

MONITORING MEDIA PLURALISM IN THE DIGITAL ERA

APPLICATION OF THE MEDIA PLURALISM MONITOR IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, ALBANIA, MONTENEGRO, REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, SERBIA & TURKEY IN THE YEAR 2022

Country report: Lithuania

Aukse Balcytiene, Vytautas Magnus University

Deimantas Jastramskis, Vilnius University

Kristina Juraite, Vytautas Magnus University

Ignas Kalpokas, Vytautas Magnus University

Research Project Report

Issue -

June 2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. About the project	4
1.1. Overview of the Project	4
1.2. Methodological notes	4
2. Introduction	6
3. Results of the data collection: Assessment of the risks to media pluralism	8
3.1. Fundamental Protection (17% - low risk)	12
3.2. Market Plurality (69% - high risk)	14
3.3. Political Independence (35% - medium risk)	17
3.4. Social Inclusiveness (36% - medium risk)	20
4. Conclusions	23
5. Notes	26
6. References	28
Annexe I. Country Team	
Annexe II. Group of Experts	

© European University Institute 2023

Editorial matter and selection © Aukse Balcytiene, Deimantas Jastramskis, Kristina Juraite, Ignas Kalpokas, 2023

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY 4.0) International license which governs the terms of access and reuse for this work. If cited or quoted, reference should be made to the full name of the author(s), editor(s), the title, the series and number, the year and the publisher.

Views expressed in this publication reflect the opinion of individual authors and not those of the European University Institute.

Published by

European University Institute (EUI)

Via dei Roccettini 9, I-50014

San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)

Italy

ISBN:978-92-9466-446-4

doi:10.2870/031898



With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The European Commission supports the EUI through the EU budget. This publication reflects the views only of the author(s) and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

1. About the project

1.1. Overview of the Project

The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) is a research tool that is designed to identify potential risks to media pluralism in the Member States of the European Union and in Candidate Countries. This narrative report has been produced on the basis of the implementation of the MPM that was carried out in 2022. The implementation was conducted in 27 EU Member States, as well as in Albania, Montenegro, The Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. This project, under a preparatory action of the European Parliament, was supported by a grant awarded by the European Commission to the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) at the European University Institute.

1.2. Methodological notes

Authorship and Review

The CMPF partners with experienced, independent national researchers to carry out the data collection and to author the narrative reports, except in the case of Italy where data collection is carried out centrally by the CMPF team. The research is based on a standardised questionnaire that was developed by the CMPF.

In Lithuania the CMPF partnered with Prof. Aukse Balcytiene, Prof. Kristina Juraite and Assoc. Prof Ignas Kalpokas (Vytautas Magnus University), Assoc. Prof. Deimantas Jastramskis (Vilnius University), who conducted the data collection, scored and commented on the variables in the questionnaire and interviewed experts. The report was reviewed by the CMPF staff. Moreover, to ensure accurate and reliable findings, a group of national experts in each country reviewed the answers to particularly evaluative questions (see Annexe II for the list of experts). For a list of selected countries, the final country report was peer-reviewed by an independent country expert.

Risks to media pluralism are examined in four main thematic areas: Fundamental Protection, Market Plurality, Political Independence and Social Inclusiveness. The results are based on the assessment of a number of indicators for each thematic area (see Table 1).

Fundamental Protection	Market Plurality	Political Independence	Social Inclusiveness
Protection of freedom of expression	Transparency of media ownership	Political independence of the media	Representation of minorities
Protection of right to information	Plurality of media providers	Editorial autonomy	Local/regional and community media
Journalistic profession, standards and protection	Plurality in digital markets	Audiovisual media, online platforms and elections	Gender equality in the media
Independence and effectiveness of the media authority	Media viability	State regulation of resources and support to the media sector	Media Literacy
Universal reach of traditional media and access to the Internet	Editorial independence from commercial and owners' influence	Independence of PSM	Protection against disinformation and hate speech

Table 1: Areas and Indicators of the Media Pluralism Monitor

The Digital Dimension

The Monitor does not consider the digital dimension to be an isolated area but, rather, as being intertwined with the traditional media and the existing principles of media pluralism and freedom of expression. Nevertheless, the Monitor also extracts digitally specific risk scores, and the report contains a specific

analysis of the risks that related to the digital news environment.

The Calculation of Risk

The results for each thematic area and Indicator are presented on a scale from 0 to 100%.

Scores between 0% and 33%: low risk

Scores between 34% and 66%: medium risk

Scores between 67% and 100%: high risk

With regard to the Indicators, scores of 0 are rated as 3%, while scores of 100 are rated as 97%, by default, in order to avoid an assessment that offers a total absence, or certainty, of risk.

Methodological Changes

For every edition of the MPM, the CMPF updates and fine-tunes the questionnaire, based on the evaluation of the tool after its implementation, the results of previous data collection and the existence of newly available data. For the MPM 2023, no major changes were made to the questionnaire, except for the Indicators Transparency of Media Ownership, Plurality in Digital Markets and Editorial Independence from Commercial and Owners Influence (Market Plurality area), and Protection Against Disinformation and Hate Speech (Social Inclusiveness area). The results obtained for these indicators are therefore not strictly comparable with those results obtained in the previous edition of the MPM. The methodological changes are explained on the CMPF website at <http://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>.

In the Market Plurality area, the names of three Indicators have changed. The former indicator on "News Media Concentration" is now named "Plurality of Media Providers"; "Online Platforms and Competition Enforcement" has been renamed as "Plurality in Digital Markets"; "Commercial & Owners' Influence Over Editorial Content" has been renamed as "Editorial Independence from Commercial and Owner Influence".

Disclaimer: The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the views of the CMPF, nor the position of the members composing the Group of Experts. It represents the views of the national country team who carried out the data collection and authored the report. Due to updates and refinements in the questionnaire, MPM2023 scores may not be fully comparable with those in the previous editions of the MPM. For more details regarding the project, see the CMPF report on MPM2023, which is available on: <http://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>.

2. Introduction

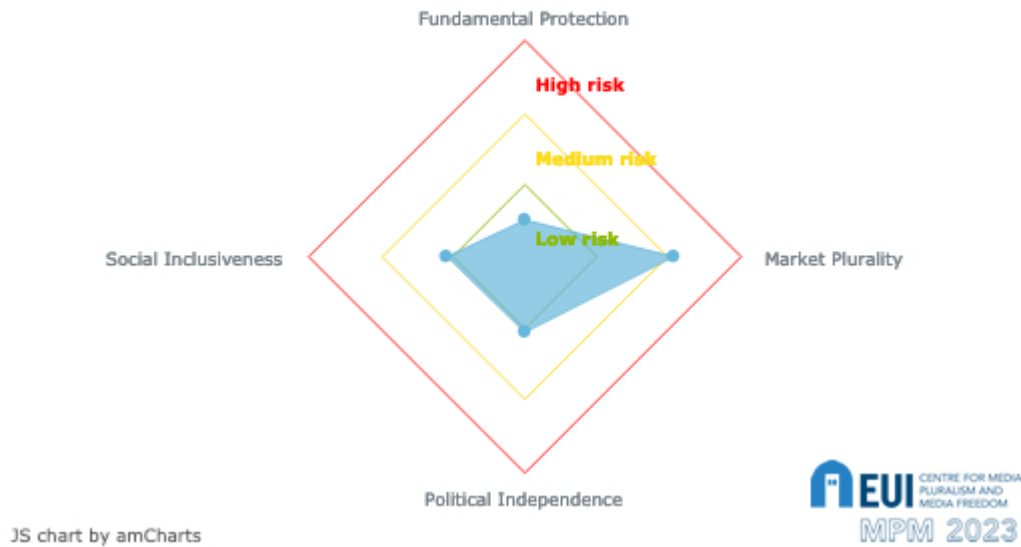
- **Country overview.** Lithuania (65 286 km²) is situated on the South Eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. It is bordered by Latvia to the North, Belarus to the East and South, Poland to the South, and Kaliningrad Oblast (a Russian Federation territory) to the Southwest.
- **Population.** According to Statistics Lithuania, the resident population amounted to 2.8 million inhabitants in 2022. The demographic decline in the country has been observed since the early 1990s and is due to different reasons, including low birth rate, mortality and immense emigration. Only in the last couple of years the net international migration has shifted into positive - the number of immigrants exceeded that of emigrants. Those who are arriving to Lithuania mainly include Belarusians, Ukrainians and returning Lithuanian citizens^[1]. Vilnius is the only city in the country that has grown over the last decade. The capital's official population is over 500,000. Most of Lithuania's population resides in cities: over two thirds, or 68.2 percent, of the Lithuanian population live in urban areas^[2].
- **Minorities and languages.** The official language of the country is Lithuanian. At the beginning of 2022, the resident population was composed of Lithuanians (85.1%), Poles (6.6%), Russians (5.1%), and other (3.2%). There are 154 nationalities living in Lithuania^[3].
- **Political situation.** In the past few years, political polarization has visibly intensified in Lithuania. The last national election of 2020 has brought a new generation of politicians, which is notable in terms of the age, gender representation, and the declared political program provisions of the coalition parties towards greater equality and individual liberty (e.g., same-sex partnerships, legalization of soft drugs, etc.). The coalition government was led by the Conservatives (Homeland Union) and Liberals (the Liberal Movement and the Freedom Party). In comparison with previous year assessments of MPM, no changes have been identified in the political sphere in relation to the effectiveness of governance, which remains robust but has some unresolved serious flaws. The rule of law is respected, but political participation and trust levels remain relatively low. The policy performance remains mixed: strategies are listed in policy documents, but outcomes and measures of impact of reforms implemented are lagging; there are inconsistencies in programs and legal acts, which cause duplication of actions. Content-wise, too much focus is on economic issues while structural reforms in education, healthcare, and public administration produce obvious gaps and lack innovation. The insufficient effectiveness in these areas is widening socio-demographic and creating new digital information inequalities. Some improvements include: anti-corruption legislation is well developed and being improved; strategic management has been initiated to concentrate efforts of national resilience development into one central unit.
- **Economic situation.** Lithuania's economy has shown resilience to pandemic obstacles, but the country still faces major challenges. Lithuania experienced successful economic growth until early 2022 but has since faced setbacks due to Russian aggression in Ukraine. In 2022, the Lithuanian economy slowed down, and the quarterly growth was weak throughout the year, culminating in a negative growth rate of -1.7% in the fourth quarter. In 2022, inflation has reached 18.9%, but the rate of price growth is projected to decrease in 2023. In response to inflation, the government has been supporting households and businesses to help them cope with the energy crisis. According to the Bank of Lithuania, in 2022, the unemployment rate was 5.9% which is less than in the previous year^[4].
- **Media market.** Lithuania is in a good position in terms of press freedom, internet access, and media

