

Live from Brussels II

*Changing Dynamics
of the Brussels Press Corps*



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Executive Summary

Building on the findings of a previous analysis, this report explores the work environment, and individual perceptions of EU correspondents and the challenges they face. Using two data sources, the interinstitutional accreditation database and an online survey, it offers a contemporary understanding of journalistic life in Brussels, with a particular focus on how digital transformation is fundamentally altering it.

Below are some of the new report's key findings.

- ◆ Overall, this report shows a Brussels press corps characterised by both continuity and change. It remains a relatively stable professional community. The number of accredited journalists has remained roughly constant since our last report, and journalists in the press corps continue to be predominantly mid-career and cover EU affairs for their national audiences. While COVID-19 dominated the journalism covered in the previous report, this one identifies new topics as important to journalists, such as security/defence and the economy.
- ◆ While the overall size of the Brussels press corps is stable, the data shows that the number of media organisations active in Brussels has actually decreased over the last few years, suggesting that more journalists now work in fewer, larger newsrooms.
- ◆ A small number of international and EU-focused media organisations continue to play a central role in setting the agenda within the Brussels media ecosystem. Journalists who responded to the survey also report close professional ties with fellow correspondents and institutional actors beyond national borders.
- ◆ Off-the-record briefings organised by EU institutions, press activities around Council meetings, and European Commission press conferences are among the most important sources of information for Brussels correspondents. In particular, spokespersons of the Council's rotating presidencies have become significantly more important sources since the previous report.
- ◆ Private messaging apps have become an important aspect of journalistic work in Brussels, with WhatsApp and Signal now near-universal tools for communication and sourcing.

- ◆ Social media generally remains central to the work of Brussels correspondents, though attitudes toward its influence have become more ambivalent since 2021, in particular regarding X. But the journalists surveyed continue to rely heavily on social media as both a reporting tool and an information source, particularly the accounts of political figures, EU officials, press officers, academics and experts. Among the relevant social media platforms, X, LinkedIn and Bluesky emerged as important for both research and dissemination, although there are differences in credibility.
- ◆ Perceptions of social media's broader impact have shifted slightly downward: while 78% of respondents in 2021 considered social media important for their work, this fell to 67% in 2026, and positive assessments of its impact declined marginally from 54% to 52%.
- ◆ Concerns about disinformation are widespread among Brussels correspondents. The journalists surveyed overwhelmingly regard disinformation as a major threat to news media, particularly in coverage of EU policies, and many report frequent exposure to misleading or false information in the media sources they use. The survey indicates that journalists who perceive that they are more exposed to disinformation are also more likely to see it as a danger and less likely to believe that European journalists are adequately equipped to counter it.
- ◆ Survey respondents identified media literacy among citizens as the most effective countermeasure (62%) to disinformation, followed by proactive correction of false information (50%), fact-checking by independent organisations (38%) and stronger EU-level regulation of digital platforms (37%). Additional fact-checking training for journalists and fact-checking by public institutions also received substantial support, while AI-driven fact-checking tools were seen as less effective, with only 11% viewing them positively.
- ◆ AI has become increasingly integrated into journalistic practice in Brussels, yet journalists remain divided over its implications for the quality and credibility of news. Although only 7% of respondents reported not using any AI-powered tools, the majority remain sceptical about AI's overall impact on journalism and believe it may worsen news quality and contribute to disinformation.
- ◆ In addition, journalists recognise clear practical benefits in specific areas, using it especially for multilingual reporting and managing large volumes of information. AI is most used for transcription, translation and language support, followed by research, summarisation and data analysis.



Introduction

Following the [2021 report](#) on the dynamics of the Brussels press corps, the General Secretariat of the Council has conducted a new study in 2026 to update these insights. This report comprises the findings of that study and thus provides another opportunity to understand how Brussels correspondents work, as well as how recent challenges, such as disinformation and the rise of AI, have affected their work since the last study.

Although there are few studies specifically examining the Brussels press corps, existing academic knowledge on their work broadly aligns with important themes in journalism studies. Specifically, this literature suggests that social media has long transformed journalistic practices by serving as both a source and a distribution channel for journalistic content (e.g. de Haan et al., 2024). Additionally, journalists are engaged in an ongoing struggle to address the impact of disinformation, whether through tackling its use in attacks on the media and ‘fake news’ accusations (Egelhofer et al., 2022) or in efforts to mitigate its influence on reporting accuracy (e.g. Lecheler et al., 2024; Michalidou & Trenz, 2021; Weikmann et al., 2026). A recent yet fundamental challenge is the growing use of AI-powered tools by journalists. Journalists in many countries, as well as in Brussels, are quickly adopting these tools into their workflow, but are also wary of their potential to compromise journalistic quality (e.g. Cools & Diakopoulos, 2026; de Haan et al., 2022; Simon, 2024).

The findings reported here are once again informed by two data sources: the EU interinstitutional accreditation database, and the 2026 online survey among journalists accredited by the EU institutions. The [accreditation database](#) administers journalists’ annual accreditation by the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Data accessed for this study in the database was fully anonymised. While the data used in the study itself is 2025 accreditation information, a historical perspective of the available accreditation data, from 2002 to 2025, is provided in Annex 1.

The 2026 questionnaire (see Annex 2) repeated some of the questions asked in 2021. In addition, it made use of new, validated measures from academic literature, as well as existing published surveys such as the [Worlds of Journalism Survey](#). Where necessary, questions were, as in 2021, adapted to fit the specific research interests of this study. All questions were programmed into the online survey management system [EU Survey](#)¹, where the final survey was also published.

¹ The tool is supported by the European Commission's ISA² programme, which promotes interoperability solutions for European public administrations.

The study focused on journalists stationed in Brussels who cover EU affairs. This means that the survey sample consists of 917 journalists accredited at the time the survey was sent out in February 2026 (N=917). A total of 143 journalists completed the survey, hence a response rate of 15.6%. As described in this report, the survey sample includes Brussels-based respondents from both EU Member States and third countries, with varying levels of experience and areas of topical focus. This means the makeup of the sample is an informative snapshot of the press corps as a whole, particularly in terms of the ratios of gender, age, media type, and nationality among journalists.

The survey data was downloaded from EU Survey, anonymised and analysed. The study's focus is on general trends among journalists, which means all findings presented in this report are based on aggregate-level data analysis, thereby making it impossible to identify individual participants in retrospect. When interpreting the findings of the study, the following is of particular importance: answer options for several questions in the survey were formulated in the Likert-Scales format (i.e. 1 – 'do not agree' to 7 – 'fully agree'), which is common in measurements of perception, opinion and experience. For most of the visualisations in this report, answers were grouped to show general trends. This means that answers which lay above, on or below the middle point of a 7-point scale were grouped into meaningful subgroups, and then used to calculate percentages (i.e. on a scale from 1 to 7, those who gave an answer between 5 and 7 inclusive were recoded as participants who 'tend to agree'). All visuals contain notes that explain this recoding logic.

It should also be noted that, as in our previous report, certain limitations apply. As stated above, findings from both the accreditation database and the 2026 survey have been taken into account, and we have also compared them with those of the 2021 study. However, because the data was anonymised, we were unable to link respondents across the two surveys, and we analysed the data sets separately, meaning changes in answers could not be identified. The origin of a result is always indicated in the text of the report. Furthermore, while most measures were chosen based on prior research and existing surveys (e.g. the Worlds of Journalism Survey), these measures do not always capture the full granularity of journalists' attitudes towards their daily work. Lastly, we did not oblige respondents to answer all the survey questions, which means that some questions were answered by fewer of our respondents than others.

