

# Digital News Innovation Fund Impact Report



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## Introduction

**The only real, substantive guarantee of the independence of news media – which is critical for the well-being of pluralist democracies – is their own economic success, not government subsidies or gifts from wealthy donors: you never know when either one might run out.**

The offline news business, first print, then the news wires, radio, then TV, had been a century-long success story. But over the past 20 years, many traditional news media have suffered significant revenue and profit declines. Employment has become less plentiful, and sometimes precarious.

As a result, media companies are changing how they do things. Which media company had research & development (R&D) units at the beginning of this millennium, working on the next big innovation? Which media companies had the skill sets in their organisations to manage rapid technological change and develop products and services fit for the evolving consumer behaviour? The answer is too few.

In 2015, Google's Digital News Innovation Fund (DNI Fund) was one of the initiatives which set out to help change that. The direct result of the DNI Fund's work is the realisation of numerous innovative projects – some of which you will read about in this report.

But in my view, the biggest achievement of the DNI Fund goes beyond individual projects. Its biggest achievement is to have helped to kick-start the overdue development of an R&D culture in the European news ecosystem.

It has laid the groundwork for the implementation of new business models and structures along the entire value chain – from content workflow processing, to digital distribution, to go-to-market strategy for new news products and monetisation. Concepts such as user-generated content, audience development, real-time analytics, robot journalism and propensity-to-buy modelling have become part of everyday work in most media organisations. The DNI Fund was also able to stimulate networks among publishers and tech companies.

**News will remain a tough business, but in Europe we are now well on our way to building business models which will be sustainable, hopefully facilitating the transformation of many revered legacy organisations – and also help a number of startups to develop their niches.**

Thus, the DNI Fund has been time, effort, and \$150 million well directed. It was an honour for me to be part of, and then chair, the DNI Fund Council, which evaluated all of the larger projects proposed.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the DNI Fund Council, the amazing project team and all others who made this journey possible and were part of it.

And to the media companies of Europe: we need you to be successful. Godspeed.