literacy. In World Press Freedom index Lithuania ranks number 9.^[5] Internet access (penetration of population) is 77%, and daily Internet use is 82%.^[6] Media literacy rank is 17 (in 2021 it was 58).^[7] Despite flaws in the legal system and financial issues media and journalists work in a relatively favorable environment. However, disinformation is becoming a major concern among the public and the media as well. 80% of population in Lithuania agree with the statement that disinformation is a problem for one's own country.^[8] Three largest media groups have fact-checking newsrooms, of which two are signatories of IFCN. The state of democracy in Lithuania is assessed with a moderate score: 40.^[9] To improve media pluralism, it is important to ensure that the media is free from any political interference, has favorable economic conditions and financial resources for journalists to carry out their work, as well as the support of the public. As of 2022, two media sectors remain the strongest in the country: TV and Internet-based media. Social media channels and TV news are the main news sources for audiences. Facebook is the top popular social media platform (61% of users), and Pinterest ranked second with 12.2% of Lithuanian social media site visits^[10]. In policymaking, there is a lack of systematic approach to media pluralism assurance in Lithuania. Among biggest achievements in 2022 is a new financial support scheme for the media sector introduced by the Ministry of Culture. Overall, a detailed analysis of the diverse factors (regulatory framework and effectiveness and performance analyses) influencing the situation is missing, which calls to define media policy as of limited efficiency^[11].

- **Regulatory environment.** The media regulatory framework in Lithuania remains quite liberal despite a few changes. In 2022, a new media support scheme was included into the amendment to the main media law (Law on Provision of Information to the Public) and a new co-regulatory body, namely the Media Support Foundation, will replace existing Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation.
- **War in Ukraine.** Since the outbreak of the war, Lithuania has been standing with Ukraine and continues providing its humanitarian, military and financial support. In 2022, Lithuania granted 660 million euros in aid to Ukraine, including 240 million in military assistance. 95% of population are in favor of the humanitarian aid, and 70% have already donated money and material goods to Ukraine^[12]. On the other hand, the country is facing with growing challenges of weaponization of information set up by the Russia's state propaganda machine. Lithuanian support to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees is among the top disinformation narratives exploited by the Kremlin information operations.

3. Results of the data collection: Assessment of the risks to media pluralism

Lithuania: Media Pluralism Risk Areas



The implementation of the Media Pluralism Monitor in Lithuania shows a situation of low risk in the Fundamental Protection area, of medium risk in Political Independence and Social Inclusiveness, and of high risk in the Market Plurality area. With 17% of risk **Fundamental Protection** remains of low risk assessment; However, there is a significant reduction from the previous assessment (last year it ranked 29%). The risk associated with the **Political Independence** area remains stable (35%, last year – 35%), while the risk associated with **Social Inclusiveness** has decreased (36%, last year – 43%). The high risk level in **Market Plurality** is 69% in 2022, with an increase of the risk level - which was medium in the previous year.

The area of **Fundamental Protection** reveals assessments only of low risk. The media regulatory framework in Lithuania follows a liberal perspective. The rights of freedom of expression, right to information are explicitly defined in the Constitution.

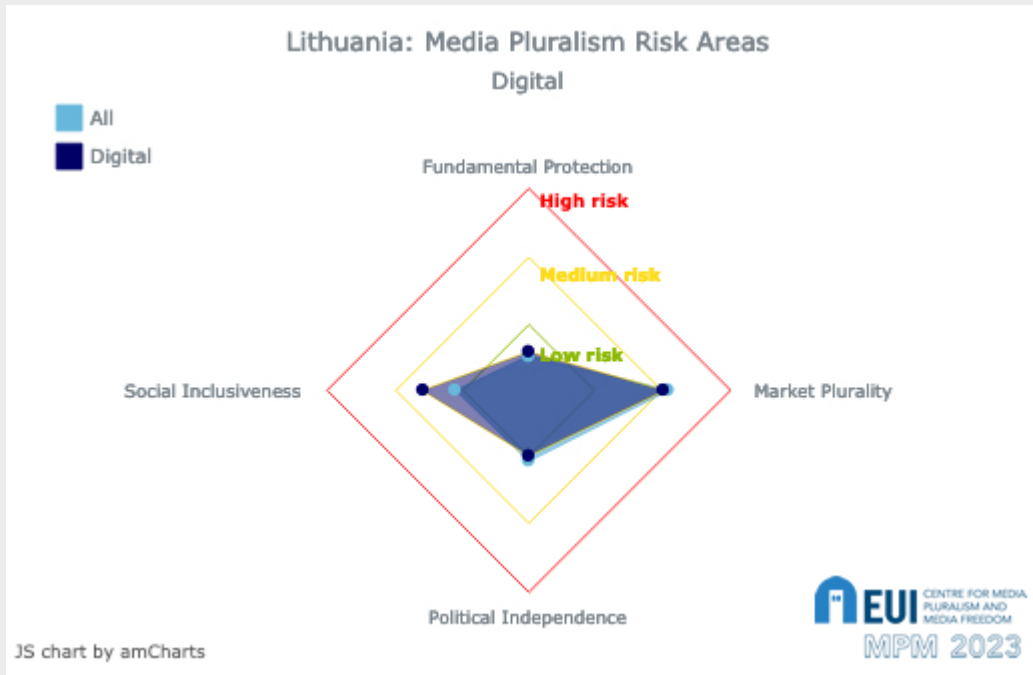
The risk assessment in **Market Plurality** area reveal trends which have an enduring character. Among these are: political/business influence, insufficiencies in the assurance of media ownership transparency mechanisms. Media ownership though is regulated with well-defined indications of who cannot be an owner of the media, the transparency mechanisms are not without flaws. Though **Transparency of media ownership** indicator scores within low range of risks (25%), in practice there exists a somewhat incongruity: audio-visual media matters (broadcast licensing, ownership changes) are observed by the designated media authority (Radio and TV Commission). Whereas print media and Internet outlets' ownership transparency questions are addressed by the designated institution (Ministry of Culture) indicated by law. The requirement to annually report on print and Internet media ownership changes is listed in the law (the Law on Provision of Information to the Public), this requirement, however, is fulfilled only partially since no mechanism exists to penalize those media groups which ignore such an obligation. As a result, there is lack of comprehensive data on ownership transparency, which is a persistent risk factor in both – sustainable media policy, and media democratic performance. **Plurality of media providers** is very high 97% and **Plurality in digital markets** reveals 82% of risk – for a small and linguistically restricted market these developments create obvious risks to plurality of voices and may have a negative impact on the quality of the overall information landscape. Briefly, an ongoing concentration and oligopolization was an edident

trend since some years ago, but the digitalization and platformization has made these trends even more evident showing persistent loopholes in policy and regulation.