The 2026 survey – like the 2021 survey – was developed and the present report written in close collaboration with Prof. Sophie Lecheler at the University of Vienna (Austria), and both are based on a literature review of research on Brussels journalism. Sophie Lecheler has more than 20 years of research experience in political journalism and EU politics and has published extensively on the EU press corps. Her current research focuses on the impact of digital transformation on political communication. She has led several international research projects and is currently one of the scientific coordinators of the Vienna Doctoral College of Digital Humanism, as well as a lead in the research platform 'Trustworthy Science Communication'.



Prof. Sophie Lecheler
University of Vienna

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Key developments since our last study



KEY DEVELOPMENTS SINCE OUR LAST STUDY

The first version of this study was fielded in September 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings reported then showed that working in Brussels was a temporary mid-career stop for many correspondents, and that most of those surveyed worked for national media rather than pan-European outlets, meaning their coverage was aimed mainly at national audiences. Most Brussels correspondents tended to be generalists, meaning they also covered other foreign or domestic topics, such as NATO or Belgium. We also found a male-dominated press corps, though the share of women had improved over time.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic dominated journalistic coverage, but journalists also focused on traditional EU topics such as the economy, migration and external relations, often framing stories around conflict and responsibility rather than morality. The findings then showed work that relied on classic reporting formats rather than new technologies, even though growing pressures to develop technical skills and engage audiences more directly were very evident.

EU-focused and English-language international media were seen as agenda-setters, while national media were seen as keeping journalists connected to their home audiences. In 2021, social media, and especially Twitter (now X), was already considered important. The journalists surveyed relied heavily on EU institutions' press services, and particularly on off-the-record briefings, press releases and background materials. While COVID-19 had temporarily increased interest in EU affairs, journalists did not expect this to last. They did, however, see hybrid press formats as the future, albeit likely limited to accredited media, as broader access was considered harmful both to the size of the press corps and the quality of coverage.

So, what has changed? First, we are now surveying the press corps after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, in a period that feels no less tumultuous, but tumultuous in different ways. Nevertheless, some of the earlier findings were specific to the pandemic, particularly COVID-19, which was a dominant topic of coverage in Brussels and globally. While we will still address digital work in this report to some extent, issues of distance and digitality now have a different meaning, with journalists more concerned about other aspects, such as the credibility of digital information sources.

Specifically, we want to highlight three global challenges in this new report, all linked to digital transformation and each warranting its own discussion. First, the changing role of social media in journalistic work, broadly. Naturally, this was already a major part of our 2021 report, but in 2026, we see new dynamics, particularly in the role of messaging apps in journalistic work. The second challenge is the crisis of disinformation, which was also already a topic of debate some years ago, but has taken on new levels of relevance today. It interacts with the third, and probably most prominent, current concern for Brussels correspondents: the multi-level impact of AI on their work, European and global politics, and society. Concerns about disinformation and AI have influenced how journalists work in many contexts, including Brussels.

While these issues are all examined in detail below, one initial highlight comes from a 2026 survey question asking Brussels correspondents whether, over the past five years, the importance of certain factors in their work has *increased* or *decreased*. The question mentioned issues such as the impact of social media, the time available for researching stories, the credibility of journalism and journalistic freedom in editorial decision-making.

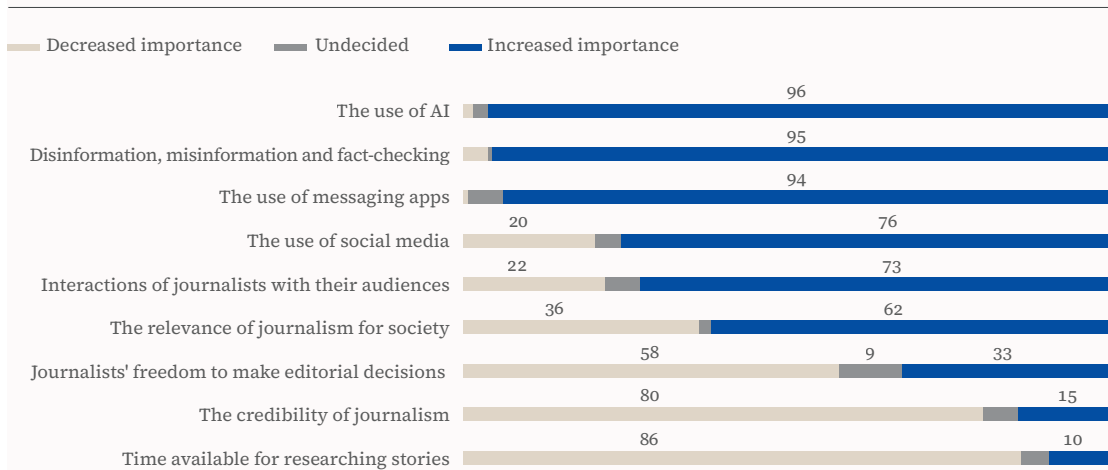
As expected, social media is seen as important in journalism. However, journalists in our survey rated the use of messaging apps as becoming more important. This is interesting, as messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Signal had long been only a minor focus in discussions

of digital communication for journalists, but have now become important channels for media and press work. Additionally, AI and disinformation have become major points of consideration among journalists.

Unsurprisingly, given that these issues were less prominent five years ago, there is near-unanimous agreement among Brussels correspondents that AI's importance has grown. In fact, 96% say its significance has increased. Journalists also concur that disinformation poses a significant threat to media integrity and is a key concern. Many are worried about who will address the challenges of AI and disinformation, with EU institutions seen as potential actors.

Perception of changes in journalism (2026)

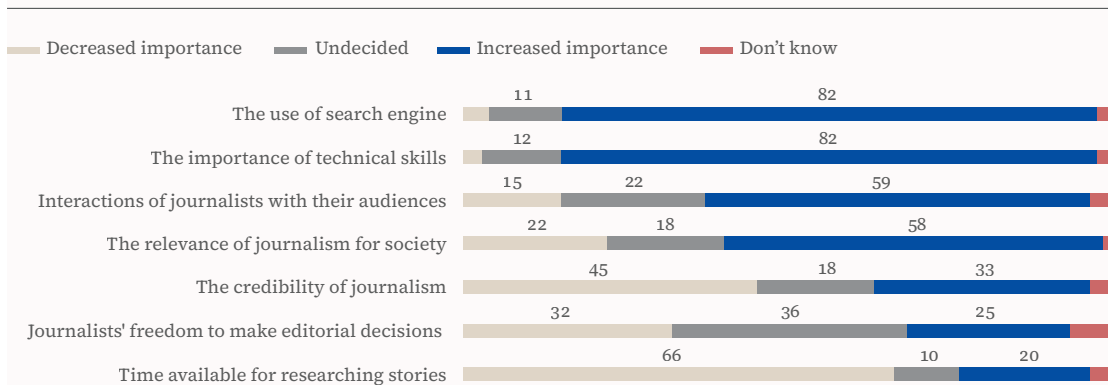
How has the importance of the following aspects evolved (in %)*



* Journalists were asked whether there had been an increase or a decrease in the importance of certain aspects of their work over the past five years (from 1 – 'decreased a lot' to 7 – 'increased a lot'). In this graphic, answers 1-3 are shown as 'decreased importance', answer 4 as 'undecided', and answers 5-7 as 'increased importance'.

Perception of changes in journalism (2021)

How has the importance of the following aspects evolved (in %)[†]



[†] Same as above: answers 1-3 are shown as 'decreased importance', answer 4 as 'undecided', and answers 5-7 as 'increased importance'.