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**Veit Valentin Dengler**

*COO, Bauer Media Group*

*Chairman of the DNI Fund Council  
Hamburg, October 2020*

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Report by numbers

# DNI Fund

€150M fund

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662 projects

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30 countries

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# Funding across Europe

KEY  
PROJECTS  
FUNDING

AUSTRIA

17  
€3M

FINLAND

20  
€2.9M

LITHUANIA

6  
€910K

SLOVAKIA

6  
€1.5M

BELGIUM

18  
€5.3M

FRANCE

75  
€20.1M

LUXEMBOURG

2  
€770K

SLOVENIA

7  
€843K

BULGARIA

6  
€503K

GERMANY

93  
€21.5M

MALTA

1  
€150K

SPAIN

47  
€12.1M

CROATIA

3  
€850K

GREECE

11  
€2.3M

NETHERLANDS

32  
€5.5M

SWEDEN

15  
€2.8M

CYPRUS

1  
€450K

HUNGARY

18  
€2.6M

NORWAY

21  
€3.8M

SWITZERLAND

15  
€3.4M

CZECHIA

12  
€1.5M

IRELAND

10  
€1.9M

POLAND

33  
€6.6M

UNITED KINGDOM

78  
€14.9M

DENMARK

15  
€2.5M

ITALY

45  
€11.5M

PORTUGAL

32  
€7.8M

ESTONIA

2  
€441K

LATVIA

5  
€250K

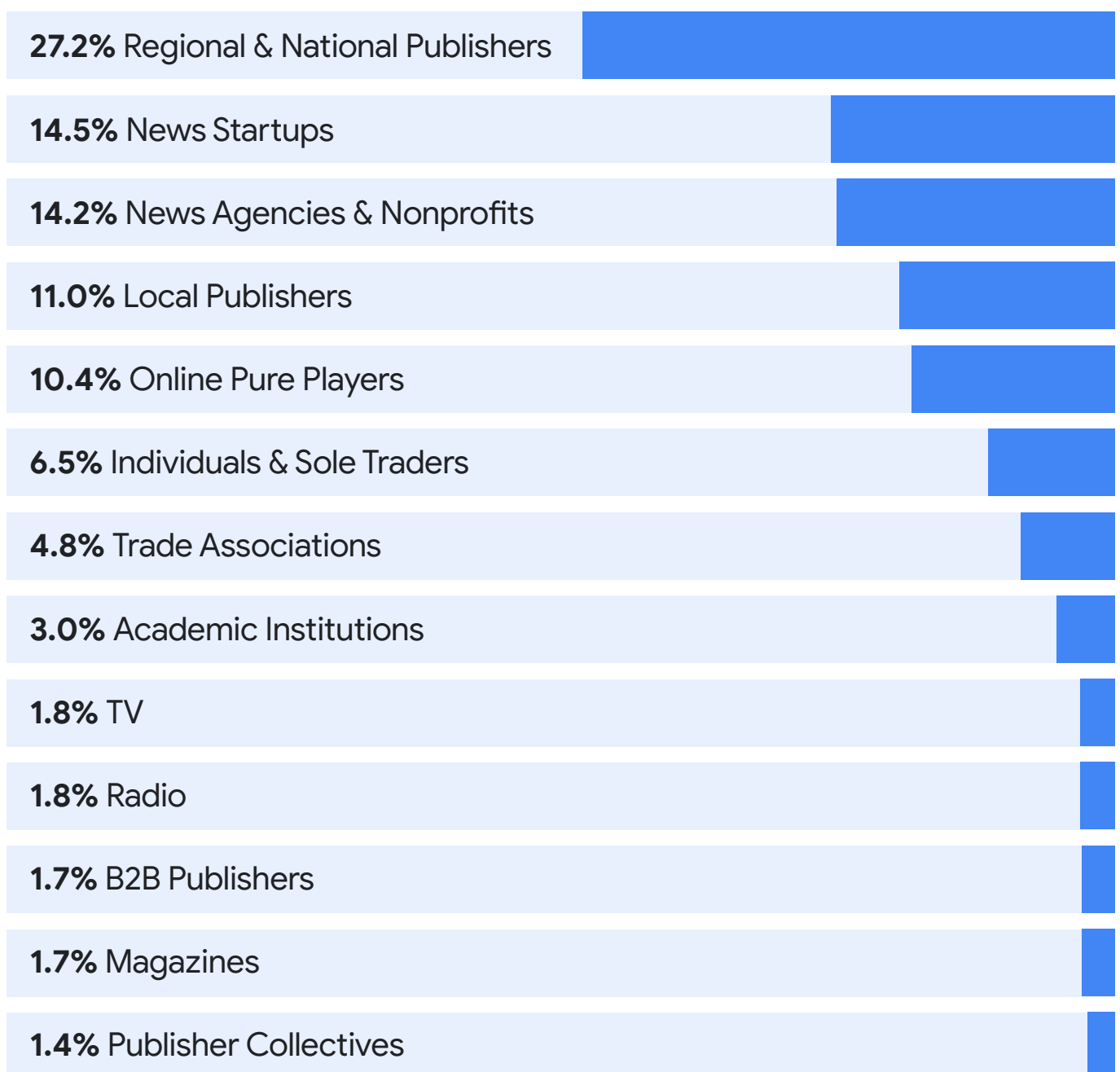
ROMANIA

16  
€1.8M

6% of the DNI Fund went to knowledge sharing, reporting and overheads

# Organisation types

A breakdown of projects supported by organisational type



# Funding topics

The DNI Fund has supported projects tackling four key industry challenges

**12%**

Boosting Digital Revenues

**15%**

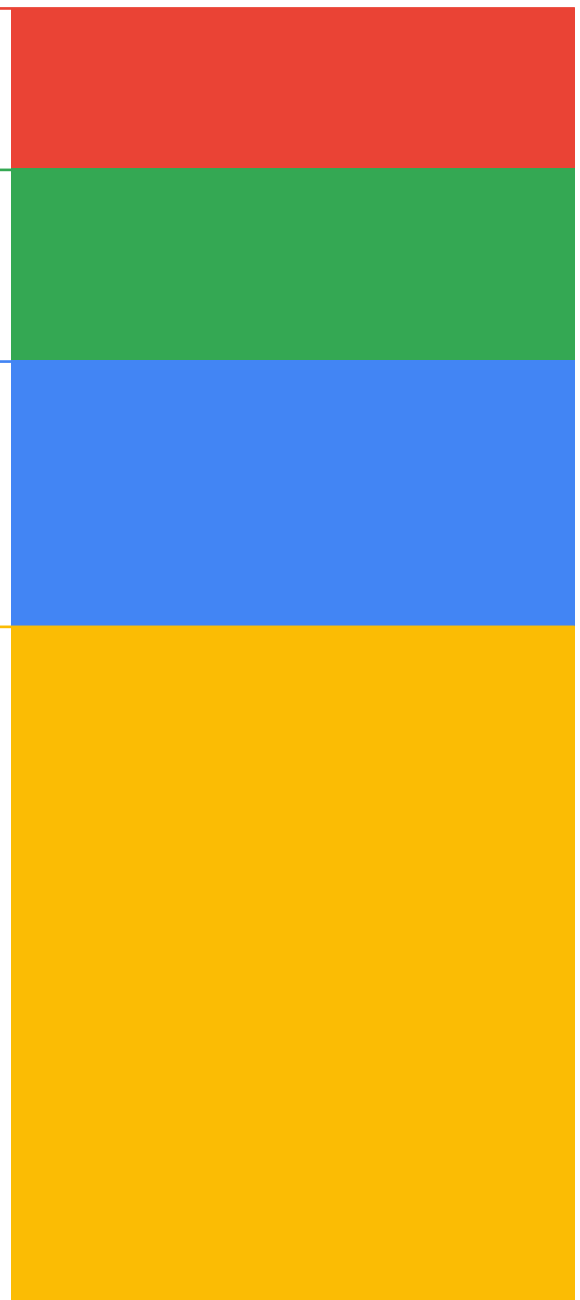
Telling Local Stories

**21%**

Battling Misinformation

**52%**

Exploring New Technologies



# Boosting Digital Revenues

LoVer | Spain | €896K Funding | Local Publisher



## Single login for Spanish local news network

**Henneo has developed LoVer, a single sign-on (SSO) system, to be the foundation for a paywall and programmatic advertising for a network of Spanish local publishers.**

The problem to solve sounded simple: how to allow small and medium publishers to challenge larger organisations in the competitive digital environment. The solution was collaboration.

Inspired by other DNI-funded experiences, the Spanish publisher Henneo built a coalition called LoVer (Local and Vertical) to generate a single login for the Spanish press.

For users, this means high-quality, personalised content across a wider network of publishers. For publishers, the data collected improves programmatic advertising and monetisation. It allows publishers to connect, share tools and campaigns, and learn from each other. In the future, LoVer will serve as the basis for paywall payments.

“We know that cookies used to identify the user will disappear soon and we need to create an environment in which as many people as possible will be signed in, so we can still segment our users,” says Miguel Madrid, Chief Digital Officer at Henneo. He predicts the company will diversify ways to monetise the aggregate data from LoVer. “We will also soon be selling new products, such as video streaming and native advertising.”

### Project Highlights

**500K** registered users

**91%** of the Spanish market reached

**60** websites, 14 Spanish publishers now participating



“The funds helped us to grow to 500,000 registered users and reach over 91% of the Spanish market.”

Miguel Madrid, Henneo Chief Digital Officer

## Smarter paywall optimises subscriber conversion

Go Beyond Subscription, an initiative by French newspaper Le Monde, drives and retains digital subscriptions. Its three-tier system includes individual logins and shared accounts.

### Project Highlights

**6.8%** of subscribers use couple or group options

**40%** subscriber growth year-on-year

**14K** new subscribers in the paywall launch month

“We wanted to expand our subscribers, and reward their loyalty,” says Julien Laroche-Joubert, Chief Digital Officer at Le Monde, explaining the system’s development, “but also create opportunities to adapt the pricing of the offer depending on the user’s needs.” Observing that subscribers often share logins led Le Monde to develop a smarter paywall system to prompt users registering simultaneous logins to upgrade to a shared account.

As with many publishers, the company saw an increase in subscribers prompted by people looking for verifiable pandemic information from a trusted source, but that’s not the full story behind the improved metrics. The digital subscribers increased from a 25%+ forecasted gain to a 40% year-over-year gain due to both the new offers and the pandemic situation, to reach 335,000 in June 2020.