The area of **Political Independence** stands in the medium risk zone (35%) and draws attention to a number of concerns: the indicator **Political independence of the media** (52%) evidences how some Lithuanian political parties develop influence on the local media content through their members or protégé persons in the ownership structures (or management staff) of media companies in many Lithuanian municipalities (Ramonaitė, Vaiginytė, 2020). The indicator **Editorial autonomy** reveals a risk of 75%, largely resulting from the lack of safeguards to the autonomy of editors-in-chief and the dependency of the editorial content in those news media organizations which ownership structures have ties with politically involved persons. The Indicator **State regulation of resources and support to the media sector** (27%) detected how no viable support mechanisms are available to this day, such as state subsidies, while the indicator **Independence of public service media** is at low risk (3%). Briefly, while the national media is relatively free from political risks (although political influence is possible through the funding of political advertising and publicity services), the biggest risks linked to **Political Independence** remain for the local municipal media.

In 2022, the **Social Inclusiveness** is still associated with a medium risk (36% compared to 43% last year). Among the factors that explain the decrease of the risk level for Social Inclusiveness, is the adoption of the Basic Law on the Protection of the Rights of People with Disabilities, which replaces the Law on the Integration of the Disabled. This law is likely to improve media accessibility for people with disabilities. In addition, this year, a heightened attention was given to exposures of disinformation and fake narratives related to national security issues, geopolitical instabilities, and the Russian war in Ukraine. Lithuania has several collaborative partnership initiatives, such as the DIGIRES association, which engage different partners in expertise exchanges and provide trainings and awareness raising campaigns to different vulnerable groups. However, in the Social Inclusiveness area, some elements are still risk factors: Lithuanian legislation does not have definition of “minority” and of “community media”, which problematizes the representation of minorities, hence indicators **Representation of minorities in the media** shows 46%, and **Local/regional and community media** risk is 38%.

Focus on the digital environment



Analysis of digital environment pluralism indicators shows similar trends to those in the conventional news media environment. The area of Market Plurality generates the highest ranking among all other risk areas; the area of Social Inclusiveness also receives medium assessment (56%). This has been a tendency registered also in the previous years.

Online Fundamental Protection (19%). This year, the area shows a risk of 19%, which is a low risk. Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the main media law (the Law on Provision of Information to the Public), which covers all media, including those operating digitally, and the Constitution. In Lithuania, there are no online/digital-specific limitations on freedom of speech. Of course, particularly with regard to speech on online platforms, the state has to share power with technology companies, but state authorities are also seeking to ensure protection through cooperation with platform companies in cases of public concern over the latter's content moderation [policies](#). Likewise, the state itself has consistently refrained from arbitrary removal of online content, and when removal does happen after due process, such information is always publicised, and remedies are available via administrative courts. As for the platform side, various public figures, activists and journalists have alleged that social media platforms, and Facebook in particular, may be overly zealous in blocking anti-Russian content in the context of the war in Ukraine, and the government has sought clarifications from platform companies on that matter. Similarly, over the previous years, there had been notable content limitations with regard to COVID-19 (conspiracy theories and anti-vaccination content), but that had proved to be less controversial. Still, it must be stressed that platforms only provide a very basic statistical breakdown of content takedowns for Lithuania, thus lacking transparency. In terms of online threats against journalists, this constituted a somewhat less significant problem in 2022 than over the previous years, which coincided with the ebb of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the problem remains sufficiently significant for some online news outlets, and they have to anonymise their fact-checking content. Finally, it is noteworthy that there has been a significant increase in internet connectivity, such as broadband and connection speeds and a decrease in the market concentration of dominant ISPs, leading to a more competitive service provision environment. The latter developments largely coincided with the pandemic and the rollout of

5G connectivity.

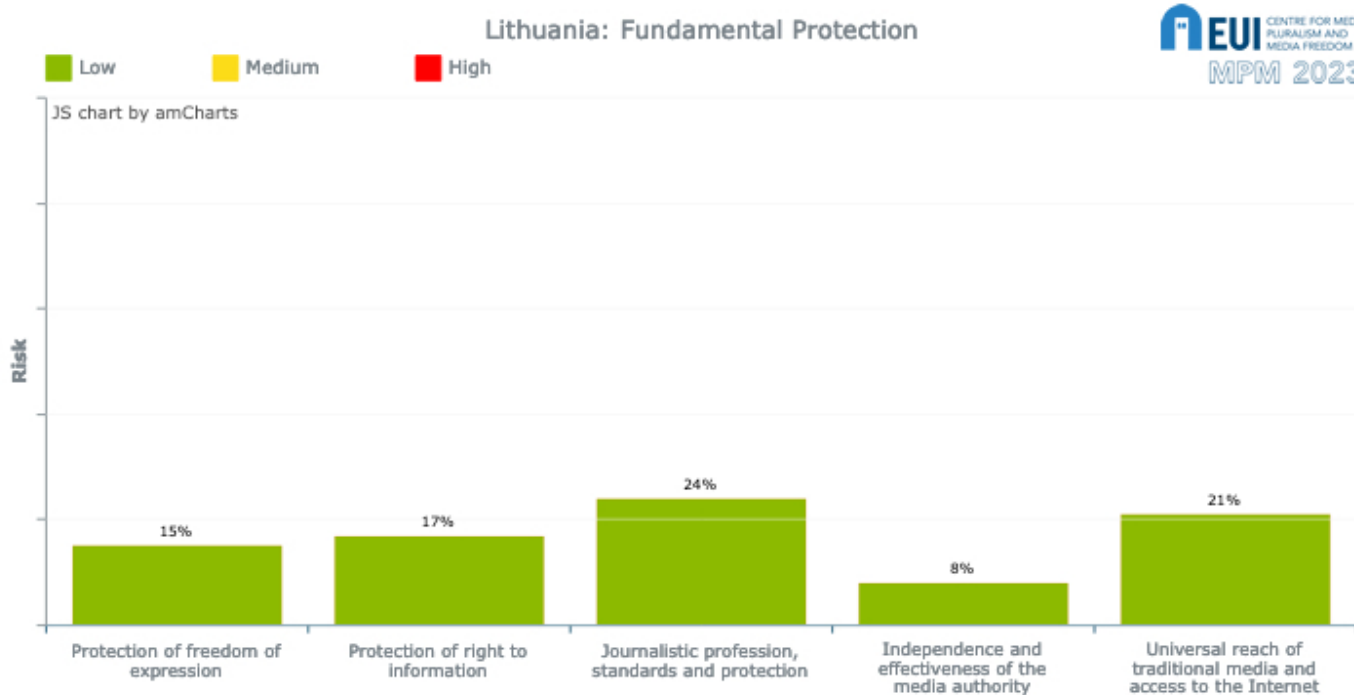
Online Market Plurality (67%). Media transparency is an enduring issue: the national legislation contains explicit requirements for the disclosure of ownership information (and ultimate owners) in the news media (both digital and traditional) sector, but the system for collecting data on all registered media outlets will only commence operation in 2023. To date, the major obstacle to effective monitoring of the digital news media sphere is the absence of reliable and comprehensive data on ownership (including ultimate ownership). This data gap can be attributed to numerous factors, such as the lack of a single, unified database of news media ownership, the lack of audited and dependable financial statements, and the lack of standardized disclosure requirements. Generally, the introduction of specific competition rules, increased transparency, and a focus on innovation are all essential measures that should be taken in order to maintain a healthy digital media market.

Online Political Independence (32%). Main national digital media groups do not have direct links to political control; however, some local websites may be indirectly controlled by politicians or their family members. Internet news media are subject to the same requirements of the main media law as other media types, thus, ethical norms of journalistic professionalism and political advertising must be applied to digital content. At present, there is no specific regulation for online political advertising during electoral campaigns, and the system to effectively monitor campaign expenditures is not yet put into action.

Online Social Inclusiveness (56%). Media literacy risk (43%) remains at a similar scale as in the assessments of previous years. Lithuania has many groups of actors involved in media education, including teachers, librarians, and journalists. However, political will in relation to viewing media literacy as a guide to digital resilience is lacking. A more radical shift from 'media literacy' to 'digital media education' is required. Understanding of digital infrastructures is essential to resisting and combating disinformation, instigations to conflict, etc., thus digital media literacy needs to be seen not as a shield to protect citizens (a reactive approach) from information disorders. The digital skills training must receive more focused attention: starting with media literacy integration in schools. Improving digital skills from an early age will prepare students to take advantage of the digital world and become active, responsible citizens in the digital age. Also, to reduce risks of digital information disruptions, it is essential to strengthen the regulatory framework and to coordinate efforts to counter false information. In Lithuania, different stakeholders (government, national security, media, academic institutions, NGOs, civil society) play an active role in raising civic resilience and public alertness to fake narratives, instigations to conflict, influx of hate speech. Lithuania appears at the forefront advancing efforts to counter disinformation, and many decisions are brought as examples of good practice and exemplary cases of policy making. As to media and fact-checking, these activities are limited in scale but are effective, as people are aware of the practice. Financial resources for fact-checking will be provided by the new Media Fund, which will come into effect in 2023. Currently, the activities of fact-checking are financed by the media groups, with significant support from various additional research and analysis projects (most of these are developed in partnership with EDMO, such as DIGIRES and BECID), and external sources.