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The Brussels Press Corps



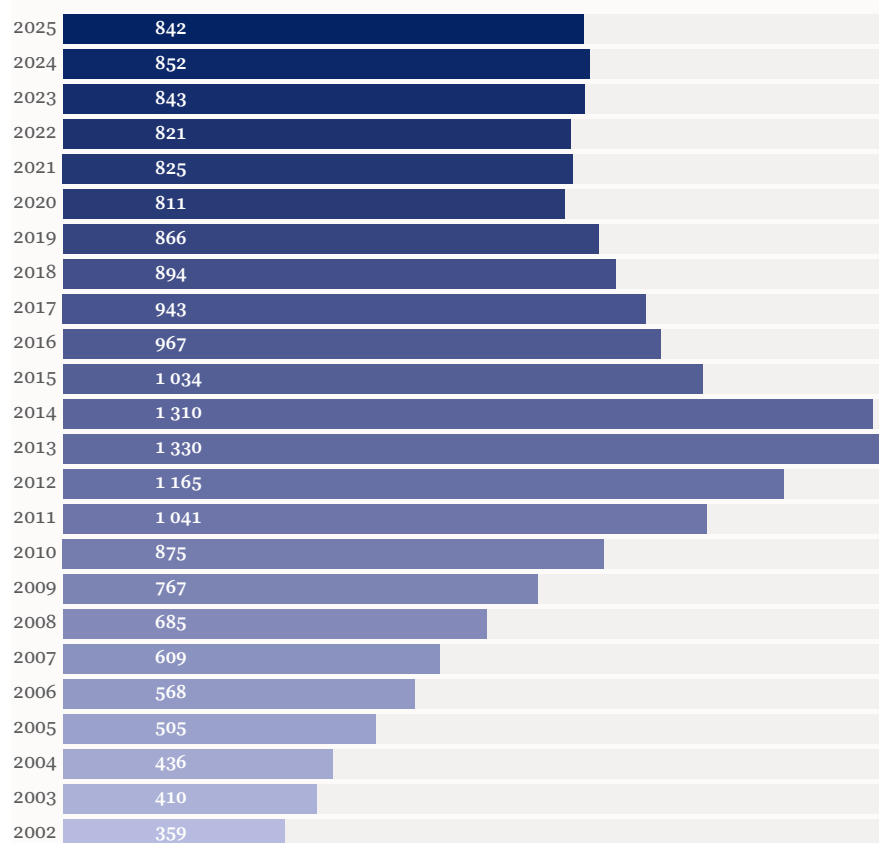
THE BRUSSELS PRESS CORPS

In this first section, we briefly summarise the structure of the Brussels press corps and compare our 2026 findings with those from the 2021 survey. Importantly, the Brussels press corps is not particularly volatile, so many of the characteristics we previously reported on, such as age, gender and media organisation, have remained relatively stable over the five-year period between this report and the last. However, we do observe some trends worth highlighting, which we discuss below.

As previously shown, the size of the Brussels press corps changes over time. Following a steady increase in the number of journalists since 2002, peaking in 2013, the Brussels press corps has been shrinking consistently. However, at the time of this report, there are 842 accredited journalists¹, a figure comparable to that reported in the first edition of the study (2020: 811 journalists). In fact, the number of journalists in the accreditation database has remained relatively stable since 2019, indicating that this reduction in size has not continued recently.

Number of single journalists accredited by the EU institutions (2002-2025)

Based on EU interinstitutional accreditation data



Socio-demographics

The Brussels press corps comprises journalists from media outlets across EU Member States and third countries, with diverse experience and social backgrounds. As noted, this is not a particularly volatile environment, so many findings from the 2026 report mirror those from 2021. In the following paragraphs, we highlight some minor shifts over the last five years.

¹ The discrepancy between the number of journalists contacted to participate in the survey (917 journalists) and the number of accredited journalists (842) stems from the fact that the cut-off date for data extraction from the EU interinstitutional accreditation database was October 2025, whereas the survey was launched in February 2026.

Age

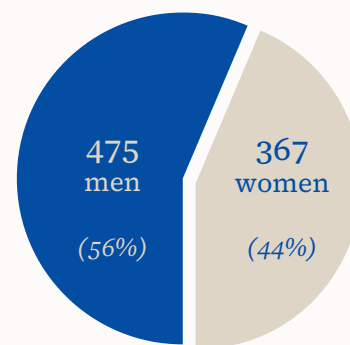
Overall, we see little variation in the age of accredited journalists in the Brussels press corps. In the 2021 report, the average age of correspondents was 45, and the 2025 accreditation database shows the same average. As in the previous report, the most common age group is 35 and above. This indicates that stationing in Brussels has largely been a mid-career position for several years.

Gender

The EU interinstitutional accreditation database indicates that, in 2020, approximately 63% of journalists identified as male, compared to 56% in 2025. In our 2026 survey, 59% of respondents identified as men, 38% as women (compared with the 44% of accredited journalists who were listed as women) and 3% chose ‘prefer not to reply’. This data suggests that there has been little change in gender representation over the past five years. Such stability is perhaps not surprising, given that gender balance tends to be subject to long-term developments that are better understood when tracked across entire career cycles.

Composition of the Brussels press corps in 2025 by gender

Based on EU interinstitutional accreditation data



Nationality

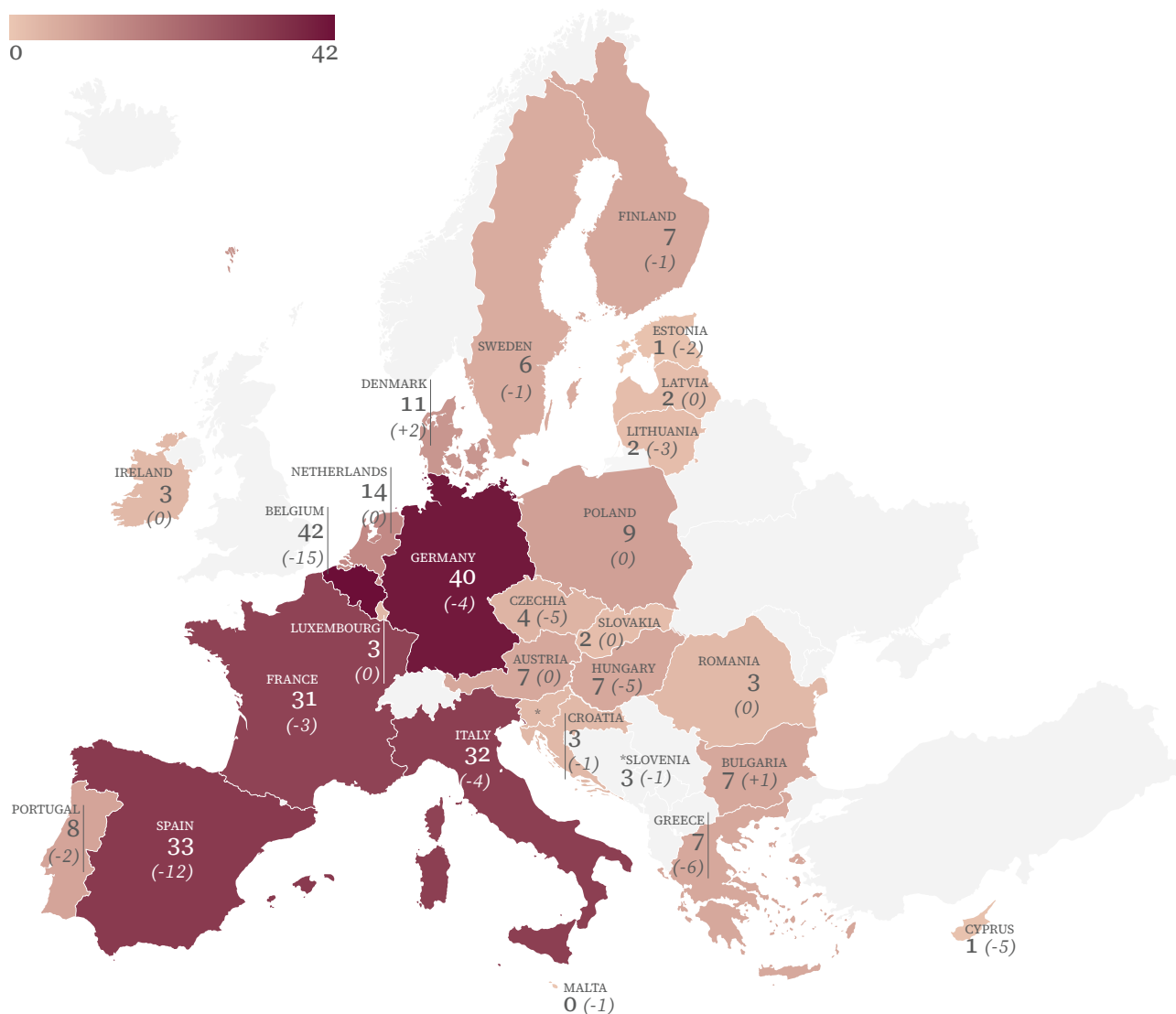
The stability noted above is also visible in where journalists come from and how long they remain in Brussels. In our first report, we showed that more journalists come from the largest EU countries, and that Member States are not represented proportionally to the size of their country or media market. In 2025, we find that the largest groups in the press corps are from Belgium (25%) and France (12%), followed by journalists from Germany (10%) and Italy (9%). Overall, these patterns have remained largely the same across Member States. There is, however, one notable exception: journalists from the UK, who accounted for around 10% of accredited correspondents in 2020, decreased to 4% in 2025, a change that is logically linked to the UK’s withdrawal from the EU.

