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Why Investigative Journalism Needs Long-Term Investment: Insights from OCCRP

Case Studies

As part of MediaDev Insider’s special focus on the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and its implications for the future of journalism, we highlight the experience of GFMD member OCCRP (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project). This case study illustrates why long-term, flexible, and globally coordinated investment in independent media must be central to the next MFF — and why Europe has both the opportunity and the responsibility to lead.

Author: Communications Gfmd | 30. October 2025

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[Financial Framework \(MFF\)](#). The proposal by the European Commission to significantly increase funding for culture, media and civil society in the next iteration is a welcome one.

However, OCCRP believes that for the media support to be more effective and impactful, it should include the following four strategic points:

1. **Long-Term Funding:** Provide support to media through **continuous, multi-year programs**, ensuring the stability necessary for high-impact investigations and sustained organisational success.
2. **Flexible Core Support:** Prioritise **flexible, core support (rather than strictly project-based grants) for nonprofit media**, empowering them to strategically allocate resources based on evolving editorial and operational priorities.
3. **Global Collaboration:** Significantly increase the focus on **supporting cross-border journalistic collaborations** — both within the EU and with partners globally — recognising that transnational organised crime and corruption do not stop at borders.
4. **Public Good Justification:** Explicitly **recognise and frame investigative journalism as a public good**, justifying its support as a strategic investment that yields high democratic, societal, and economic returns (e.g., money recovered, policy changes).

*OCCRP's reporting between 2009 and 2024 has contributed to the recovery of **more than \$11 billion in fines and seizures**, and led to hundreds of indictments, arrests, and high-level resignations. These results demonstrate that public-interest investigative journalism is not a cost — it's an investment with tangible benefits for societies and economies alike.*



Inside The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)
Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project



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Yet, **the sustainability of this work is at risk.** Much of this vital work is done by small nonprofit media and individual journalists who often investigate complex criminal schemes that span multiple regions — areas where law enforcement may be unable or unwilling to go. Collaboration, information exchange, and shared resources (like OCCRP’s tech tools) are crucial, helping small outlets save time and money. **However, these shared resources don’t solve the fundamental problem of securing the stable, long-term, and flexible funding needed to sustain and grow individual investigative outlets, as the work itself is very expensive.**

Following the termination of key U.S. funding streams, including from USAID, the gap in support for cross-border investigative journalism has grown. While some argue for public funding, **investigating complex illicit activities often lacks mass appeal (“*corruption as the victimless crime*”) and emotional connection, making it difficult to secure sufficient long-term public support,** especially amid a deluge of information and low disposable income. Monetising content also requires substantial, sustained investment, which is currently scarce.

Meanwhile, in Europe, investigative journalism is rarely considered a legitimate philanthropic cause by private foundations, and those who do fund it often focus domestically. International development agencies must adhere to government policy and non-interference rules, limiting their focus primarily to regions adjacent to Europe. This leaves networks like OCCRP facing a major challenge in sustaining and developing their crucial cross-border investigations.

Without a shift in approach, the world’s most effective investigative collaborations — such as those led by OCCRP and its partners — risk losing momentum just as they are most needed to uphold transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

The next MFF offers a critical opportunity for the EU to lead by example — to recognise journalism as a democratic infrastructure, and to fund it accordingly.

Our joint letter, “[Invest in Free Media: Europe’s Democratic Foundation](#),” urges the European Parliament, the European Commission, and Member States to ensure that the next MFF delivers long-term, coordinated investment in journalism as a cornerstone of Europe’s democratic and digital infrastructure.

We invite you to join us in [signing](#) and sharing it with your networks. Every signature, article, and share strengthens our call for Europe to invest in free, independent media as a democratic foundation.

Tags: [Funding journalism](#) | [Media grants](#) | [Crowdfunding](#), [Investigative journalism](#) | [Accountability](#).



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