“Creating those offers within a subscription management system was quite complex, but DNI funding allowed us to accelerate this project,” says Laroche-Joubert. The system has already proved a success – 6.8% of subscribers are now using couple or group plans, with the figure still trending upwards.



“The project helped to expand our subscribers, and reward their loyalty.”

Julien Laroche-Joubert, Le Monde Chief Digital Officer

# Boosting Digital Revenues

NZZ Companion App | Switzerland | €670K Funding | National Publisher



## Giving people news the way they want it

NZZ Companion App, from Switzerland's oldest newspaper Neue Zürcher Zeitung, is a digital companion that personalises through-the-day news delivery, creating tailored news based on each user's profile, location and situation.

Head of Technology at NZZ Andreas Bossecker explains, "Personalisation is at the core of what we do. Readers want to know they are receiving the

news they want, when they want it, morning, noon or night, especially during these unstable times."

Launched in spring 2017, the NZZ Companion App has built both trust and loyalty. The centrepiece is personalised reading recommendations, generated through feedback (online surveys, one-to-one meetings and idea platforms) from a beta community. Getting those high-quality recommendations allowed the company to incorporate personalisation across digital products. Delivering a mobile-first approach also led to organisational changes in the teams.

Since the app launch, NZZ has seen a 20% increase in its subscriber base – a total of 195,000. "It's more than we expected, and really confirmed our mobile-first focus," says Bossecker. Beyond NZZ, he says, "a number of publisher partners use our technology stack, including a bigger regional newspaper in Switzerland."

The software is also distributed to other publishers and retailers looking to increase website engagement.

### Project Highlights

**20%** increase in subscriber base for NZZ since launch

**65%** of total traffic on mobile

**125%** more visits from logged-in traffic than in 2018

“Readers want to know they are receiving the news they want, when they want it, especially during these unstable times.”

Andreas Bossecker, NZZ Head of Technology

# Boosting Digital Revenues

Noteworthy | Ireland | €380K Funding | Online Pure Player



## Crowdfunding people’s investigations

**Noteworthy sees the public suggest stories, and fund the cost of investigating them to deliver stories that communities care about. Since receiving DNI funding in 2018, the team has completed over 25 investigations.**

“Advertisers can have the best of intentions, but they won’t want their ads next to an investigation into, for example, hospital malpractice.” That was the dilemma facing

Journal Media CEO Adrian Acosta – how to finance stories that aren’t sustainable with an advertising model, but impact people’s lives.

The answer is Noteworthy, a crowdfunding site for news stories. Investigations are suggested by the public via questionnaires. The team’s proposals include costs, backers pledge funds, and when the story is funded, it gets the green light. Costs range from several hundred to a few thousand euros, depending on research time, legal advice, production and project management. The project tackles everything from under-regulation in care homes to for-profit DNA collection. For example, 27 people donated €2,425 to investigate slot-machine gambling, while 48 people donated €1,440 to investigate a story on sexual abuse survivors.

Managing Editor Susan Daly explains, “It’s a large-scale listening exercise that allows the audience control over the news agenda and motivates them to contribute to seeing that journalism delivered.” Noteworthy distributes the stories via social media, its website and newsletters to supporters and contributors.

### Project Highlights

**100** public proposals selected for potential investigations

**25** completed funded investigations



“The value of Noteworthy lies in how closely it engages with the public on the issues that are important to them but absent from mainstream news coverage.”

Susan Daly, Journal Media Managing Editor

# Boosting Digital Revenues

News Agency Tracking Tool | Netherlands | €400K Funding | News Agency



## News agency creates insights tool

The News Agency content tracking tool from Dutch press agency ANP tracks the usage of hundreds of thousands of text stories and images every month. The results help to prove the financial value of the service – and give journalists real-time insights into how their work is performing.

In an age of demonstrable return on investment (ROI), press agencies must prove the value of their stories. ANP has provided content to news publishers since 1934, but in today’s digital environment, there was previously no easy way to track the articles across multiple news sites.

With DNI funding, ANP created a bespoke tool to crawl customers’ websites and match agency content with publisher content in almost-real time. Now live, the tool can trace agency content with near-real time reporting that shows how ANP content is being used, with 200,000 text articles processed per month. “In a media market with declining revenues, all commercial press agencies have to prove their relevance when they negotiate a contract,” explains CTO Mark Westerhoff. “Our editorial team was sceptical, but with cultural change, we must decide if we need to report on a specific topic. Or if we should, for instance, produce more content in the morning. This tool allows our editors to make more data-informed decisions.”

### Project Highlights

**300K** images, 200K articles tracked monthly

**9** national press agencies using the tracking tool

**100K** publisher websites tracked per month

“Many journalists believe they know what our customers want; this tool allows our editors to make more data-informed decisions.”

Mark Westerhoff, ANP CTO

# Boosting Digital Revenues

CrowdNewsroom | Germany | €500K Funding | Nonprofit



## The citizen-led newsroom

The CrowdNewsroom project from German non-profit news site CORRECTIV engages citizens to participate in investigative reports, creating a community of over 18,000 contributors.

Through crowdsourcing its online audience, CORRECTIV set out to discover verifiable facts on local topics where public information is absent; for example, the traffic situation across Germany – potholes, roadworks, etc. It’s vital information

with no single public data source – instead, many individuals hold pieces of the jigsaw.

Those pieces flow into the newsroom in a variety of formats, and from a multitude of sources. The challenge is to avoid “data flooding”. To curb this data chaos, the team created a “platform that collects a structured data set, with proofs on every single data point. If someone contributes data, they have to verify it,” explains Founder David Schraven.

The software has already been central to more than 16 complex investigations – including providing key data to a newspaper report on housing inequality in Hamburg – and is available for purchase as an off-the-shelf product.

CrowdNewsroom has raised more than €500,000 in investment through supporters and partners, and has ambitious plans to scale up the software’s availability worldwide. “We have founded an initiative with the Global Investigative Journalism Network to support citizen journalism with tactical tech. We want to make it available across the globe.”

### Project Highlights

**18K** contributors

**3.5K** contributors on a single investigation

**28** partnered projects with news media



“ We have founded an initiative with the Global Investigative Journalism Network, DigLab and Tactical Tech to support citizen journalism. We want to make it available across the globe.”