Organisation

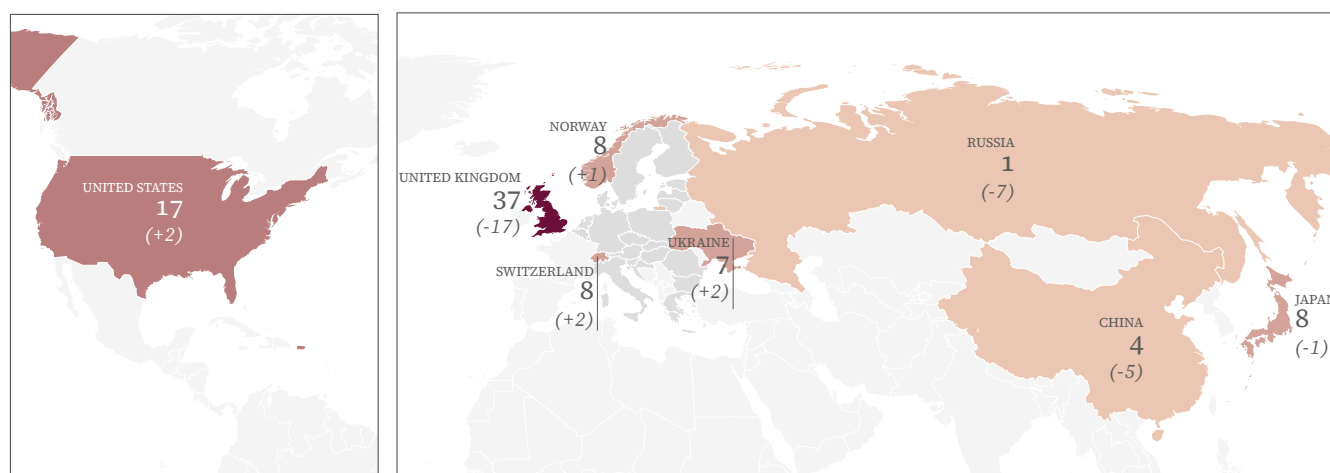
In general, the accreditation database shows that the organisations journalists worked for in 2025 were still located across the EU, but that their number had decreased. Given that the overall number of journalists has remained relatively stable, this points to a level of concentration, where some newsrooms have increased in size, while other smaller newsrooms or organisations with few correspondents in the press corps are no longer represented. In 2025, the EU’s most strongly represented media organisations were from Belgium (10%, including online-only pan-European and global media, as well as some specialised media), Germany (9%), Spain (8%), Italy (8%) and France (7%). There has been a decrease in the number of the UK-based media organisations, from 54 in 2020 to 37 in 2025.

Number of accredited news organisations by country in 2020 and 2025

Based on EU interinstitutional accreditation data*



Main non-EU countries



* The map colours represent the 2025 data. Figures in brackets indicate the corresponding 2020 values. For example, Belgium had 42 accredited news organisations in 2025, down from 57 in 2020 (-15). Denmark had 11 accredited news organisations in 2025, up from 9 in 2020 (+2). For countries where (0) is shown, the number of accredited news organisations remained unchanged between 2020 and 2025.

Employment conditions

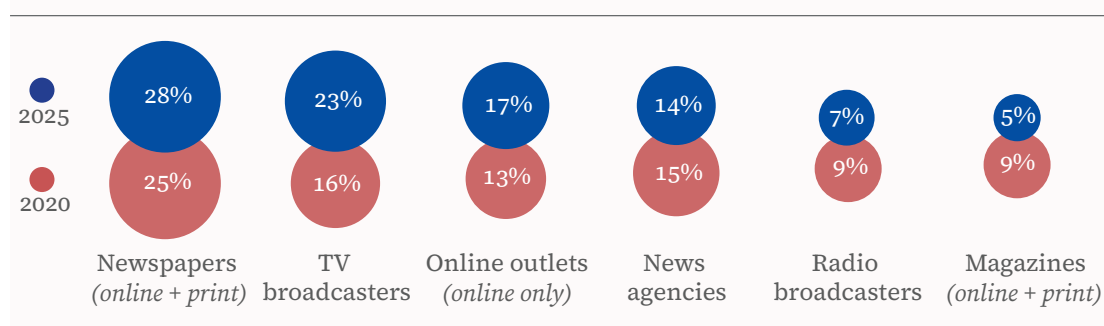
According to the EU interinstitutional accreditation database (2002–2025), journalists are stationed in Brussels for an average of eight years. However, a more detailed analysis shows that the range of stays is much larger, spanning from less than one year to the full 23 years. Similarly, in the 2026 survey, journalists reported stays ranging from a few months to more than 40 years. Overall, the data suggests that posting durations are skewed towards shorter periods, with more than 50% of journalists in the 2025 accreditation database reporting stays of five years or less. This largely confirms the findings of the first report.

In our previous report, we also noted a significant number of freelancers in the press corps. In 2020, around 25% of journalists reported being freelancers, according to the accreditation database. Today, this figure has decreased to 12%. This is an interesting finding to explore further in future years, as it shows a contrast in Brussels with the global increase in the proportion of freelance journalists within news organisations (e.g. Maares, 2026; Nicoletti & Jastramskis, 2025). One explanation is changes to accreditation rules within the EU institutions' accreditation database, but there may also be more substantive reasons, such as an overall consolidation in the Brussels press corps or increased investment in full-time employment by larger, growing Brussels-based newsrooms.

Another constant is that journalists in Brussels cover EU affairs for national audiences. While most employers are still media such as news agencies, newspapers and magazines, over a third of the journalists who participated in our survey work for online-only news outlets. This suggests that this group is somewhat overrepresented in our survey, as the general accreditation database shows only 17% of journalists working for online-only outlets. What was already notable before, but is becoming more pronounced, are the topic specialisations of Brussels journalists. Over two-thirds of accredited journalists identify as generalists in political reporting rather than specialists focused on specific policy areas. This may indicate, consistent with findings in the academic literature, that in Brussels, generalists are more common than specialist reporters; this is not necessarily a reflection on the quality of their skills, but may be because Brussels correspondents are required to cover several complex areas and therefore need to remain generalists rather than specialise (e.g. Lecheler, 2008). This is supported by our 2026 survey data, which show that over half of the journalists surveyed cover not only EU affairs, but also other foreign (e.g. Benelux, NATO) or domestic issues. Only 22% of journalists report covering EU affairs exclusively.