3.1. Fundamental Protection (17% - low risk)

The Fundamental Protection indicators represent the regulatory backbone of the media sector in every contemporary democracy. They measure a number of potential areas of risk, including the existence and effectiveness of the implementation of regulatory safeguards for freedom of expression and the right to information; the status of journalists in each country, including their protection and ability to work; the independence and effectiveness of the national regulatory bodies that have the competence to regulate the media sector, and the reach of traditional media and access to the Internet.



Fundamental protection scored a low risk. There has been a significant reduction of risk from 29% to 17% compared to the previous year. Still, the reduction has not been even across indicators.

Notably, **Protection of freedom of expression** has remained stable at 15% (17% during the previous year). There were no changes to the fundamental legal framework (laws and constitutional provisions governing the freedom of expression. One area that has improved - clarity of limitations to the freedom of expressions - has been not due to legal changes but simply a consequence of institutional practice with the media regulation authority setting a precedent for a restrictive interpretation of several otherwise relatively broadly defined clauses.

A significant reduction of risk (from 29% to 17%) has been recorded in **Protection of Right to Information**. This is because, while in the previous year, there had been attempts to limit access to information by misapplying existing restrictions, such as data protection laws, in 2022 such decisions were ultimately [overturned by the Supreme Court](#). Improved conditions for access to information (medium to low risk in this case) constitute a significant positive development. Also, 2022 saw the adoption of the [Law on Whistleblower Protection](#), although the actual effectiveness of the law had not yet been tested in 2022.

Another significant improvement can be seen in **Journalistic Profession, Standards and Protection** (risk reduction from 36% to 24%). In particular, while in 2021 the Covid-19 pandemic had fuelled conspiracy theories and violent protests, this had also spilled over threats made against journalists; meantime, in 2022, no such threats had been recorded or at least made public (inasmuch as can be judged from a search of publicly available data), leading to the reduction of risk from medium to low. Likewise, there is no publically available data that would suggest a preponderance of online attacks, including against female journalists,

although the role of newsrooms in, for example, anonymising factchecking reports could be seen as a contributing factor as well.

There has also been improvement with regard to **the Independence and Effectiveness of the Media Authority** (risk reduction from 13% to 8%). Lithuania has two regulatory bodies: the Office of the Journalism Ethics Inspector and the Radio and Television Commission. The tasks and responsibilities of the Commission, as well as appeal mechanisms against its decisions, are well defined in the Law on Provision of Information to the Public. The Commission is well-resourced. There have been no indications that its financial and human resources are inadequate. In the past, there has been a controversy around the Office of the Journalism Ethics Inspector, which extended the application of data protection regulations to reporting on potential corruption in public procurement, which was met with an outcry from journalists and civil society. The Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania has since overturned the decision. In the absence of similar cases, the overall risk level for this indicator has decreased.

The largest overall improvement has been in the indicator of **Universal Reach of Traditional Media and Access to the Internet** (risk reduction from 52% to 21%) due to a significant increase in broadband connection (70.8% to 81.8%). It is worth noting that the time period between the two data points correlated with the Covid-19 pandemic, that had witnessed an overall significant increase in the use of digital communication technologies. There has also been a marginal improvement of overall connectivity, by 4% to 86%, meaning that the increase in broadband users was most likely due to existing users having their service improved. There has been an increase in average connection speeds, which could also be at least partly related to several network providers rolling out wireless 4G (and later 5G) connection plans for home users, particularly in rural areas and other areas not benefitting from good broadband speed. Last but not least, there was an increase in competition between internet service providers (ISPs), with the market share of top 4 shrinking by 8% to 79%.

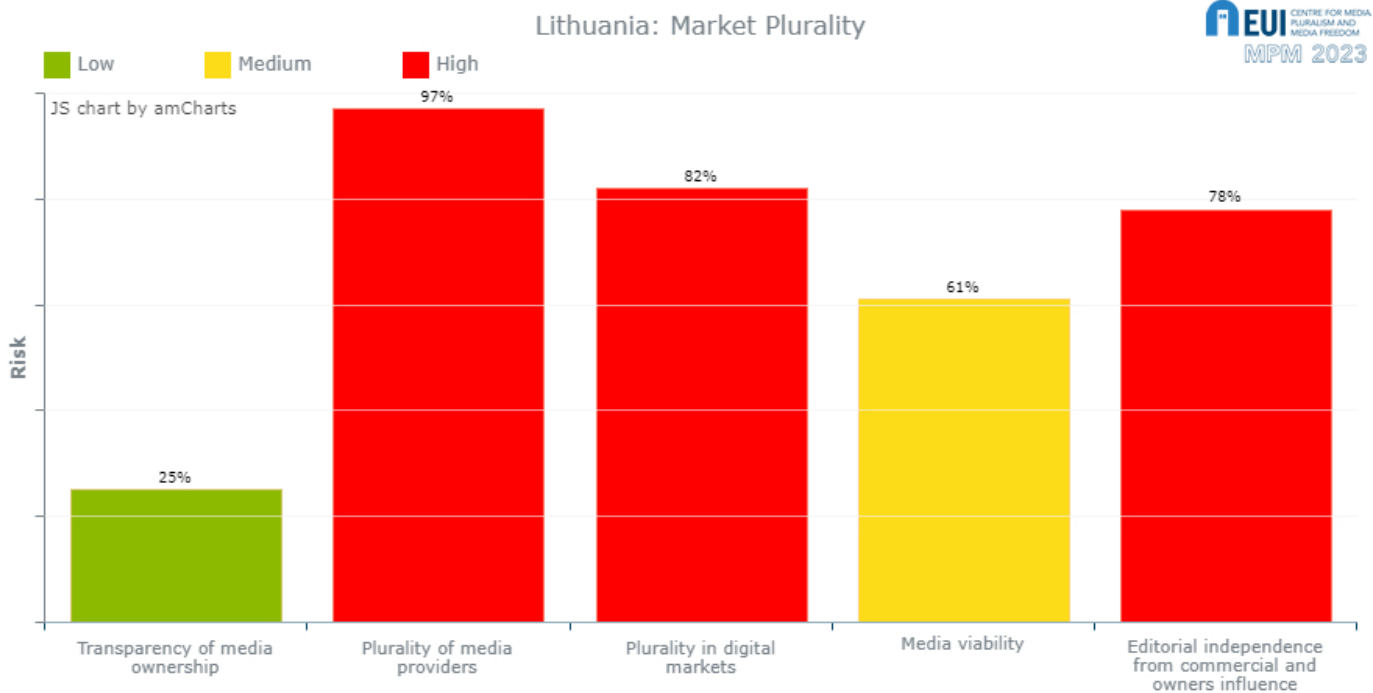
Overall, it transpires that while, at face value, there has been a notable reduction of the risk score, very little of it was the result of state policy, increased protection, or changed in judicial practices (with the exception of removal of GDPR restrictions for journalists when publication of personal data is in the public interest). Instead, most of the improvement can be attributed to the general decrease of polarisation after the pandemic and increased internet connectivity in the country. This can only be taken to demonstrate the close entanglement of media pluralism with contextual factors that go beyond regulatory practices and are often independent of them.

Focus on the digital environment

With regard to the digital environment, it must be stressed that there have been no publicly known instances of arbitrary removal of online content or content filtering by both state institutions and ISPs and/or platforms as was through recent years. However, the positive change is visible in terms of the online safety of journalists, although that can only be attributed to the weakening of polarization with the ebb of the Covid-19 pandemic but not to efforts by state institutions, journalist unions or other bodies. A further area where improvement is evident is connectivity and average connection speeds. Also, new connectivity plans offers by internet service providers are likely to have been contributors. In addition, the period for which data has now become available covers the pandemic, which was in itself a catalyst for online connectivity.

3.2. Market Plurality (69% - high risk)

The *Market Plurality* area considers the economic dimension of media pluralism, assessing the risks deriving from insufficient transparency in media ownership, the concentration of the market in terms of both production and distribution, the sustainability of media content production, and the influence of commercial interests and ownership on editorial content. The actors included in the assessment are media content providers, with indicators including *Transparency of media ownership*, *Plurality of media providers*, *Media viability*, *Editorial independence from commercial and ownership influence*, and *digital intermediaries* (with the indicator on *Plurality in digital markets*).



The **Market Plurality** area score shifted from medium to high risk (69%) compared to MPM2022. Three of five indicators are classified as high-risk, one as medium-risk, and one as low-risk.