David Schraven, CrowdNewsroom Founder

# Boosting Digital Revenues

Personalisation Project | France | €400K Funding | National Publisher



## Personalising the sports reader's experience

For France's specialist online sports publisher L'Équipe, audience insight from data analytics has increased page views by 20% and boosted revenues.

L'Équipe secured DNI support for a project to drive audience engagement through data-driven analysis, revealing stories readers want.

Romain Lhote, L'Équipe's Head of Data, ran data analysis on a site with 2.8 million users a day and 1.5 billion page impressions, monthly. "We used machine learning to define a scoring system for articles from zero to 100, which we used to understand user behaviour better." This scoring system helped sharpen the content strategy in terms of coverage, space and formats, and refine a personalised subscriber experience.

It led to a 30-fold increase in push notification open rate and a 27-fold increase in email open rate, compared to non-personalised campaigns. Journalists who initially were unconvinced now refer to the data.

Lhote's team is currently customising the site homepage, using a subscriber's unique profile to personalise recommendations. But even with the technological advances, Lhote insists the news agenda will always be set by editors. "The first five articles on the homepage should be an editorial choice. We need to offer basic information. Even if the reader doesn't like tennis, if Federer wins Wimbledon, we'll tell them."

### Project Highlights

**20%** increase in page views for data-optimised articles

**30X** increase in push notification open rate

**27X** increase in email open rate

“DNI funding allowed us to build a model to reveal insights that helped us to create a deeper connection to our fans.”

Romain Lhote, L'Équipe Head of Data

## The gamification of news subscriptions

Project Syndicate, a Prague-based news NGO, delivers quality journalism to global publishers, regardless of their ability to pay. Since launching in 2019, its subscribers have grown by 116% year-over-year, thanks to its game-like referral system that connects contributors and subscribers. These like-minded readers share tracked links and collect points, which can be exchanged for cash, when someone joins.

Driven by a belief in open-access content, Project Syndicate knew a traditional paywall was never an option. Instead, it built a platform serving members based on their behaviour, and a rewards programme for sign-ups.

Potential subscribers have a selection of ways to sign up for the service, as well as being offered the ability to offset future subscription fees by sharing Project Syndicate’s content and accruing credits or gifting subscriptions to friends and family.

“Readers can use their points to, for example, offset an upcoming subscription fee, or, in the spirit of Project Syndicate, donate their points back to projects,” explains Deputy Managing Editor Rachel Danna.

“Tracking links lets us serve a pop-up or personal note to new users, saying ‘This content is free because X shared it with you. To get a 50% discount, click here.’”

Project Syndicate hopes to create ambassadors out of contributors and readers who will regularly champion the mission and global organisation.

### Project Highlights

**116%** subscriber growth year-on-year

**9K** paid subscribers, a tripling in growth since 2019

**500** media partners in 157 countries



“Our mission is to provide access to global thought leaders and expert authors’ commentary to as many people around the world as possible.”

Rachel Danna, Project Syndicate Deputy Managing Editor

# Telling Local Stories

Local Recall | UK | €676K Funding | Local Publisher



## Giving local history a voice

Archant, a local UK newspaper publisher, is monetising historical news stories with Local Recall. Bringing together intelligent voice infrastructure and chatbot functionalities, the publisher digitised its 150-year-old archive to create a voice-activated news service.

Local Recall launched in August 2020 with over a century’s worth of Eastern Daily Press news stories. In just a few weeks, the service accumulated over 300 paying subscribers. Today, with a team of over 900 volunteers, it will soon be available across a further 54 titles, showing how important local news still is to the community.

Local Recall lets users ask questions about past events, access archived stories and hear responses from voice-activated devices such as Google Home. Archant’s Chief Client Officer Lorna Willis says the team of volunteers has created “one of the most advanced voice infrastructures in the UK” by manually digitising damaged archives that even the most advanced scanners could not achieve.

Archant is freely offering Local Recall technology to competitors. Its long-term goal is to see other publishers use the tool for their own content. As Willis sees it, “If local content isn’t available where people want it, when they want it, we’re planning the collective demise of local news publishing.”

### Project Highlights

**300** paying subscribers generated in the first few weeks

**10%** weekly increase in subscribers

**900** volunteers enlisted



“We’ve created one of the most advanced voice infrastructures in the UK. To do it, we broke the habit of compromise, surrounded ourselves with experts and didn’t set limits on the project. DNI funding made it all possible.”

Lorna Willis, Archant Chief Client Officer

# Telling Local Stories

Ländlepunkte | Austria | €350K Funding | Local Publisher



## Building loyalty through gamification

Bringing together behavioural science and tech innovation, the team at VOL.AT (a local news site for Vorarlberg, western Austria) created a loyalty scheme, encouraging users to engage with its content by awarding them redeemable points, called Ländlepunkte, as they read articles.

Given how important it is to get users to log in, the project has surpassed expectations. “We used to have 3% of our users logged in,” says CEO of Russmedia Gerold Riedmann. “Now, about 30% of our repeat users are.”

The loyalty scheme was created using techniques seen in gaming platforms to build a loyal base of users. Riedmann explains, “A extensive project like this wouldn’t have been possible without external backing. DNI funding offered us the chance to escape the zero price point trap.”

The technology is not restricted to this publisher and can be used on any website – it’s already being used by IKEA in Switzerland and supermarket chains.

There are plans to expand the rewards scheme into a local currency, and then use GPS functionality to trigger mobile messages and nudge members to visit VOL.AT business partners for special offers or promotions. Ultimately, says Riedmann, the technology enables businesses to “make loyal customers out of fly-by web traffic.”

### Project Highlights

**10X** increase in registrations

**3.3K** user logins a day via points rewards system

**65%** of points used to purchase VOL.AT’s own products



“It’s been a 10-fold growth project for us and there are not a lot of those happening in our industry.”

Gerold Riedmann, Russmedia Digital CEO

Buletin de București | Romania | €50K Funding | Nonprofit



## Strengthening local news with data-based journalism

Bringing municipality data to life, the Buletin de București — the brainchild of NGO publisher Funky Citizens — aims to paint a true picture of Romania at a local level.

