



**Association for the Advancement of Journalistic Practices
Innovative Media**

Annual Report for 2025

**Covering the program activities
between**

January 1 to December 31, 2025

**March 2025
Skopje, North Macedonia**

Innovative Media Mission and Vision

Vision

The Association for the Advancement of Journalistic Practices Innovative Media envisions a society in which engaged and aware journalists actively use innovative tools to exercise their duties, a society in which they are cautious about influencing and demanding accountability from the authorities, while ensuring democratic, accountable and prepared governance.

Mission to Achieve the Vision

Innovative Media protects, promotes and advances professional standards in the media by building capacities of journalists and strengthens the awareness and capacity of young journalists for them to take on the best possible role as innovative journalists respecting ethical norms and are activists for democracy.

Program areas

Innovative Media strengthens the awareness and capacity of citizens and civil society to assume their fullest possible role as activists for democracy, while supporting government to fulfil its democratic role in serving society. Innovative Media work is focused on three main program areas:

1. Combating disinformation and promoting media literacy
2. Upholding democratic values through watchdog journalism
3. Advancing professional journalism standards
4. Combating discriminatory and hateful public discourse

Basic Information

Registration data	Contact information
Full name: Association for the Advancement of Journalistic Practices INNOVATIVE MEDIA – Skopje	Website: http://innovativemedia.mk
Established in: Skopje, North Macedonia	E-mail: innovativemediamk@gmail.com
Legal form: Association, registered according to the Law on Civic Associations and Foundations of the Republic of North Macedonia	Address: Apostol Guslarot 40, 1000 Skopje, North Macedonia
Date of registration: 05/03/2019	Mobile: +38970213404
Registration number: 7343540	Telephone: +38923109325
VAT number: 4080019580596	

Executive Summary

The Association for the Advancement of Journalistic Practices **Innovative Media – Skopje** was established in 2019 in Skopje, North Macedonia by a group of journalists and civil society. Over the years, it has established a diverse portfolio of collaborations, projects and capacities related to covering digital transformation issues and usage of digital tools in journalistic work. As a result, it has formed lasting partnerships with other civil society organizations, donors and media outlets.

Innovative Media projects conducted during 2025, primarily provided support for the news portal Portalb.mk, with an aim to provide the Albanian speaking population of North Macedonia and abroad with accurate and reliable information, through news and analysis production, with a focus on the reform process of European Union (EU) accession and the benefits and responsibilities resulting from the NATO membership.



[Portalb.mk](https://portalb.mk)

Also, the activities of Innovative Media reflect a year focused on countering hate speech and polarizing narratives through advocacy, monitoring, civic participation, and public engagement. Through Reporting Diversity Network (RDN), The New Agenda several activities have been organized, such as: a public panel discussion, published periodic monitoring highlights, an open call and sub-granting for CSO initiatives, and regional exchange around monitoring findings. The year also featured multiple public-space interventions in Skopje, a procurement call for communication outputs, and the publication of a substantive analytical report.

Innovative Media continued implementing “Promoting Credible and Reliable Reporting in Albanian Language” founded by National Endowment for Democracy and aims to provide independent news and non-biased public interest information on political and economic issues in Albanian language. Additionally, its objectives are to provide citizens with information and explanatory content about NATO’s support to North Macedonia’s security challenges and to educate and inform the citizens about the EU accession process, esp. about the fulfilment of the required reforms (EU Acquis).

In 2025 Innovative Media received support from two donors, enabling partnerships contributing to increasing the scope and quality of its work; the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) from Washington, DC, USA, the donor of the project “Promoting Credible and Reliable Reporting in Albanian Language - Portalb.mk” and Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans the donor of the project Reporting Diversity Network – The New Agenda.

Below is an overview of the projects Innovative Media has worked on in 2025 and of the highlights of some of the achievements.

Innovative Media Activities and Projects in 2025

Innovative Media conducted a range of activities in 2025 in order to promote the crucial role of free and professional media in providing knowledge and in giving voice to citizens of Republic of North Macedonia in general, and in particular the primary audience of Portalb.mk - the ethnic Albanian

community from the country and the region, as basic condition for empowering citizens to meaningfully participate in democratic processes.

Overall, the yearly impact of the project **Portalb.mk** can be summarized as fostering transparency, accountability, and social justice. By uncovering discrimination, labor rights violations, corruption, and inefficiencies in public administration, Portalb.mk has contributed to shaping a more equitable and accountable society. Through its journalism, the project has empowered citizens with knowledge, catalyzed institutional reforms, and served as a watchdog for democracy. Moving forward, sustained efforts in reporting and advocacy will be crucial in addressing systemic issues and advancing societal progress.

In 2025, Portalb published more than 9000 articles, receiving 9.1 million pageviews and about 5 million users on its website. Portalb.mk solidified its position as a leading investigative and trusted media outlet in North Macedonia, driving significant institutional changes, legal actions, and public discourse. Its reporting consistently prioritizes transparency, accountability, and the needs of diverse communities.