The indicator of **Transparency of media ownership** generates the lowest risk in the Market Plurality area (low risk, 25%). This is the same score as last year. The decisive factor in the relatively low overall level of risk is that the national law contains specific provisions requiring the disclosure of ownership details in the news media sectors. The law also contains a provision requiring the disclosure of information on the ultimate owners of news media as well. However, disclosure of news media ownership is effectively provided to public bodies and the public only partially. The ownership of the final beneficiaries of the media organizations is disclosed partially as well.

The risk level of **Plurality of media providers** is very high (97%). The high level of concentration is caused by an overly liberal approach to concentration regulation in Lithuania, without establishing special concentration limits for media markets. The high level of risk is mainly due to the high concentration of revenue in the audiovisual, radio, newspaper, and online news media markets (Top4 market shares respectively – 98%, 93%, 86% and 98%). Additionally, the radio market has a very high concentration not only of revenue but also of audience (audience share of Top4 radio groups - 82%). Two main television groups (TV3 and LNK) together occupy almost 90% of the revenue market. The M1 group dominates the radio revenue market, occupying two-thirds of the market. The concentration in the newspaper market is slightly lower, with two companies, Lietuvos rytas and Verslo žinios, holding two-thirds of the revenue

market. However, the news website market is more concentrated than the newspaper market: two main players (Delfi and 15min) occupy three-quarters of the revenue market.

The **Plurality in digital markets** poses high risk (82%). This was mainly influenced by the huge revenue shares of global digital intermediaries in the Lithuanian online advertising market (Google+Youtube - 44%, Facebook+Instagram - 25,5%). It is also important emphasize that there are no financial agreements in Lithuania between digital intermediaries and news media producers to remunerate the publishers for using of copyright-protected content or, more generally, to contribute to their financing. The competition conditions for national media and global platforms are currently unequal and favour global media (Köuts-Klemm, Rožukalne, Jastramskis, 2022).

Media viability risk indicator scored 61% (medium risk). The growth in the TV advertising market was predicted by 1.5%, radio- 1.5%, online news media -7,4% in 2022. However, the newspaper advertising market was predicted to decline by 6% in 2022. PSM financing from the state budget in 2022 increased by 3% compared to 2021. In the leading national media organizations, several new jobs were created in 2022, and the average salary in 2022 was about slightly higher than in 2021. Meanwhile, some local media organizations have had to reduce staff numbers, and salaries have remained significantly unchanged. However, since there was about 20% inflation in Lithuania, the income (or purchasing power) of many journalists was relatively decreasing.

The risk of **Editorial independence from commercial and owner influence** was high (78%). For-profit media organizations which dominate Lithuanian media system always have a commercial interest to operate profitably. And that is why organizations are trying to appoint editors-in-chief to produce the content that consumers need, and that would bring commercial benefits. This is less relevant for non-profit organizations, especially for the public broadcaster, which receives most of its revenue from the state budget. The Code of Ethics for Public Information (2016) requires that advertising (including political advertising) be clearly distinguished from the work of journalists in the media. Also, the journalist has the right to refuse to prepare advertising information. However, in some media organizations (especially in local level), personal and commercial interests are confused with journalism and high standards of professional ethics are not set and implemented.

Focus on the digital environment

The Market plurality area in the digital domain scored a high risk (67%).

The national law contains specific provisions requiring the disclosure of ownership details (and ultimate owners) in the news media sectors (digital as well). However, transparency of ultimate ownership of digital news media (like other news media) is only partial. The revenue concentration in the online market (news media and online platforms) is high, but audience concentration in the same sector is medium. There are no limitations on the cross-media concentration of ownership in Lithuania. The high degree of concentration in the digital advertising market cannot be prevented without specific competition rules regarding this media sector.

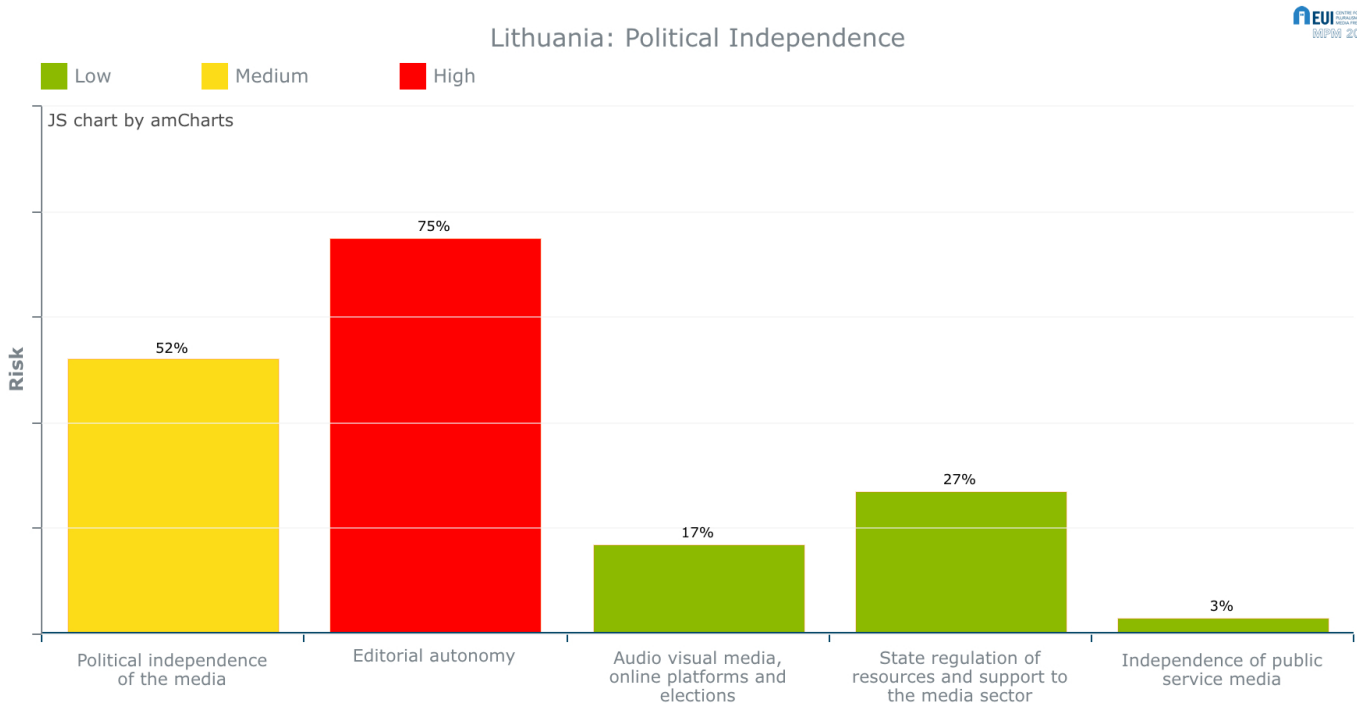
The Lithuanian internet advertising market was expected to grow by 7.4% in 2022 (Kantar, 2022). Subscribing to digital news content for some internet media organisations provides additional

revenue. The minimal funding of the Press, Radio, and Television Support Foundation does little to support national online media, which find it difficult to compete in the advertising market with global players (Facebook, Google, Youtube, etc.). Lithuania transposed the Directive (EU) 2019/790 on Copyright in the Digital Single Market into national law in 2022. So far, there is no data regarding negotiating and financial agreements in Lithuania between digital intermediaries and news media producers to remunerate the publishers for the use of copyright-protected content.

Lithuanian online media performs publicity functions in various projects initiated by other entities, publishes partners' content and is active in content marketing. The leading Lithuanian news websites have even established positions for journalists of content projects (Delfi.lt) and journalists of content marketing (15min.lt), which are incompatible with the essence of independent journalism. Therefore, there is a risk that advertising content can be confused with journalistic content. In addition, in practice, there is a certain balance between the commercial influence of advertisers and the audience's trust, where part of the audience does not notice or critically evaluate the specific commercial influence on the media content.

3.3. Political Independence (35% - medium risk)

The *Political Independence* indicators assess the existence and effectiveness of regulatory and self-regulatory safeguards against political bias and political influences over news production, distribution and access. More specifically, the area seeks to evaluate the influence of the State and, more generally, of political power over the functioning of the media market and the independence of the public service media. Furthermore, the area is concerned with the existence and effectiveness of (self)regulation in ensuring editorial independence and the availability of plural political information and viewpoints, in particular during electoral periods.



Political Independence area score remained identical (35%) as in the MPM2022. Three of five indicators are classified as low-risk, one as medium-risk, and one as high-risk.

The indicator **Political independence of media** shows the medium level of risk (52%). While there are formal restrictions on the disposal of media property by legal entities associated with the government, municipalities, and political parties, politicians, like any other individuals, may still acquire and control media outlets either directly or through their involvement in legal entities. Some Lithuanian political parties develop influence on the local media content through their members or protégé persons in the ownership structures (or management staff) of media companies in many Lithuanian municipalities (Ramonaitė, Vaiginytė, 2020). Main private national media organizations do not have direct links to political control but like private local media, operate in a field of commercial-political risks, where public procurement and other financial sources of political origin can potentially weaken the media's independence from politicians.