### Project Highlights

**624K** unique visitors to date

**80%** of audience is 25-44-year-olds

**€70K** of further funding from other European sources

Funky Citizens President and Co-founder Elena Calistru explains, “Our most important achievement has been using data in local journalism, which was a new approach in Romania.” The Buletin de București was created to bring new energy into local news in a country with what Calistru calls “a vulnerable journalistic landscape.” (Romania ranked 48th in the World Press Freedom Index 2020.)

The project’s impact is keenly felt in the role it has played in coronavirus pandemic coverage. The team produced data-driven content during a time when information from the authorities was unclear. Significantly, the Buletin de București broke a story showing where funds were misspent in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) procurement during the pandemic and used the data as incontrovertible evidence to rebut charges of spreading fake news.

In the future, Calistru plans to improve the project’s sustainability by introducing subscriptions and crowdfunding. It’s part of a diversified funding model that Calistru believes is essential for news outlets’ survival.



“The project wouldn’t have existed without DNI funding — while we constantly felt the need to have both data journalism and community-focused interventions, we didn’t have the resources or the courage to start this on our own.”

Elena Calistru, Funky Citizens President

## Combating online disinformation

**Debunk (Demaskuok in Lithuanian) from Delfi, the largest online news publisher in the Baltics, is an initiative to tackle fake news online using a combination of artificial intelligence-based analytics and a dedicated community of volunteers.**

In the Baltics, cyberattacks and disinformation are major problems. To give a sense of the scale of the issue, Debunk analysed 9,881 articles between April and June 2020, spotting 617 disinformation cases related to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the context of Covid-19.

In order to provide analyses of online content at that scale, the company created advanced web-scraping tools and smart filters to automatically detect potential disinformation. Regular notifications are sent to a network of fact checkers who've earned the title 'elves' due to their troll-fighting powers. This mixture of tech and human intervention means that articles with harmful content can be flagged, and journalists automatically notified.

Since its launch in 2018, Debunk has worked with organisations in 17 countries around the world. DNI funding has been pivotal to enabling the resources, developers and specialists required for the project. "We needed to hire people who had knowledge of political science and international relations, alongside developers who would be able to work with machine learning and artificial intelligence," says Ieva Ivanauskaitė, Head of Business Development at Delfi.

### Project Highlights

**6** countries with technology implemented

**17** countries with partnered organisations

**72** reports produced per year

**617** disinformation cases spotted in past six months

“In Lithuania, when we need to defend our country against propaganda and fake news, we are united.”

‘Hawk’, a Debunk ‘elf’ working undercover

Edge NPD | Poland | €662K Funding | Startup



## Protecting publishers from fake and bot traffic

By building an anti-bots and trolls shield, Edge NPD has helped protect readers, publishers and advertisers globally from the negative impact of fake traffic, estimated to cost tens of billions of euros per year – and growing.

Advertisers' budgets can be severely impacted by fake and automated traffic due to fraudulent clicks and views being recorded. Founder Dobromir Ciaś was determined to find a way that every publisher could instantly identify sources of bot traffic, disinformation and trolling.

By embedding technology into a commercial advertising model, the team at Edge NPD, a business intelligence company founded in 2013, was certain it could secure any campaign from fraud and so developed ABT Shield.

The DNI Fund was essential for building the technology, designed in close cooperation with publishers, advertisers, academics and think tanks. Since the product's release, the company has partnered with some of the biggest names in the Polish news ecosystem and received an award for innovation from the Marketing Communication Association.

The company is seeing ABT Shield having a tangible impact on digital advertising, with advertisers more likely to spend money and allocate budget for campaigns when the protection is in place.

### Project Highlights

**3** major Polish publishers protected from fake and automated traffic

**1.8M** bots and trolls blocked

“Just as you try to keep our planet clean, we should keep the internet clean from the disease spread by bots and trolls. It is our social and commercial responsibility. As a publisher. As an advertiser. As an active technological participant of the internet environment.”

Dobromir Ciaś, Edge NPD Founder

RADAR | UK | €706K Funding | News Agency



RADAR

## Powering local news rooms with data and automation

**RADAR (Reporters and Data and Robots) provides subscriptions to 400 UK newsrooms to create data-driven articles using a blend of human and artificial intelligence.**

RADAR CEO Alan Renwick explains, “Our automated distribution helps us get important data insights to every citizen every day. Instead of writing one version of a story, we use automation to create large numbers of

bespoke versions distributed to 385 UK local authority areas. Publishers can subscribe to a Press Association daily feed of insights for one or more of those areas.” This process sees journalists working at RADAR writing a story template with wording for each of the various possible scenarios that a story could take, for example a rise or fall in violent crime or traffic accidents. Then versions of the story are automatically created for the UK’s local authority areas, using the data for that location to shape the most relevant story.

### Project Highlights

**200K** articles per year generated

**400** UK newspaper titles served

**150%** increase in subscriber usage during 2020

RADAR Data Journalist Katie Williams explains, “Data analysis can be a really daunting prospect, especially for local journalists who are busy in their patch, which is why RADAR is so vital.” Currently, RADAR articles have 95% pick-up digitally and, when it comes to print, many are front-page stories.

The service is proving highly cost efficient for publishers – fees are £1-2 per article compared to a newsroom production cost of approximately £20. In the future, the company plans to expand into other data-rich industries, including property, insurance and even retail.



“ We are filling a void and ensuring that important local issues – which matter to residents – are not going unreported. ”

**Katie Williams, RADAR Data Journalist**

## Digital newsroom tunes into radio future

For Portuguese digital news publisher Observador, DNI funding enabled a pivot to audio. Its voice service offers on-demand digital and 24-hour radio – and around 50 podcast shows are recorded in house, making Observador one of Portugal’s biggest providers.

Within a year of launching its audio service, and with the help of DNI funding, Observador has gained 25% of the total audio on-demand market in Portugal. Its digital live feeds reach over 180,000 monthly unique users and its podcasts are consistently ranked in the top 50.

To integrate audio services into its news offering and achieve this success, Observador completely rethought its newsroom workflows. Journalists produced text articles and on-demand voice packages simultaneously, and could live-stream interviews too.

Although the Portuguese audio market is not as mature as that of some other countries, the success of the service has proved this was due to a lack of compelling offering rather than a problem with demand. The Observador team now hope this experience will energise other publishers to follow suit.

