable opportunity to build confidence and a constructive relationship with journalists and media organisations.

A number of respondents reflect on their own internal obstacles, too. They report difficulties in setting clear priorities for their journalism funding activities, and in some cases struggle to balance European interests with global ones. Some foundations admit to having only a fuzzy or erratic concept of the scope of actions they would like to support - which on occasion is due to a lack of specific qualifications in their board or dissent among founders -, and fear to have poured too much funding into a single thematic area.

At the same time, however, many funders also report that they lack the kind of financial resources they would like to spend on journalism and media, and that it is difficult to raise money for the cause.

Several foundations diagnose a lack of available information about the sector, calling for a mapping of the European journalism and media landscapes - possibly with a particular focus on non-profit initiatives -, for the development of better knowledge of the media market in general and its operational functioning in particular, and more intensive exchange of experience and lessons learned between foundations.

Nonetheless, the respondents are aware of the precariousness of the revenue situation of many journalism outlets and unsustainable business models in the long term. They consider this a risk, as even otherwise promising media organisations may have to shut down and become unable to follow through with the implementation of a grant.

Respondents identify a final cluster of obstacles in the area of law and security. Several mention an unhelpful legal and regulatory environment for their grant-making, starting with the lack of journalism-friendly provisions in charity law. As many foundations cannot support commercial organisations for statutory or tax reasons, they miss the existence of non-profit journalism outlets with a recognised charity status. Others note that rules are different in every European country, rendering compliance costly and difficult, which, in turn, discourages cross-border grant-making.

Closely related is the observation that some governments and other powers that be intentionally put spokes in the wheel of journalism and media funding. This ranges from increasing latent hostility against media even in liberal democracies and closing spaces for civil society to the undisguised obstruction of independent journalism in some countries, and sometimes culminates in direct threats against the security of grantees.

→ From the grievances mentioned by the responding foundations, it becomes clear that

- Fund-seekers need to develop their organisational capacity and make it transparent to funders, so that the latter become confident about their 'absorption capacity';
- There is a need to build trust and mutual understanding between journalism and funders, and specifically to map funders' goals on journalism's objectives, and vice versa;
- Even some of the foundations which are already supporting journalism and media still have knowledge and strategy deficits about the sector;
- The legal and security situation around journalism and journalism funding need to be improved across the board and specifically in borderline authoritarian countries.

Regulatory aspects

When asked whether they could imagine any policy or regulatory change that would make their media and journalism grant-making easier, most foundations do not have any specific demands they feel would be necessary or helpful in practice.

Several, however, mention that journalism should be recognised as a charitable cause across Europe and that it consequently should become more easy and common to set up a non-profit organisation with a straightforward journalistic purpose. The reason behind this is that many foundations can only make donations to officially recognised charitable organisations unless they want to risk their tax privileges, and that in most countries, non-profit newsrooms are forced to adopt an extraneous purpose (most frequently, public education or civil society participation) if they want to be recognised as tax-exempt charities.

A few funders also point to worsening conditions for their work in the Visegrád countries and Southeast Europe, which could be improved by stricter implementation of the laws and regulations of the European Union, respectively bringing the EU's soft power in accession candidate countries to bear.

- It is somewhat surprising that most of the sampled foundations are not aware of the charity and non-profit regulation issue, or at least do not consider it relevant for their work. This may have to do with more favourable rules applying in their country of registration, their financial capacity, or that they have developed suitable means to circumvent the legal obstacles⁶. In any case, it is likely that charity law reform would indeed promote and facilitate grant-making to journalism. The 'shrinking space for civil society' issue, on the other hand, chimes with the action many rule-of-law and civil society advocates have been demanding from the European Union.

Key take-aways

The responses to this survey highlight a bit of a paradox: On the one hand, journalism funders very clearly subscribe to the pretty much the same set of values as most members of the journalistic profession in Europe and North America: A democratic public sphere with freedom of speech and expression, an empowered civil society, a watchdog function over governments and public authorities, and scrutiny of powerful private actors. Hence, donors and beneficiaries in this area are an almost natural match.

On the other hand, however, this close alignment in the abstract does not appear to translate into concrete cooperation with the same ease: Journalism funders remain somewhat cautious and reserved when it comes to entrusting journalists and media organisations with their money and projects, citing as reasons concerns over economic sustainability, management and governance issues, as well as uncertainty about impact. Even though the sample of this survey mostly represents accomplished and experienced media grant-makers, deep mutual understanding and reconciling objectives with one another is still a major and under-resourced task.

⁶ E.g., <https://www.transnationalgiving.eu/>

Judging from the self-selection of respondents from the wider European philanthropy ecosystem, few foundations without a dedicated journalism remit have so far recognised that quality journalism - and not only public relations - could actually help their causes in a major way. And yet, precisely this seems to be the space where major additional funding for journalism could be unlocked, as long as reporters' independence is safeguarded.

Furthermore, the survey confirms that a large portion of journalism support flocks to a handful of strong Northwest European economies (with the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and France as forerunners) on the one hand, and to a similarly limited number of countries in Southeast Europe with precarious democratic governance and press freedom on the other hand (namely the Visegrád Four and the Western Balkans). Most media landscapes in between those extremes go unnoticed and un-funded.

All of the above factors may well have to do with a lack of actionable information in and on the sector. Respondents repeat that they would appreciate a comprehensive mapping of the public-interest news media space in Europe, combined with good market insight. They also would like to see an informative database of journalism and media funding, which ideally featured clear and consistent impact indicators that would provide additional orientation. Similarly, research - academic as well as think-tank-style - into the sector is under-developed.

And finally, donors are not yet satisfied with the existing opportunities to exchange experience and lessons learned with other funders, and express - if often only implicitly - the need better to understand journalism as a system and journalists as well as media organisations as the related actors. Increased cross-domain networking and structured sessions might help.

In summary:

- Journalism funders and journalism practitioners share the same set of fundamental values, but still need to work on mutual understanding and trust in practice.
- Foundations with a non-journalistic mission do not realize the opportunity that lies in funding independent thematic journalism, and hence cannot unlock funding resources.
- Much journalism grant-making appears to be based on perceived urgency rather than long-term analysis and strategy.
- Funders want data and in-depth information on media landscapes and markets, existing media funding (financial and thematic), and impacts according to an agreed standard.
- Existing opportunities for networking and exchange of experience with fellow philanthropies, but also with journalism representatives, remain inadequate.
- Independent research and expertise with respect to philanthropic journalism funding could deliver relevant impulses, but would need to be expanded first.