As in the previous years, **Editorial autonomy** is the most problematic indicator in this area, showing a high level of risk (75%). The Law does not provide regulatory safeguards to guarantee autonomy when appointing and dismissing editors-in-chief. Editorial content is not independent of political influence in those news media organizations, which ownership structures have ties with politically involved persons. Local media organizations are most at risk in this regard. Studies on media revenue from political entities and media content bias show that there was a relatively strong link between the funding allocated for advertising (publicity) and biased editorial content (favourable to funding providers) (Lašas, 2019; Juknevičiūtė et al., 2020).

The indicator on **Audio-visual media, online platforms and elections** scored a low risk (17%). The PSM, mainstream private audio-visual media, and content on online platforms contribute to diversity in political coverage. According to the Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (2022), the PSM provides time to candidates for political positions during electoral campaigns, applying the principle of equality. The Law prohibits political advertising on the PSM channels from 2021. Most private media organizations provide equal conditions for all political forces during election campaigns to introduce audiences to various political views. However, other private media outlets are selective towards certain politicians, declaring this in individual cases. Political advertising ordered on private media channels, and online platforms can give more financially capable political groups coverage advantage.

The **State regulation of resources and support to the media sector** indicator showed a low risk (27%). The direct and indirect state subsidies are distributed to media outlets fairly and transparently. Direct subsidies to media organizations in Lithuania are administered by the Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation whose structure of stakeholders guarantees independence from public authorities. The main indirect subsidy is the VAT exemption for printed and electronic media content sold. However, the distribution of state advertising to media organizations is not always fair and transparent. Unclear schemes for distributing state publicity money through communication agencies to the media outlets create conditions for corruption (Aušra, 2019). The transparent procedure was also lacking in the allocating public funds to inform the public about the COVID-19 pandemic (Jačiauskas, 2020; Lrt.lt, 2021).

The indicator **Independence of public service media** remained at the same score and generated the lowest risk (3%) within the Political Independence area. Since 2015 funding of the LRT has been related to the revenues of the state and municipalities' budgets (fixed percentage of income tax and excise revenues). This allowed the LRT to gain financial independence from the Government and the Parliament, to increase funding and to fulfil the obligations established by the Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (2022) more effectively. The Constitutional Court of Lithuania confirmed in 2020 that the LRT financing model guarantees independence from the political authorities. The independence of PSM governance is formally guaranteed by the formation procedure of the PSM council. The LRT Council consists of 4 delegates of the President, 4 representatives of the Parliament (2 from the ruling coalition and 2 from the opposition) and 4 representatives of non-governmental organizations. The terms of office of the LRT Council members do not coincide with the work cycles of political institutions.

Focus on the digital environment

The Political Independence area in the digital domain scored a low risk (32%).

Some political figures or their relatives have direct control over certain local websites. While national websites are not directly linked to political control, they are subject to commercial-political risks that could potentially compromise their independence from politicians, given the influence of political funding sources, such as public procurement.

The absence of specific regulations for political advertising on online news media during an election campaign means that they are held to the same standards as other types of media, with the aim of promoting equal opportunities and transparency in political advertising. To this end, the Central Electoral Commission has issued guidelines on the dissemination of political advertising on online platforms, which require political advertisements to be clearly marked (VRK, 2018). Campaigners are

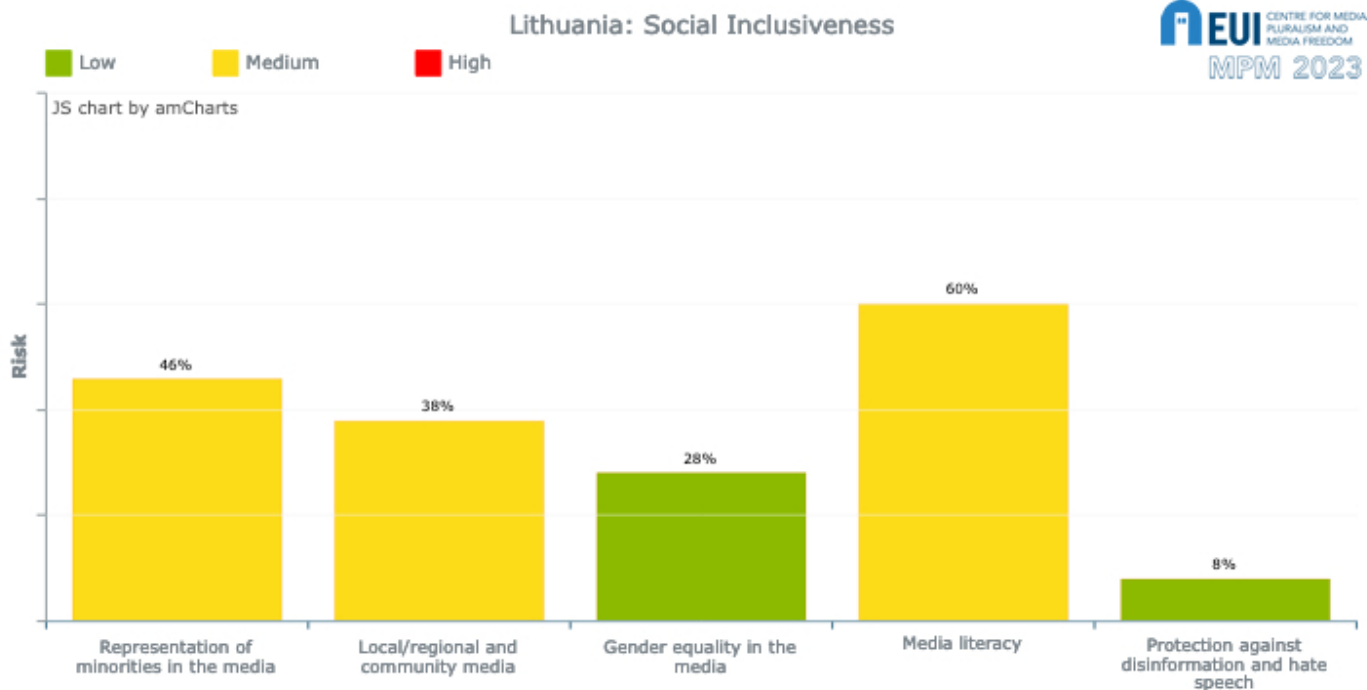
obligated to publicly disclose the expenses incurred during their election campaigns, which includes advertising on online platforms. However, the Central Electoral Commission has acknowledged that it may not be able to monitor all such expenses (Delfi.lt, 2020).

As per the Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (2021), the funds allocated from the State budget for the LRT website are clearly indicated in a separate program. With the increase in funding for LRT in recent years, the website has been adequately funded, which has allowed it to compete more effectively for audience attention in the online media market. Since July 2019, the LRT portal has not participated in the advertising market, and this move has stimulated competition in the online news arena without distorting the online advertising market.

The activity of LRT in the competition for the audience has led the representatives of commercial online media to appeal the LRT financing procedure to the European Commission in 2020. However, in 2022, the European Commission dismissed the complaint. Following the rejection of the complaint, representatives of the commercial media filed a lawsuit in the General Court of the EU (LRT, 2022).

3.4. Social Inclusiveness (36% - medium risk)

The Social Inclusiveness area focuses on the access to media by specific groups in society: minorities, local and regional communities, women and people with disabilities. It also examines the country's media literacy environment, including the digital skills of the overall population. Finally, it also includes new challenges arising from the uses of digital technologies, which are linked to the Protection against disinformation and hate speech.



The situation in the area of Social inclusiveness remains stable compared to the MPM2022, with a risk level estimated at 36%, in the medium risk band. Such a result confirms the decrease of the risk level observed since the MPM2021 (43% in the Medium risk band). This year, the main indicators contributing to the decrease of the risk level are **Representations of minorities in the media** (risk level at 46%, last year 50%), **Local/regional and community media** (38%, last year 56%), as well as **Protection against disinformation and hate speech** (8%, last year 17%).