### Project Highlights

**25%** of Portugal's audio on-demand market gained in one year

**2M** monthly podcast downloads

**180K** unique monthly users for digital live feed



“ I cannot imagine a successful news brand in five to 10 years’ time that is not able to produce, in quantity, quality audio content. ”

Rudolf Gruner, Observador Director General

SESAAB | Italy | €400K Funding | Regional Publisher



## Customising news with artificial intelligence

In an age of content saturation, the Italian publisher of L'Eco di Bergamo newspaper used artificial intelligence (AI) to create personalised newsletters and online content recommendations.

### Project Highlights

**11K** new subscribers in the last nine months

**85%** of paid members access premium content daily

**18%** increase in newsletter open rate

Società Editrice Saints Alexander, Ambrose, Bassett (SESAAB) Chief Innovation Officer Francesco Sfora explains, "We built algorithms that cluster content based on topics and user behaviour, as well as offer recommended content. If a user is browsing, after two or three articles, we suggest another article and a login call to action, to increase the signed-in activities."

In the last nine months, the publisher increased its digital subscribers to 11,000 thanks to marketing activities, innovative solutions, and a better user experience. Sfora says the more subscriptions, the more money can go into creating high-quality, in-depth L'Eco di Bergamo articles.

The news outlet has since sold the AI software to long-established Italian newspapers L'Unione Sarda and Giornale Di Brescia.

“ We were able to build a product that used AI to classify content and recommend articles, while enhancing user experience and reader loyalty. ”

Francesco Sfora, SESAAB Chief Innovation Officer

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## Closing words

When we started brainstorming about how to stimulate news innovation in Europe, we clearly didn't know what to expect, but we knew we had to do this in the most open way possible. And we had one goal: give anyone willing to think about tomorrow's technology and business models for journalism the room to take risks and try new things. Thus was born the Innovation pillar of the DNI: a call to every innovator in the news ecosystem to think big (and small!) by submitting their application(s) to the DNI Fund. Looking back, with more than 5,100 projects received, 662 selected and the €150 million fund fully allocated – we are pleased that our early intuitions at the time of our initial brainstorm were proven correct, namely:

1. Good ideas can come from anyone, anywhere
2. Having an open approach stimulates the entire ecosystem beyond the funding
3. News publishers are creative and want to collaborate to solve common systemic issues

We hope this final DNI Fund Impact Report not only brings full transparency to what has been achieved but also gives a sense of the profusion of great initiatives created to figure out new paths for sustainability through innovative use of technology. In this report, we've shared only some of what has been happening – so we really encourage you to dig deeper and visit our website to discover all the [projects](#)!

Also, don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you want to share any feedback and/or would like to be connected with another innovator in the news ecosystem: send a note to [dnifund@google.com](mailto:dnifund@google.com).

At Google, we've been so inspired by what has been accomplished here in Europe that we decided to launch a worldwide global programme in the wake of the European DNI Fund. In March 2019 we launched the [Google News Initiative](#) and, as part of it, the [Innovation Challenges](#) to continue sparking creative thinking and to help design a more sustainable future for journalism.

In Latin America, Asia Pacific, North America and the Middle East and Africa, we have already reviewed over 1,700 applications and funded [126 innovative project ideas](#) worth over €17 million.



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**Ludovic Blecher**  
*Head of Google News  
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*Director of News Ecosystem  
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# Funded organisations

## AUSTRIA

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DOSSIER GmbH  
Futurezone GmbH  
influence.vision  
Krone Multimedia GmbH & Co KG  
missMedia GmbH  
NIMEH & Partners  
ProSiebenSat.1 PULS 4  
Russmedia  
Sebastian Krause  
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Styria Media Group AG  
Telekurier Online Medien GmbH & Co KG  
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## BELGIUM

Belga News Agency  
De Persgroep Publishing NV  
International News Media Association (INMA)  
LAPRESSE.be - Alliance des Médias d'Information  
Mediafin  
Mediahuis N.V.  
Roularta Media Group NV  
Sanoma Media Belgium NV/SA  
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VRT, VRT NWS

## BULGARIA

168 Hours Ltd, part of Media Group  
Bulgaria Holding  
Damocles Analytics Ltd  
Economedia AD  
Investor.bg  
SHYN ON

## CROATIA

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Cyprus News Agency

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Sourcefabric z.ú.  
Transitions

## DENMARK

A/S Information  
A/S Kristeligt Dagblad  
Aps Altinget.dk  
Børsen  
Constructive Institute  
Danwatch  
International Media Support  
Jysk Fynske Medier P/S  
Mandag Morgen  
Mediehuset Herning Folkeblad  
Mediehuset Ingeniøren A/S  
Usable Machine  
Videnskab.dk  
Zetland Aps

## ESTONIA

AS Eesti Meedia  
Õhtuleht Kirjastus AS

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Aatos productions oy  
Aller Media Oy  
Alma Media Kustannus Oy  
Imake  
KeskiSuomalainen Oy  
KSF Media Ab  
Long Play Media Oy  
Lucify Oy  
Mediakunta Osk  
NewsInFocus Oy  
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Picks  
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## FRANCE

20 Minutes  
Agence France Presse (AFP)  
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Brief.me

Camera Lucida Productions (PCL)  
Casus Ludi  
CCM Benchmark Group  
Challenges  
Condé Nast France  
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Corse Presse SA  
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E2J2  
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Euronews  
Frontline Media  
Global Editors Network (GEN)  
Golden Network (GM6)  
Groupe L'Express  
Groupe La Dépêche du Midi  
Groupe Nice-Matin  
Ijsbergpress  
Indie  
Konbini Sas  
L'Equipe 24 24  
La Nouvelle République du Centre Ouest  
Le Figaro  
Le Parisien  
Le Parisien Libéré (by "UFIPAR", a "LVMH" group company)  
Le Télégramme  
Les Echos  
Les Jours  
Libération  
Loopsider  
melygroup  
Meteo Consult  
Monday Note SAS  
NextInteractive (part of Altice Media Group)  
Paris Normandie  
Philo Éditions  
Playbac Presse  
PlayPlay  
Pool  
Prisma Media  
Radio France  
Reporters d'Espoirs  
RTL Information et diffusion ID  
Societe Editrice du Monde  
Société Ouest-France  
Sparknews  
SSO Geste  
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K-Monitor Association  
Magyar Jeti Zrt.  
Mediaworks Hungary Zrt  
Mertek Mediaelemzo Muhely  
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Eireann  
Journal Media Ltd.  
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### ITALY