The largest media types present in Brussels in 2020 and 2025

Based on EU interinstitutional accreditation data



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Topics, networks and sourcing



TOPICS, NETWORKS AND SOURCING

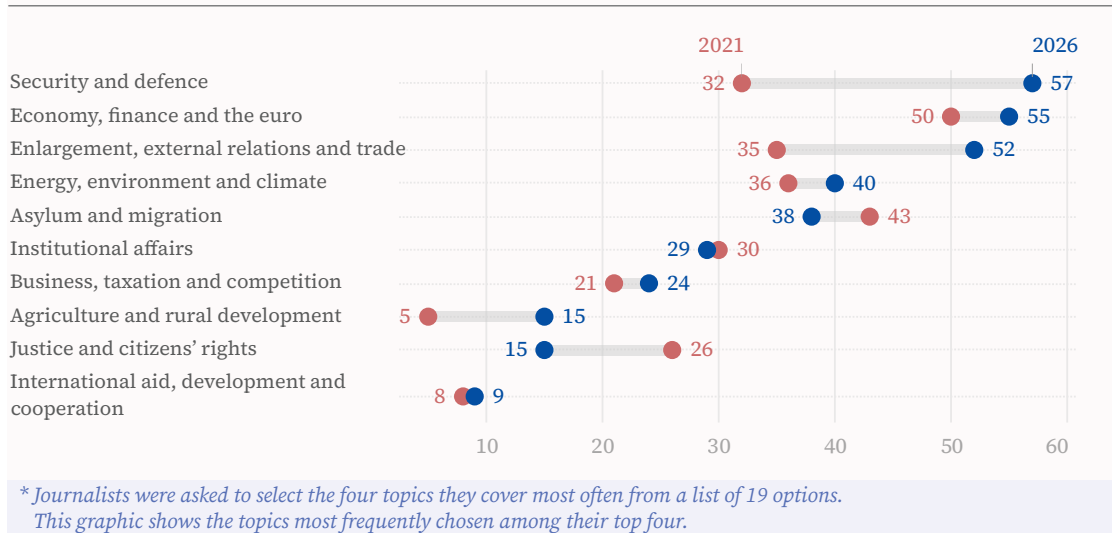
As in 2021, we asked journalists about their perceptions of the Brussels work process. Specifically, we focused on (1) the topics they cover, (2) their networks in Brussels and (3) their sourcing practices. We also chose these three areas as key points of focus in the 2026 report, because research shows that Brussels correspondents differ significantly from journalists covering only national affairs or working in other genres of journalism. This research, which summarises a complex journalistic ecosystem, has long indicated that the Brussels press corps covers highly complex topic areas, and that a small number of media outlets set the agenda in Brussels and thereby shape topic selection and reporting choices. Moreover, it has underscored that sourcing is affected not only by broader economic and technological changes, but also by the specific national and international networks journalists are able to build within the Brussels environment.

Topics

Naturally, our previous report highlighted COVID-19 as a central topic for Brussels correspondents in 2021 (back then, 55% named it as one of their most covered topics; now, health is one of the least covered topics in the survey), followed by economy and finance, and asylum and migration. This has shifted significantly in 2026. The most commonly covered topics are now security and defence (57%; 2021: 32%). Economy ranks second (55%; 2021: 50%), probably due to the economic impact of geopolitical developments. Enlargement, external relations and trade (52%; 2021: 35%) have also become more prominent areas of coverage.

Top 10 most popular news topics covered by journalists in 2021 and 2026

*What are the four topics you report on most often? (in %)**



Networks

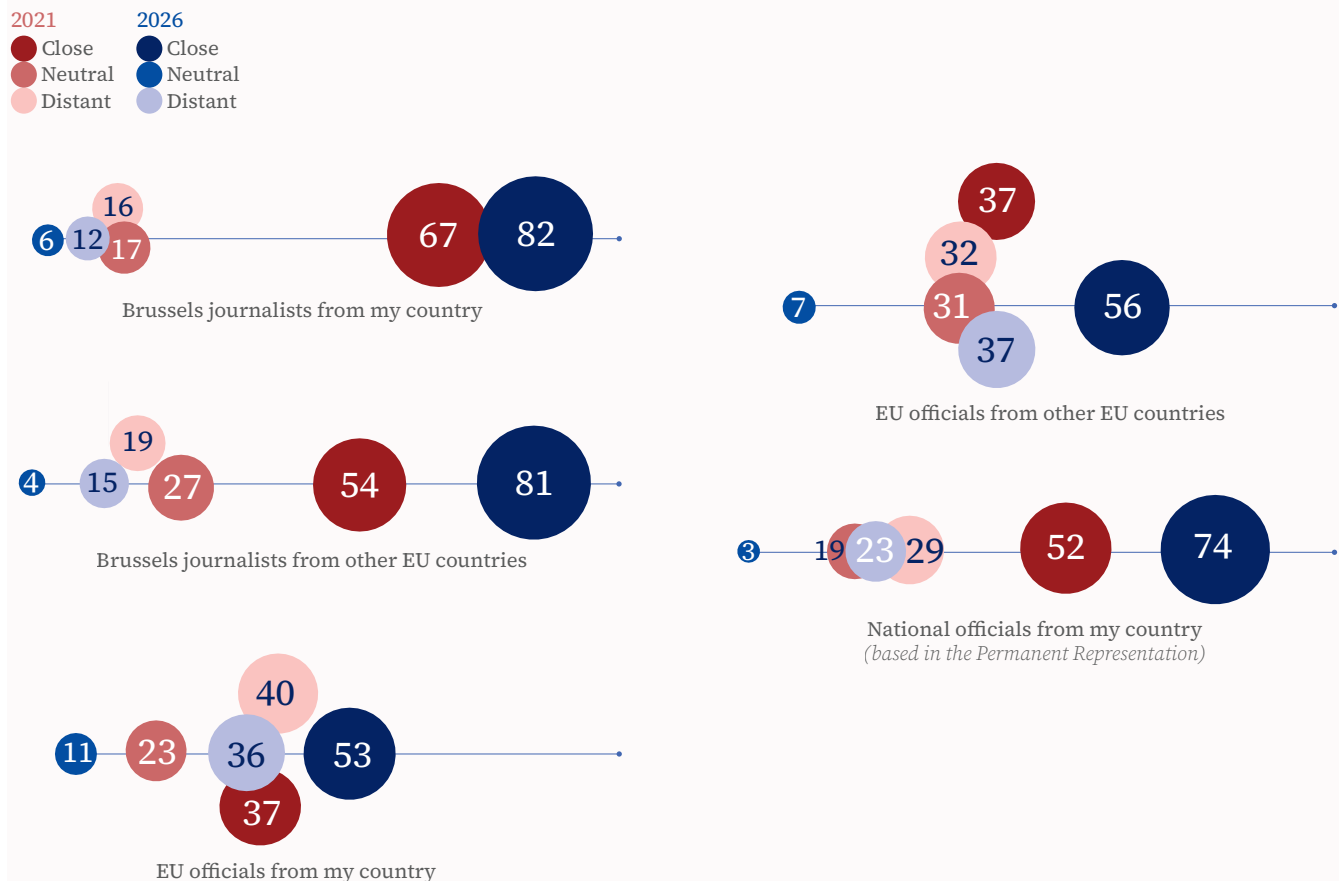
One aspect addressed by the study is perceptions of power within journalistic networks. In 2021, journalists indicated that the most important agenda-setting media were outlets from English-speaking countries, followed closely by EU-wide media focused on EU affairs. In 2026, this remains true: media from English-speaking countries with international reach are still seen as key agenda-setters on EU affairs. However, they are very closely followed by EU-wide news media and international news agencies.

More specifically, when asked in an open-ended question which news organisations they personally consider most influential in setting the agenda in Brussels, journalists frequently pointed – as in 2021 – to large Brussels-based newsrooms. *The Financial Times* was named by 74% of respondents as one of their top three. Among pan-European media, those with larger Brussels presences, such as *Politico* and *Euractiv*, were most often cited, with 88% and 26% respectively. News agencies such as *Reuters* (26%) and *Bloomberg* (19%) were also mentioned. This also aligns with sourcing practices, as our 2026 survey shows that these same outlets are most frequently used by journalists when researching stories on EU affairs.