Institutional Accountability and Legal Impact

Portalb.mk's investigations frequently served as the primary catalyst for formal investigations by state oversight bodies:

- **Anti-Corruption Initiatives:** Following a Portalb.mk investigation into the **Municipality of Tetovo's** expenditure of over 1.6 million euros on temporary employment contracts through private agencies, the **State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC)** opened an official case. Similarly, the SCPC launched an investigation into the **Municipality of Çair** after the portal uncovered the allocation of funds to a cafeteria owned by a Deputy Minister without a public call.
- **Police and Auditing:** Persistent journalistic pressure and the naming of a specific anti-drug inspector led the **Ministry of Internal Affairs** to launch internal investigations and eventually file criminal charges against two inspectors for obstructing justice. By late October, five inspectors were dismissed. Additionally, a report by the **State Audit Office** confirmed Portalb.mk's findings regarding systemic failures at the Student Dormitory in Tetovo, including its operation without technical inspections.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** After Portalb.mk reported on the illegal display of the **Vergina Sun flag** in Kumanovo prohibited under the Prespa Agreement, the Ministry of Interior issued a notice, and the flag was taken down.

Infrastructure and Environmental Remediation

The newsroom's consistent reporting on local grievances led to several concrete infrastructure improvements:

- **Environmental Wins:** A fifteen-month reporting campaign by Portalb.mk culminated in the official closure of the **Nikushtak landfill** in September 2025. Similar reporting triggered waste removal in **Slupcan** and **Vaksince**.

- **Urban Improvements:** In **Tetovo**, asphaltting on Boris Kidrič Street began just days after a Portalb.mk report highlighted prolonged delays. Other successes included the reconstruction of schoolyards at “Istikball” and “Nikolla Stejn,” the opening of a tourist Info Center, and the installation of traffic signs on the Tetovo–Jazhince road.
- **Kumanovo and Lipkovo:** The reconstruction of streets in the predominantly Albanian **Orta Bunar** neighborhood followed exclusive coverage by the portal. Furthermore, an extraordinary health inspection was conducted at Kumanovo Hospital’s laboratory after Portalb.mk exposed dilapidated sanitary conditions.

Political and Social Influence

Portalb.mk’s materials became essential tools for political actors and social advocacy:

- **Parliamentary Impact:** Members of Parliament frequently used Portalb.mk’s economic analyses and infographics to challenge government claims during parliamentary sessions. The portal’s reporting on the **omission of the Albanian language** from the government’s official website prompted formal reactions from major political parties.
- **Diplomatic and Administrative Change:** After Portalb.mk reported that a Deputy Prime Minister used the term “Kosovo and Metohija” in an official press release—deviating from North Macedonia’s official position—the resulting public and diplomatic outcry led to the statement’s removal. Additionally, the director of the National Agency for European Educational Programs was removed following a series of 15 articles by Portalb.mk highlighting his history of hate speech.
- **Social Empowerment:** The portal was the first to interview **Hana Selmani**, a young researcher using AI to diagnose depression. The interview went viral, leading to a meeting between Selmani and the First Deputy Prime Minister.

Trust and Digital Reach

Portalb.mk remains the most trusted online media outlet in North Macedonia, a ranking it has consistently held in IRI surveys since 2014. Its digital presence in 2025 was marked by high engagement:

- **Viral Content:** A guerrilla-style video addressing **hate speech** reached 162,000 views on Facebook.
- **Platform Dominance:** Significant reach was achieved on **TikTok** (e.g., 118,000 views for Palestine protests) and **Facebook** (e.g., 189,000 views for a Tetovo pre-election poll).
- **Media Echo:** Its investigations were routinely republished by over 30 national and regional media outlets, including *Fokus*, *Koha*, and *360stepeni*.

Awards and Recognition

The quality of the newsroom’s work was formally recognized when journalist **Fisnik Xhelili** received the **Annual Award from the Association of Journalists of North Macedonia (AJM)**

for his reporting on student violence. Additionally, the **British Council** showcased Portalb.mk as a regional success story for its professionalism and focus on underrepresented voices.

Reporting Diversity Network – The New Agenda

Through the project Reporting Diversity Network – The New Agenda, Innovative Media continued the [Media Monitoring process](#) which means monitoring of traditional and new media to uncover hate speech and divisive discourses following media monitoring methodology.

Other project activities:

In spring, Innovative Media documented advocacy work aimed at safeguarding democratic debate online. On 4 April 2025, it published a recap of the panel discussion “Democracy at Risk: Fact-checking and Content Moderation on Social Media,” held on 2 April 2025 within RDN – The New Agenda. The recap listed speakers and framed monitoring as an early-warning mechanism for hate speech and harmful discourse, calling for comprehensive responses by institutions and society ([Panel recap](#)).

To broaden participation beyond discussion formats, Innovative Media launched a public call. On 9 April 2025, it announced an open call for project applications aimed at countering hate speech and improving representation of diversity in North Macedonia, presented as part of the Reporting Diversity Network. The announcement described the call’s intent and focus, but did not specify expected application volumes or participant numbers ([Open call](#)).