Adnkronos SpA Unipersonale  
AGI Agenzia Giornalsitica Italia Spa  
Alice Corona  
Carlo Strapparava  
Catchy S.r.l.  
Ced Digital & Servizi srl  
Cefriel  
Corriere della Sera, RCS  
MediaGroup S.p.A  
Elemedia S.p.A.  
Fondazione openpolis  
GEDI Gruppo Editoriale S.p.A.  
Good Morning Italia srl  
Il Sole 24 Ore Spa  
Investigative Reporting Project Italy  
(IRPI)  
ITEDI/II Secolo XIX  
LA SICILIA - Domenico Sanfilippo  
Editore S.p.A.  
La Stampa (Editoriale Itedi- Italiana  
Editrice SPA)  
Linkiesta.it  
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Mitecube Srl  
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News3.0 Spa  
onData  
Poligrafici Editoriale - Gruppo  
Monrif  
Radio 24 - 24 ORE Group  
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BNS Lithuania  
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Joint-stock company  
Pl Šiauliai plius  
Vsl "360 laipsniu filmai"

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Saint-Paul Luxembourg

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Mediatoday Co. Limited

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ANP Holding B.V.  
Blendle B.V.  
Business Nieuws Holding B.V.  
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Cartoon Movement  
Charged  
Coöperatie House of Journalism  
UA  
Dag en Nacht Media  
De Volkskrant  
Deeprace  
DUIC & DIG & MILVUM  
Follow the Money BV (FTM Media  
BV)  
Het Financieele Dagblad BV  
Katalysis B.V.  
Mind the facts bv  
Netherlands Institute for Sound  
and Vision  
New Atoms  
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NRC Media  
nwzer  
Open State Foundation  
Publicism B.V.  
Reblr  
Remy Koens  
RTL Nieuws, part of RTL Nederland  
Sanoma Media Netherlands BV  
Stichting Free Press Unlimited  
Stichting Global Voices  
Stichting Lokale  
Onderzoeksjournalistiek  
VPRO

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Aftenposten Mobil AS.  
(Aftenposten AS/Schibsted Norge  
AS)  
Amedia AS  
Aptoma AS  
Bakken & Bæck AS  
Dagbladet AS  
DB Medialab AS  
Front Kommunikasjon AS  
Gudbrandsdølen Dagningen AS  
Mediacconnect AS  
Mediehuset Nettavisen AS  
Mumli Hilde Gudvangen ENK  
Norsk Telegrambyrå AS  
Publish Lab AS  
Scandinavia Online AS  
Socius AS  
Teknisk Ukeblad Media AS

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302POLITYKA sp. z o.o.  
Agora SA  
Burda Media Poland  
E-Kiosk S.A.  
Edge NPD Sp. z o.o.  
Eurozet Sp. z o.o.  
Fratrria sp. z o.o.  
Fundacja ePaństwo  
Gazeta Wyborcza  
GLOB360 Sp. z o.o.  
Gremi Media S.A.  
Grupa Interia.pl Sp. z o.o. sp. k.  
Grupa Radiowa Agory Sp. z o.o.  
Grupa RMF Sp. z o.o. Sp. k.  
PBeM Sp. z o.o.  
Piotr Fedorczyk  
PMPG Polskie Media SA  
POLITYKA Sp. z o. o. SKA  
Polska Press Sp. z o.o.  
Stowarzyszenie Gazet Lokalnych  
TVN S.A.  
Webnalist sp. z o.o.  
Wirtualna Polska Media S.A.  
ZPR Media

### PORTUGAL

Acormedia SA  
Alberto Pereira  
Antonio Bernardino  
Cofina Media  
Empresa Diário de Notícias, Lda  
Empresa Jornalística Região de  
Leiria, Lda  
Global Notícias, Publicações S.A  
Impresa Office & Service Share S.A  
Impresa Publishing  
Inês Bravo  
INESC TEC - O Instituto de  
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Lusa – Agência de Notícias de  
Portugal, SA

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Media Bit Software SRL  
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Republica.ro published by Tetragon Publishing SRL  
Ringier Romania S.R.L.  
RISE Project / Paul-Cristian Radu  
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SC Convergent Media SRL  
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ZA CLOUD SRL

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Slovenska tiskovna agencija d.o.o. (STA)

### SPAIN

93 metros S.L.  
Actividades Digital Media  
Brainstorm Multimedia, S.L  
Carlos Ruano  
Colectivo 5W, S.L.  
Corporacion Publicitaria De Medios Digitales SL  
Cuonda  
Datadista  
Diario AS S.L. (PRISA Group)  
Diario de Navarra  
Diario La Grada Ediciones, S.L.

Ediciones El Pais S.L.  
Ediciones Prensa Libre, SL  
Editorial Ecoprensa S.A.  
El Independiente. Park Row Digital, S.L.  
El León de El Español, S.A.  
eldiario.es  
Europa Press Comunicacion S.A.  
Fundación Ciudadana Civio  
Grupo Heraldo  
Henneo  
iLeon.com - Servicios Generales de Comunicación y Gestión, S.L.  
La Voz de Galicia, S.A  
Minushu SLU  
Partal Maresma i Associats SL  
PolitiBot Innovación, SL  
Precept  
Prisa Brand Solutions, S.L.U.  
Prisa Inn S.A.  
Prisa Radio SA  
Prodigioso Volcán  
Público.es  
Quality Media Producciones  
Serveis de Comunicació Global  
Aquitània SL (Nació Digital)  
Sima Applied Technologies S.L.  
Spain Media Magazine S.L.  
ThinkSize S.L.  
Titania Compañía Editorial S.L.  
Unidad Editorial SA

### SWEDEN

24 Media Network AB  
AB Kvällstidningen Expressen  
Bambuser AB  
Bonnier News AB  
Dagens Industri AB  
Journalism Robotics Stockholm Ab  
MittMedia AB  
Newsreps AB  
Papereed AB  
Stadsporten Citygate AB (Citygate)  
Svenska Dagbladet (Schibsted Media Group)  
Sydsvenska Dagbladets AB  
TT News Agency