In 2022, the lower risk level in the indicators **Representations of minorities in the media** and **Local/regional and community media** is due to an improved funding conditions and state support for regional and community media through different projects focused on the efforts to combat disinformation. In 2022, the Ministry of Culture, responsible for media policy in Lithuania, introduced a reform of media support model, which includes a new public institution, namely the Media Support Fund, which should be established and replace existing Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation from May 2023. The new media co-regulatory institution will support media outlets and journalists on project basis, it will also grant stipends, perform research, and perform other functions for the implementation of policy on the provision of information to the public^[14]. In the new funding scheme, support to regional and local media, ethnic minority media, as well as media literacy initiatives is envisaged. However, the freedom of regional media remains at risk, not only because of its enduring reliance on political-business influences, but because of the obstacles caused by digitalization and related challenges to professionals, such as generational change and lack of journalists. Besides, there is no media-related nor minority-related legal mechanisms for equal opportunities to access media for local and/or regional communities, or national minority groups. Requirements to meet the needs of national minorities are listed in a general manner, with exception of the public service media, the

LRT Law^[15]. For example, the main media law (The Law on Provision of Information to the Public, Article 34, Section 2)^[16] does specify that radio and television programs broadcasted in foreign languages must be translated into Lithuanian or shown with Lithuanian subtitles, with the exception of programs created by the broadcaster for the Lithuanian national minorities. Taking into account the needs of national minorities living in the area covered by the broadcast, the license conditions might specify the proportion of programs in the languages of national minorities. The LRT Law (The Law on National Radio and Television, Article 5, Section 9)^[17] states that LRT provides radio and TV programs and content on its website dedicated to national minorities, providing an opportunity to spread minority cultures. No such policy applies to other types of media. LRT, the national PSM, has developed its strategic guidelines on diversity and inclusion, which address the rights to information of ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, regional population. Though a certain kind of news content is available on PSM and commercial channels, much more strategically focused and collaborative efforts are required to ascertain and address the complexity of information and education needs of the ethnic minorities in Lithuania.

Lithuania is among the countries with highest representation of women in top media management positions, so **Gender equality in the media** indicator shows low risk (28%). Though there is no explicit media-related policy on gender equality, the PSM guidelines request equal representation of genders in its programs. The Global Gender Gap Report 2022 published by the World Economic Forum benchmarks Lithuania at position 11, which also illustrates positive changes in assuring gender balance.

This year, **Media literacy** shows 60% of risk, in the medium risk band. The lack of interinstitutional cooperation and coordination of activities is the major drawback against changing this result towards a more optimistic situation. Lithuania has a very rich scene of actors (policymakers, NGOs, public institutions), but these tend to emphasize different directions of media literacy promotion and development. Very often these programs duplicate one another. Media literacy is seen as a "soft form" of capacities needed for resilience building (DIGIRES, 2022)^[18]. The growth of uncertainty in relation to the changed geo-political situation in the region due to Russia's aggression and war in Ukraine has highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach to media literacy promotion and development. Institutional and structural integration of media literacy and digital skills at all levels, starting with education, culture, library activities, etc., is required.

The risk level of **Protection against disinformation and hate speech** indicator has been decreasing from 35% in 2021 and 17% in 2022 to 8% this year due to the systemic interventions introduced: in December 2022, the national parliament approved a new crisis management framework with the National Centre for Crisis Management, which will be responsible for coordinating, consulting and monitoring threats, crises and emergency situations, including disinformation and propaganda. Even though effective measures have been taken to fight disinformation by the national authorities, the level of societal resilience is still limited (only 10-20% of the population are checking online information sources). More efficient initiatives have been introduced in practice to fight against hate speech in the country, including interinstitutional cooperation, public information and education campaigns, media monitoring and media awareness raising activities. Hate crimes and hate speech cases can be easily reported, as there are quite a few online platforms created by public institutions and NGOs where people who have been victims or witnesses of hate crime/hate incitement can easily report it to NGOs or the police and get help. Public opinion polls also show a growing concern of the issue among the state institutions, NGOs and public sector, as well as society at large^[20].

Focus on the digital environment

The main indicators that measure digital risks in the Social Inclusiveness are **Media literacy** and **Protection against disinformation and hate speech**. As the speed of information flow is increasing, different initiatives have been launched to counter disinformation through media-backed projects (e.g., fact-checking, debunking, pre-bunking, monitoring of toxic narratives, etc.), educational interventions aimed at different social groups, as well as research and policy studies to identify the risks and solutions. Even though there is a growing concern of the digital risks, especially in relation to disinformation and hate speech, and more actions are taken towards greater public awareness raising and training, there is a lack of coordinated and effective national policy aimed at systemic change. What is missing is a strategically framed national policy framework that would be focussed on digital media education curriculum development, multi-stakeholder approach and support of professional media and journalism.

As Eurostat data show, nearly half of the national population (49%) has at least basic or above basic digital skills, which is signaling about high risk level. DIGIRES (2022) research shows that there are quite a few fact-checking initiatives in Lithuania, promoted by both professional journalists and civil society organizations, however, only a small part of the audience is aware and benefits from the activities.

4. Conclusions

Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM2023) discloses some of the enduring tendencies in the Lithuanian media environment. Several indicators within the areas of Market Plurality and Political Independence have scored particularly high revealing risks of the lasting character, such as media concentration (**Plurality of media providers** is 97% and **Plurality in digital markets** is 82%) and political/business parallelism (**Commercial & owner influence over editorial content** - 78%), which negatively affects **Editorial autonomy** (75%).

There have been no changes in media policy and legislation to set transparency criteria on media performance in terms of its different (funding, political/business influence) dependencies, to normalize media concentration, and to promote digital capacities and media education as an institutionalized program. These issues have been identified as concerns with enduring character.

Fundamental protection

Lithuania enjoys favorable environment in terms of fundamental protection. In fact, there has been a significant improvement in comparison with the previous year (risk down from 29% to 17%). However, it is notable that this increase has been not because of actions taken by state institutions or media organisations but, instead, despite the lack of them as most of the change can be attributed to increased connectivity and decreased polarisation after the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are several recommendations that can be made on the basis of high-risk sub-indicators:

- **Whistleblower protection** laws must be strengthened, particularly for cases involving high-profile or politically sensitive information. This includes providing measures that are in line with global standards and guidelines.^[21]
- Lithuania should consider introducing **anti-SLAPP** (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) legislation, which is a legal tool that protects citizens from being sued for speaking out on matters of public interest. This also would protect journalists from frivolous lawsuits that are meant to intimidate them and prevent them from reporting on sensitive matters.
- Greater **social welfare protection for freelancers** must be developed. Freelancers are often under-represented in the media industry and professional organizations, and thus they are more vulnerable to job insecurity. This could include the provision of unemployment insurance, health insurance, and other basic services. Likewise, more state support is required for professional organisations that offer advice, training, and legal representation to journalists.

Market plurality

Market plurality area reveals some critical tendencies that require immediate responses. Market plurality exposes a wide range of risks of enduring character. At the same time, it is expected that the launch of the Information System of Producers and Disseminators of Public Information (VIRSIS) in 2023 has the potential to enhance the transparency of media ownership and finances. This will increase the transparency of media ownership and create an environment in which media ownership is easier to track and monitor.

Recommendations to be addressed the government and policymakers:

- Adequate policies to promote **diversification of media ownership** must be supported by providing

grants to independent media outlets, and community media, also media start-ups operating online.

- Investments in **innovative research, data collection and analysis** must be promoted in policymaking to better understand the dynamics of implications of digital transformation on the media sector and its implications to media pluralism and diversity.
- Viability of the media system must be enhanced by increasing **direct subsidies** to private media without compromising its independence.
- Enhancing the **role of PSM** in the online news media market is essential as it has the potential to address audience concentration and promote diversity of content.
- Regulations and measures **specific to the media industry** must be developed in order to prevent the concentration of media ownership.

Political independence

National media is more politically independent than local media. National media outlets are less likely to be influenced by local power structures, since they are not dependent on local advertising budgets. Local media outlets tend to be more biased in their reporting than national media outlets, still, national media is dependent on budgets allocations for publicity services which comes from state institutions. Legislative does not provide rules for the advertising of state institutions in the media. State institutions, when organizing tenders for the purchase of advertising in the media, determine the requirements for advertising in their separate decisions. It is vitally significant to eliminate the corrupt dependence of the commercial media on politicians and to establish policies and rules.

Recommendations to address the gaps in transparency of resource allocation are listed:

- Transparent rules for state and municipal publicity funding must be established. These must be developed, for example, indicating to publicity funding resources allocated to development of independent journalistic content rather than to political advertising.
- Journalists' organizations are recommended to create safeguards for editorial independence. One way to do this is by establishing editorial councils within media companies. These councils can help facilitate agreements between owners and top managers, as well as editors, to ensure that editorial independence is protected.

Social inclusiveness

No change has been registered in relation to making media literacy a whole-of-society's program. A more radical shift from 'media literacy' to 'digital media education' is of growing demand. Understating of the digital infrastructures is essential to resisting and combatting disinformation, instigations to conflict, etc., hence digital media literacy needs to be foreseen not as a shield to protect citizens (a reactive approach) from information disorders. Lithuania comprises a significant number of highly qualified actors (stakeholders in academia, libraries, fact-checking organizations, national-security and cyber-security units, civic education projects, etc.) involved in short-term media education and civic resilience actions.