Next, we look at journalists' networks of cooperation. As in 2021, we asked journalists how they would describe their relationships with other members of their professional network. One finding worth highlighting, which is both consistent with our previous study and somewhat contrary to parts of the existing research literature, is that Brussels correspondents feel very close to other Brussels correspondents both from their own country and from other EU countries, with the difference between their relationships with these two groups appearing to diminish further. A similar structure is visible in relationships with EU officials, where journalists report similarly close relationships with officials from their own country and with officials from other EU countries. Together, this suggests that the Brussels press corps is a close-knit professional community.

Brussels correspondents' feeling of proximity to the following members of their professional network

How would you describe your relationship with members of your professional network? (in %)*



* Journalists were asked how they would describe their relationship with members of their professional network (1 – 'very distant' to 7 – 'very close'). In this graphic, answers 1-3 are shown as 'distant', answer 4 as 'neutral', and answers 5-7 as 'close'.

Sourcing

When asked which activities they consider most important for their work in Brussels, journalists in the 2026 survey, much like in the previous report, point to a wide range. However, some clearly stand out.

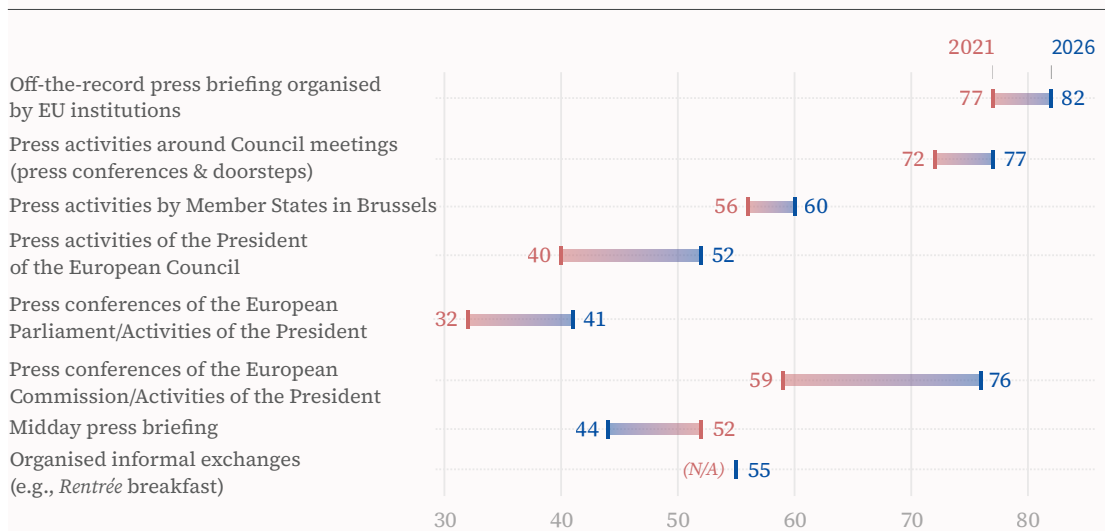
For the journalists we surveyed, three activities remain of utmost importance: off-the-record press briefings organised by EU institutions, press activities around Council meetings and press conferences by the European Commission and its President. The midday briefing also remains central, but the 2026 data indicates a slight decrease in significance among the surveyed journalists, which needs to be evaluated over a longer time frame. The survey findings underscore the continued importance of organised, institutional interactions, even as less structured forms of digital information dissemination become more important.

The importance of physical meetings, such as those described above, is also evident in other survey questions. We asked journalists how often they use different channels to stay in contact with their sources. Here, they mentioned press conferences and email, indicating that both formal and informal channels remain relevant. Having direct contact details, such as phone numbers or other informal digital connections, remains important.

Notably, however, in line with the immensely important role of digital communication, messaging apps are now very frequently used by journalists in their work.

Press activities according to Brussels journalists

*How important are the following activities to your work? (in %)**



**Journalists were asked how important they considered the activities shown above for their work, from 1 – ‘not important’ to 7 – ‘very important’. This graphic shows answers of 6 or higher.*

Frequency of use of different channels to contact sources

How often do you use these channels to contact sources? (in %)*

◆ 2021 ■ 2026

Messaging apps (WhatsApp, Signal, etc.)†

57

E-mail

38 ◆ 48

Press conferences / press events (e.g., briefings)

◆ 33 36

Pre-arranged physical meetings

◆ 20 33

Telephone (phone calls)

30 ◆ 33

Spontaneous interactions in EU institutions

16 ◆ 18

SMS‡

16 ◆ 36

Receptions and other events

◆ 12 16

Messages on social media (Instagram, X, etc.)

2 ◆ 6

* Journalists were asked how often they use the channels presented above when making contact with their sources, from 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’. This graphic shows answers of ‘all the time’.

† 2021: N/A

‡ In 2021, the response option ‘SMS’ was grouped together with text messages on Signal or WhatsApp.

EU sources according to Brussels journalists

How important do you consider the following institutional sources? (in %)*

■ 2021 ■ 2026

Ministers and other members of Member States governments

57

75

Officials of the Council/European Council

59

65

Members of the European Parliament

52

54

Officials of the European Parliament

34

39

European Commissioners

52

71

Officials of the European Commission

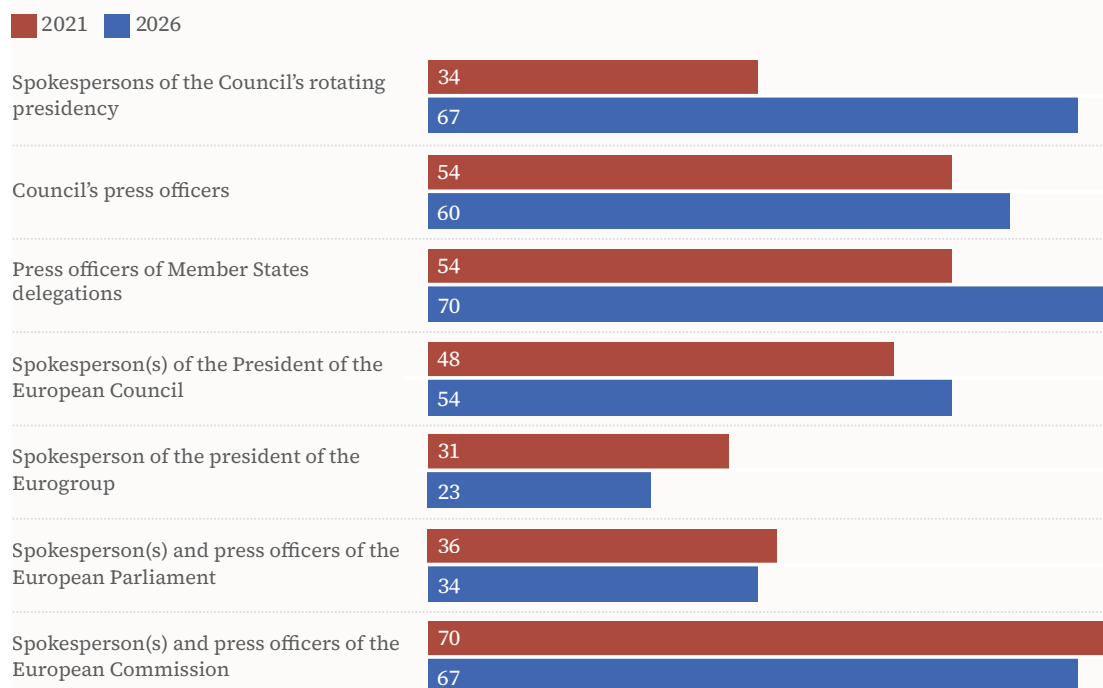
66

71

* Journalists were asked how important they considered the sources displayed above when working on a story, from 1 – ‘not important’ to 7 – ‘very important’. Visualised here are answers of 6 or higher.