### SWITZERLAND

awp Finanznachrichten AG  
AZ Zeitungen AG (AZ Digital)  
Blasting News Ltd.  
FixxPunkt AG  
Heidi Média SA, publishing compagny of Heidi.news  
Le Temps SA  
Neue Zürcher Zeitung AG  
Scitec-Media  
TagesWoche  
Tamedia AG  
WAN-IFRA  
We.Publish Association

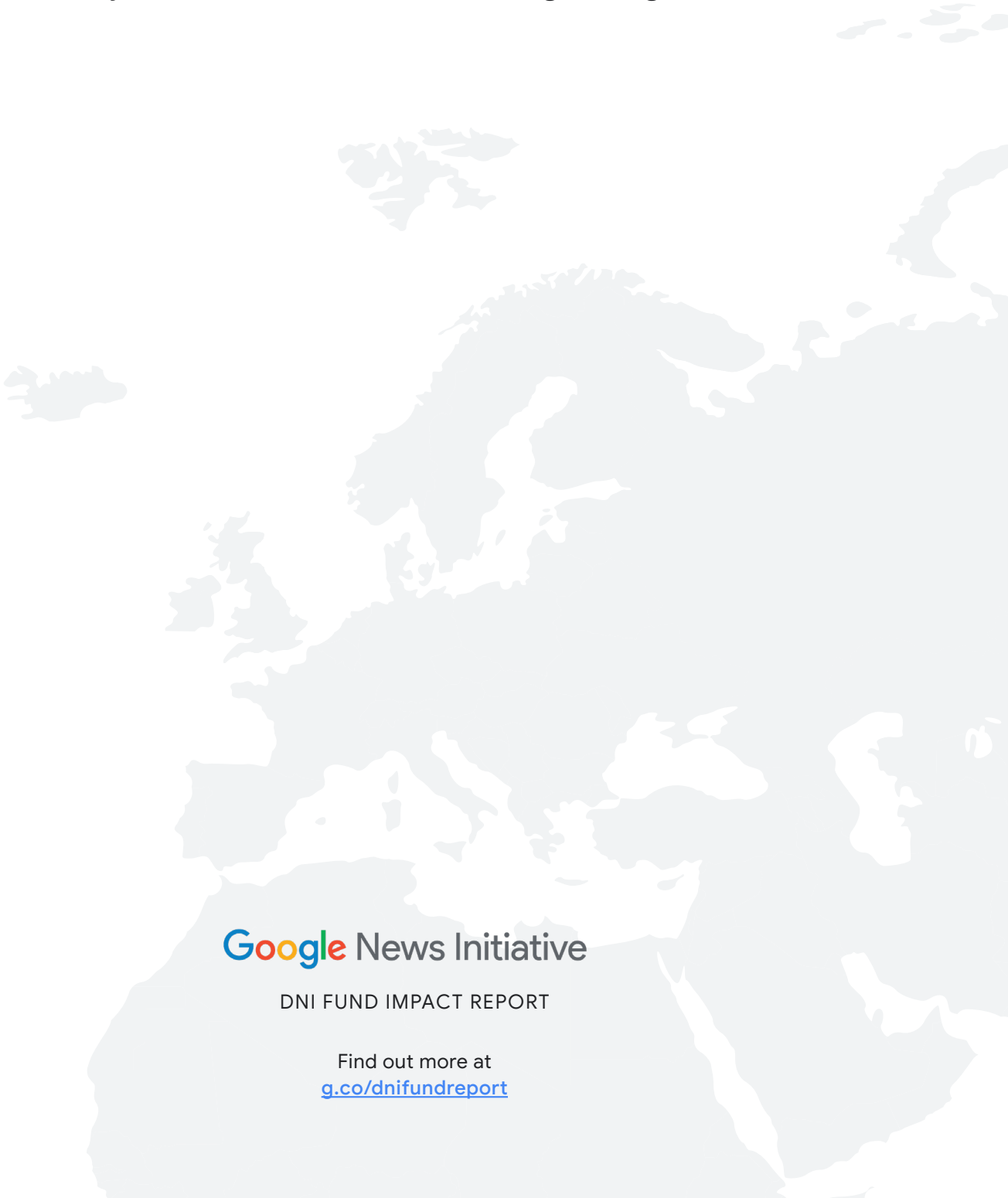
### UNITED KINGDOM

Al Jazeera International  
Angel Milev

Archant Community Media Ltd  
Associated Press Television News Limited  
Bellingcat  
Below the Radar Ltd  
Bistromathics Limited  
Caerphilly Media Ltd  
City University London  
Counterpointing UK Ltd  
Coventry University  
Dennis Publishing  
Explaain  
Factmata Limited  
Financial Times Limited  
Full Fact  
GLITCH.DIGITAL LIMITED  
ImmersiveIP Ltd  
Independent Television News Ltd (ITN)  
IPTC - International Press Telecommunications Council  
James Durston  
Johnston Press plc  
Kaleida Networks Ltd.  
Kendra Foundation  
Kiln Enterprises Ltd  
Magnum Photos  
Media Innovation Studio, University of Central Lancashire  
Mediaforce (Holdings) Limited  
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MGN Ltd  
News UK & Ireland Limited  
Newsquest Media Group Ltd  
Open Business Industry Group  
Orion Technologies Limited  
PinkNews  
Press Association news agency  
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Reuters Limited  
School of Journalism, Media and Culture - Cardiff University  
Serelay LTD  
Siine Ltd  
Sky News  
Snappd Ltd  
Solent News and Photo Agency  
South West News Service Limited  
Springer Nature Limited  
Stuart Goulden  
Talk About Local (West Midlands) Limited  
Tanya Cordrey  
TapeWrite LTD  
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The Ferret Media Limited  
The Financial Times Ltd  
The Irish News Ltd  
The University of Sheffield  
The World Weekly Media Ltd  
Tomas Petricek  
Tortoise  
Trinity Mirror Shared Services Ltd  
Trint Ltd

TRUE 212 Limited  
Turi Munthe  
UK Citizens Online Democracy  
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Some organisations listed received funding for multiple projects



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**Google** News Initiative

DNI FUND IMPACT REPORT

Find out more at  
[g.co/dnifundreport](https://g.co/dnifundreport)