Strengthening community media in the regions has been an issue of ongoing concern. Lithuania does not have legally recognized minority groups. PSM and commercial media aim at the largest minority groups (Polish, Russian, Ukrainian), whereas smaller minority groups remain underserved. Even though a certain kind of news content is available, much more strategically oriented and collaboration-based efforts are expected to address the complexity of information/education needs of minorities. No concrete steps were taken to ensure the transparency or secure mechanisms for viable financial support to regional media. We recommend that these questions need to be jointly addressed by stake-holder groups and the Ministry of Culture, initiating legislative actions to ensure robust schemes to support different types of (minority, community, regional) media.

Recommendations to increase the social inclusiveness of the media are listed:

- In policymaking, **strategic direction and actions coordination** must be developed to gain a more substantial impact in the areas of media literacy and digital competencies development.
- In media literacy policies that addresses digital competencies development, a stronger emphasis on **multiliteracies** must be added to improve digital skills and online resilience. Also, information verification should be trained at different levels (high schools and universities) and integrated into formal and non-formal education linking them to different subjects and whole school curriculum.
- **Public information campaigns** are needed to promote digital media literacy and disseminate findings from impact assessment to wider audiences.
- A stronger focus on **vulnerable and minority groups** is required. Development and support of initiatives (digital access, content sharing, media literacy) is required to foster the functioning of independent media in the minority areas. Media outlets must be encouraged to increase the diversity of their content by creating content that reflects the unique perspectives of vulnerable groups and providing platforms for minority voices.

Briefly, a comprehensive national policy framework is needed to support and sustain professional media and quality journalism, to increase the level of collaboration and networking between media organizations, civil society organizations and the general public in order to ensure the citizens rights to verified information and to counteract disinformation, hate speech, xenophobia, racism and other types of hybrid threats.

5. Notes

- [1] (Statistics Lithuania: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/en/lietuvos-gyventojai-2022/salies-gyventojai/gyventoju-skaicius-ir-sudetis>)
- [2] Statistics Lithuania: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/en/lietuvos-gyventojai-2022/salies-gyventojai/gyventoju-skaicius-ir-sudetis>
- [3] (Statistics Lithuania: <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/en/lietuvos-gyventojai-2022/salies-gyventojai/gyventoju-skaicius-ir-sudetis>)
- [4] Finansų ministerija: šiemet Lietuvos ekonomika stipresnė nei tikėtasi, kitamet augimas išliks teigiamas: <https://finmin.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/finansu-ministerija-siemet-lietuvos-ekonomika-stipresne-nei-tiketasi-kitamet-augimas-islirks-teigiamas>.
- [5] World Press Freedom Index ranking (RSF, 2022), <https://rsf.org/en/index>.
- [6] Eurostat (2022). Digital economy and society statistics - households and individuals. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals#Use_of_internet.
- [7] Lessenski, M. (2022). How It Started, How It is Going: Media Literacy Index 2022. European Policies Initiative. Open Society Institute. https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/HowItStarted_MediaLiteracyIndex2022_ENG_.pdf.
- [8] Eurobarometer (2022a). Standard Eurobarometer 96 – Winter 2021-22. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>.
- [9] EIU (2022). Democracy Index 2021: The China challenge. The Economist Intelligence Unit. <https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf>.
- [10] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1165917/market-share-of-the-most-popular-social-media-websites-in-lithuania>.
- [11] DIGIRES: Multisectoral and Multistakeholder Foresights Towards Resilient Digital Citizenship in Lithuania (State-of-the-art: A report on current issues, methodologies, and needs in anti-disinformation actions in a small state, <https://digires.lt/en/testttt>).
- [12] Gitanas Nausėda: Resolve of the Lithuanian people to support Ukraine is unprecedented: <https://www.lrp.lt/en/media-center/news/gitanas-nauseda-resolve-of-the-lithuanian-people-to-support-ukraine-is-unprecedented/39732>
- [13] Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics (2021). Independent Ombudspersons' Review on Institutional Response to Hate Speech. Available on: <https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/04/independent-review-on-hate-speech2021.pdf>
- [14] Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania (2022). Reform of the model for supporting the media: more funds, flexibility and independence: <https://lrkm.lrv.lt/en/news/reform-of-the-model-for-supporting-the-media-more-funds-flexibility-and-independence>
- [15] Republic of Lithuania Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (1996/2021). Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/GmufPYmBqB> Republic of Lithuania Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (1996/2022). Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/asr>
- [16] Republic of Lithuania Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (1996/2022). Available at: <https://www.etar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/asr>
- [17] Republic of Lithuania Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (1996/2021). Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/GmufPYmBqB>.
- [18] DIGIRES (2022). Multisectoral and Multistakeholder Foresights Towards Resilient Digital Citizenship in Lithuania. State-of-the-art report. Available at: <https://digires.lt/en/testttt/>

- [19] Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics (2021). Independent Ombudspersons' Review on Institutional Response to Hate Speech. Available on: <https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/04/independent-review-on-hate-speech2021.pdf>
- [20] Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics (2021). Independent Ombudspersons' Review on Institutional Response to Hate Speech. Available on: <https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/04/independent-review-on-hate-speech2021.pdf>
- [21] Transparency International Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Answer: Whistleblower protection at the United Nations, https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/kproducts/whistleblower-protection-at-the-UN_PR_v3.pdf.

6. References

- Ainius Lašas, Vaida Juknevičiūtė (2019) Korupcijos skandalai kaip sisteminių pokyčių variklis: „MG Baltic“ atvejo analizė. Politologija, Vol. 93, 8-35, <https://www.zurnalai.vu.lt/politologija/article/view/12774/11518>.
- DIGIRES (2022). Multisectoral and Multistakeholder Foresights Towards Resilient Digital Citizenship in Lithuania. State-of-the-art report. Available at: <https://digires.lt/en/testtt/>
- EIU (2022) Democracy Index 2021: The China challenge. The Economist Intelligence Unit. <https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf>
- Eurobarometer (2022). Standard Eurobarometer 96 – Winter 2021-22. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2553>
- Eurostat (2022) Digital economy and society statistics - households and individuals. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals#Use_of_internet
- Gitanas Nausėda: Resolve of the Lithuanian people to support Ukraine is unprecedented: <https://www.lrp.lt/en/media-center/news/gitanas-nauseda-resolve-of-the-lithuanian-people-to-supportukraine-is-unprecedented/39732>
- Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania (2022) Reform of the model for supporting the media: more funds, flexibility and independence: <https://lrkm.lrv.lt/en/news/reform-of-the-model-for-supportingthe-media-more-funds-flexibility-and-independence>
- Ragne Kõuts-Klemm, Anda Rožukalne & Deimantas Jastramskis (2022) Resilience of national media systems: Baltic media in the global network environment, Journal of Baltic Studies, 53:4, 543-564, DOI: [10.1080/01629778.2022.2103162](https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2022.2103162).
- Reporters without borders (2022) World Press Freedom Index ranking. <https://rsf.org/en/index>.
- Republic of Lithuania Law on the Lithuanian National Radio and Television (1996/2021). Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/GmufPYmBqB>
- Republic of Lithuania Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (1996/2022). Available at: <https://www.etar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/asr>
- The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics (2021). Independent Ombudspersons' Review on Institutional Response to Hate Speech. Available on: <https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/04/independent-review-on-hate-speech2021.pdf>

ANNEXE I. COUNTRY TEAM

First name	Last name	Position	Institution	MPM2023 CT Leader
<i>Aukse</i>	<i>Balcytiene</i>	<i>Leader</i>	<i>Vytautas Magnus University</i>	X
<i>Deimantas</i>	<i>Jastramskis</i>	<i>Project partner</i>	<i>Vilnius University</i>	
<i>Kristina</i>	<i>Juraite</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Vytautas Magnus University</i>	
<i>Ignas</i>	<i>Kalpokas</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Vytautas Magnus University</i>	

ANNEXE II. GROUP OF EXPERTS

The Group of Experts is composed of specialists with a substantial knowledge and experience in the field of media. The role of the Group of Experts was to review especially sensitive/subjective evaluations drafted by the Country Team in order to maximize the objectivity of the replies given, ensuring the accuracy of the final results.

First name	Last name	Position	Institution
<i>Deividas</i>	<i>Velkas</i>	<i>Representative of media regulator</i>	<i>Ministry of Culture, Republic of Lithuania</i>
<i>Irmina</i>	<i>Matonytė</i>	<i>Professor, media/politics analyst</i>	<i>Military Academy of Lithuania</i>
<i>Vaiva</i>	<i>Radikaitė-Žukienė</i>	<i>Representative of a broadcaster organisation</i>	<i>Lithuanian Cable Television Association</i>
<i>Audronė</i>	<i>Nugaraitė</i>	<i>Representative of journalists' association</i>	<i>Lithuanian Journalists Union</i>
<i>Andrius</i>	<i>Vaišnys</i>	<i>Professor, commentator</i>	<i>Vilnius University</i>

Research Project Report

Issue -

June 2023

doi:10.2870/031898

ISBN:978-92-9466-446-4

QM-04-23-670-EN-N



Publications Office
of the European Union