Press sources according to Brussels journalists

How important do you consider the following press contacts as sources of information? (in %)*



* Journalists were asked how important they considered the sources illustrated above for their work, from 1 – 'not important' to 7 – 'very important'. This graphic shows answers ranging from 6 to 7.

As in our previous report, we find that high-level officials and political actors are considered particularly valuable sources. This is reflected in the continued importance of the press officers from Member States delegations, as well as spokespersons and press officers of the European Commission and the Council presidency. The increase in the importance of the spokespersons of the Council's rotating presidency is interesting – a change likely to be connected to the continued evolution of communication practices within presidencies over recent years. Generally, in our previous report and now, political figures and media contacts working for the same institution are seen as similarly relevant when researching a story. Journalists were not asked to explain their answers. Therefore, answers need to be considered taking into account a number of factors, including the roles and organisation of the different institutions and their overall communication strategies.

4

Social media and messaging apps



SOCIAL MEDIA AND MESSAGING APPS

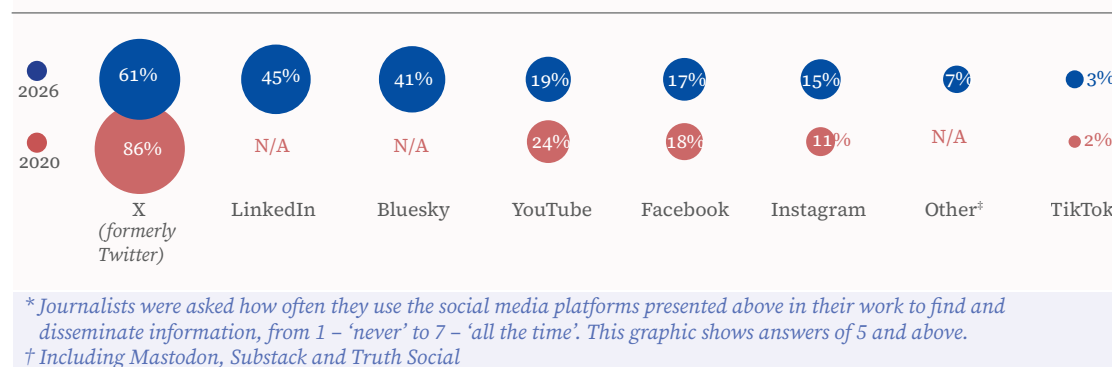
As the previous sections already indicate, social media platforms play a very important role at many stages of the journalistic production process, including for Brussels correspondents. In our 2026 survey, we expanded our analysis of social media platforms, examining their role not only as tools but also as sources of information. In addition, we included messaging apps in our analysis. Overall, that analysis shows the changing role of X (formerly Twitter) and the resulting shift in which platforms matter in journalistic work.

While X still matters in 2026, its importance has declined significantly since our last survey. Other platforms, notably LinkedIn and Bluesky, have increasingly filled the space left by X, with many journalists using them both for research and for sharing their work. Perceptions of credibility appear to have shifted alongside these usage patterns: content on X is generally viewed as less trustworthy, while material shared on LinkedIn and Bluesky is seen as more credible.

We also asked respondents how often they use the social media accounts of specific sources when producing their reporting. The results show that these social media accounts are seen as important, with many surveyed journalists rating them as important to extremely important. Most significant in this regard are the social media accounts of political figures and EU officials, followed by those of press officers. In addition, scholarly communication on social media is increasingly picked up, with many journalists regularly referring to posts by academics and experts.

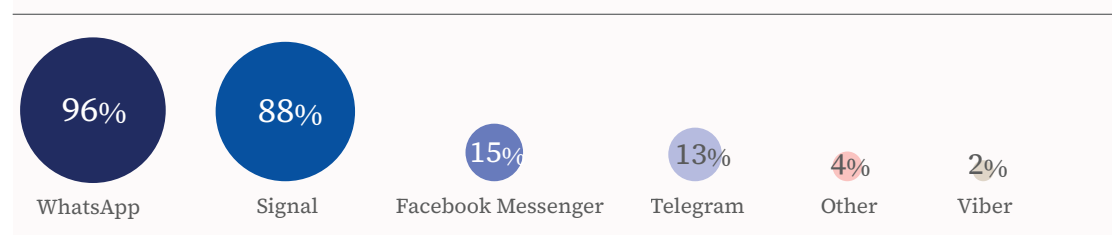
Social media platform use in 2021 and 2026

*How often do you use the following social media for your work?**



Use of messaging apps in 2026

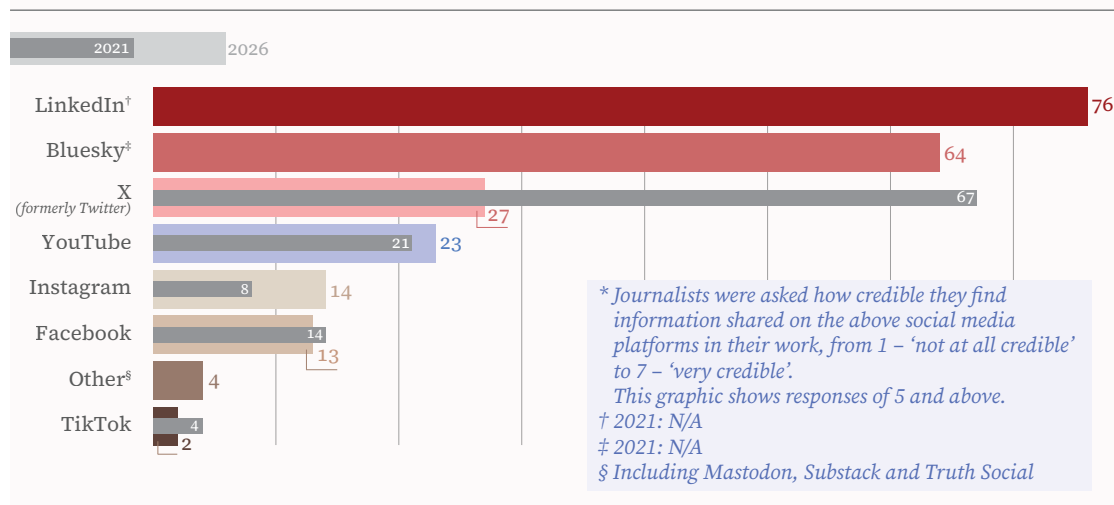
Which private messaging apps do you use the most?



In addition to public platforms, journalists also highlighted the growing importance of private messaging apps. In our sample, the most used apps are WhatsApp (96%), followed by Signal (88%) and Facebook Messenger (15%).

Credibility assessment of social media platforms in 2021 and 2026

How credible do you find information shared on the following social media platforms? (in%)*

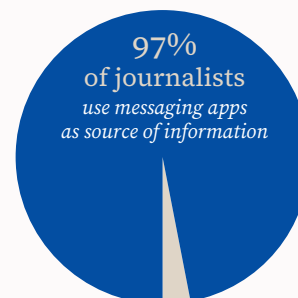


Interestingly, when asked whether social media has a positive or negative influence on their work, opinions are somewhat divided: 41% evaluate it as rather negative, while 51% see it as rather positive. This indicates a slight shift from our last survey: here, 54% saw the impact as rather positive, while only 27% saw it as rather negative (with a larger share of surveyed journalists ranking social media’s impact as neutral).

In the 2026 survey, we also asked about the role content creators play within the broader news and information ecosystem for Brussels correspondents. Results show that, in our sample, they are viewed quite negatively, with only 24 % of journalists rating their impact as rather positive and 76 % rating it as rather negative. This assessment is consistent across journalists working in different media formats and employment conditions.