The reporting period also includes Media Articles published on the site. On 28 April 2025, Innovative Media published an article on youth emigration and motivations to study abroad, framed through the theme of “brain drain” ([Brain Drain](#)). On 16 June 2025, it published an article examining how grief and tragedy can become politicised and what that means for public debate and civic space ([When grief becomes political](#)).

Monitoring findings were communicated through monthly highlights. “Monthly Highlights April,” published on 15 May 2025, summarized narratives detected through RDN monitoring during April, including misogyny, hatred toward people with disabilities, religious discrimination, and hate linked to student activism and elections; the post presented thematic observations rather than quantified incident totals ([Highlights: April](#)). On 15 July 2025, “Monthly Highlights June” continued the same format, describing hateful discourse that included ethnic discrimination, sexism, online harassment, hatred towards journalists, and genocide denial ([Highlights: June](#)).

From June onward, Innovative Media increasingly translated anti-hate messaging into public-space interventions in Skopje. On 27 June 2025, it reported the unveiling of the “Poisonous Arrows” installation (introduced as taking place on 23 June), using a visual metaphor to portray hate speech as an “invisible yet potent weapon” and to raise public awareness about the harm words can inflict ([Poisonous Arrows](#)). On 10 August 2025, it described a city-centre intervention using hurdles as a metaphor for the obstacles hate speech creates in shared public life ([Hurdles installation](#)).

In September, the interventions expanded in distribution and messaging. On 4 September 2025, Innovative Media reported an action that placed more than 50 modified STOP-style signs around Skopje reading “Stop Hate Speech,” inviting citizens to pause and consider the consequences of hateful communication ([STOP signs action](#)). On 12 September 2025, it published another installation built around a public “switch,” inviting citizens to “turn off” hate speech ([Act now installation](#)).



The open call moved to implementation in mid-September. On 17 September 2025, Innovative Media announced five selected sub-grantees under the call and stated that sub-granting contracts were signed in Skopje the same day, alongside a training session on financial and narrative reporting for representatives of the selected organizations ([Selected sub-grantees](#)).

In October, regional exchange and procurement actions were documented. On 1 October 2025, Innovative Media reported from the Belgrade conference “Breaking Words, Building Bridges: Responses to Polarisation in the Western Balkans,” describing monitoring findings and warning of rising polarisation ([Belgrade conference](#)). On 15 October 2025, it launched a call for proposals for video production, seeking a documentary-style video (20–25 minutes) for the period 15 November 2025 to 28 February 2026, and outlining submission requirements and selection criteria ([Video production call](#)).

The year’s published record concluded with an analytical report release. On 13 November 2025, Innovative Media published “North Macedonia’s Hate Echo: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Digital Amplification of Division,” covering monitoring from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2025 and highlighting patterns in targets of hate speech, including ethnicity as a prominent category in recorded cases during the monitored period ([Hate Echo report](#)).

Cooperation with/in Various Networks

During 2025, Innovative Media participated in the work of the following networks and coalitions:

<p>Media Literacy Network - MLN Throughout 2025 Portalb.mk continued to contribute as member of the Media Literacy Network, established in North Macedonia in 2017 and administered by the state regulatory body in charge of media literacy the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. Also, Innovative Media through Portalb.mk participated in the activities of the MLN-organized Media Literacy Days in 2025.</p>	 mediumskapismenost.mk
<p>Global Voices in Albanian Innovative Media contributes to translation and dissemination of the news of the Albanian version of the website of the international, multilingual, primarily volunteer community of writers, translators, academics, and human rights activists Global Voices Online. Global Voices members include over 1200 citizen journalists, analysts, online media experts and translators, reporting from 167 countries and translating into up to 30 languages.</p>	 sq.globalvoicesonline.org

ACTION SEE - Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in South-East Europe

Through reporting via Portalb.mk and participation of Innovative Media team members in events organized by ACTION SEE network, IM increased visibility of the projects of this network that enables cooperation between leading digital transparency organizations from North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania. Its members use new technologies for empowering citizens and increasing public institutions' accountability via fact-checking projects, annual POINT conferences on new technologies and political accountability, and developing the regional Index of Transparency.



Anti-Disinformation Network for the Balkans (AND-Balkans)

Innovative Media is among the founding members of this network that serves as the basis of a cooperation between civil society organizations, media outlets, educational institutions and all other relevant stakeholders with a goal of forming a wide front on countering disinformation through affirmation of the highest standards of fact-checking and professional journalism, as well as promoting media literacy & critical thinking based on the [Declaration that re-affirms the freedom of expression in its various forms](#).

ADN-Balkans developed gradually through bilateral and multilateral cooperation of its founding members, and from November 2021 it provided infrastructure for Metamorphosis-led project Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub: Exposing Malign Influences through Data-Driven Watchdog Journalism in the six countries of the region, with support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



antidisinfo.net