Frequency of use of messaging apps

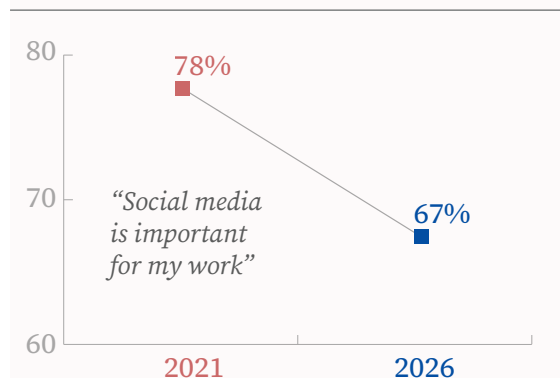
In 2026*



* Journalists were asked how often they use messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal) as a source for news or news-related communication, from 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’. This graphic includes responses of 5 and above.

Importance of social media

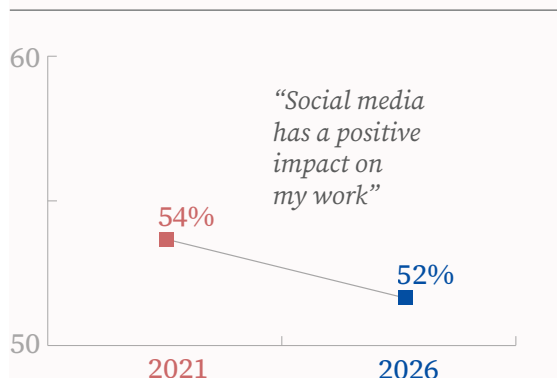
How important is social media for reporting or producing your stories?*



* The response options ranged from 1 – ‘not at all important’, to 7 – ‘extremely important’. The graphic shows answers of 5 and above.

Impact of social media

Overall, how would you rate the impact of social media on your work as a journalist?*



* The response options ranged from 1 – ‘very negative’ to 7 – ‘very positive’. The graphic shows responses of 5 and above.

Disinformation



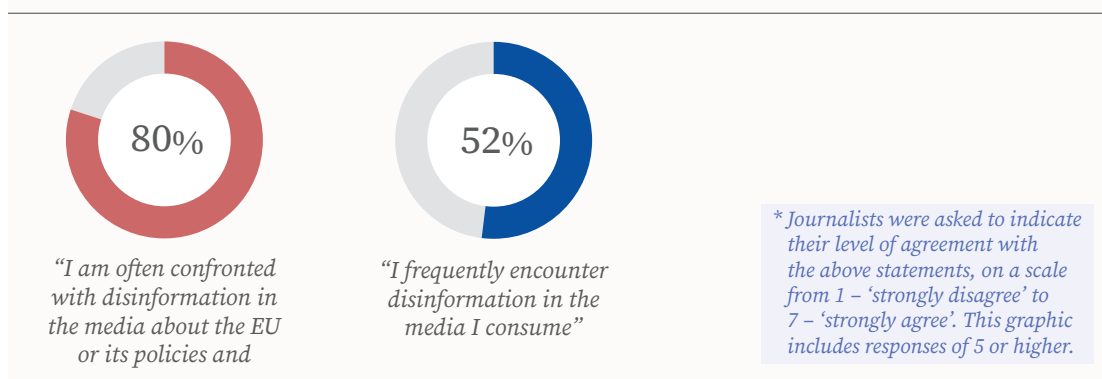
DISINFORMATION

Next, we examined how concerns about disinformation and journalists' practical engagement with it on a daily basis affect the work of Brussels correspondents. There are widespread concerns about the level of disinformation within the European information space, and this concern clearly extends to Brussels correspondents, who act as key brokers of information about and with the EU institutions.

Unsurprisingly, journalists in the Brussels press corps widely agree that disinformation poses a major threat to the integrity of news media. Importantly, those we surveyed report frequently encountering disinformation in the media they use, particularly regarding EU policies.

The role of disinformation in journalists' work (2026)

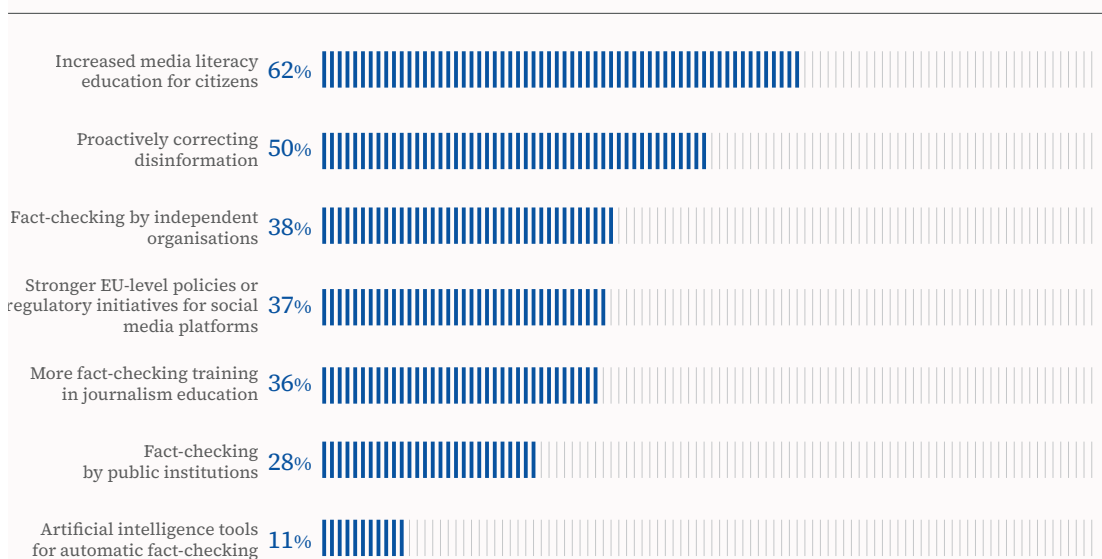
What is your level of agreement with the following statements?^{2*}



Indeed, the survey showed that the more journalists think they are exposed to such disinformation, the more likely they are to perceive it as a serious threat to the integrity of news. Those who perceive disinformation as a major threat are also less likely to believe that journalists in Europe are adequately prepared to counter it.

Perception of the effectiveness of measures to combat disinformation in Europe

In 2026^{*}



* Journalists were asked which up to three measures they believe are most effective in combating disinformation in Europe.

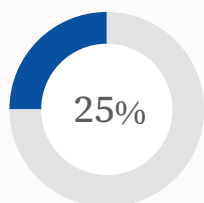
When asked what measures they believe are effective in combating the effects of disinformation in Europe, the journalists surveyed most frequently identified increased media literacy among citizens as the most effective response (62%), followed by proactively correcting disinformation (50%), fact-checking by independent organisations (38%) and stronger EU-level regulation of platforms (37%).

Strengthening the fact-checking ecosystem was also seen as important, with over a third of our sample supporting more fact-checking training for journalists. Fact-checking by independent organisations was also chosen more frequently than fact-checking by public institutions (28%). By contrast, AI is not widely seen as helpful in this area, with only 11% agreeing that automated AI fact-checking tools could be useful.

In addition, the survey suggests that Brussels correspondents are pessimistic about the EU's ability to counter disinformation alongside these measures, as more than 70% of journalists said the EU institutions are not effective in countering disinformation today. When invited to suggest measures EU institutions should prioritise, many pointed to the need for greater transparency in the EU's actions, as well as clearer, simpler and more direct communication from EU institutions to journalists and citizens.

The role of EU institutions in countering disinformation

In 2026*



“EU institutions are being effective in countering disinformation – for example by rectifying stories and proactively putting out facts”

** Journalists were asked to rate their agreement with the above statement on a scale from 1 – ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 – ‘strongly agree’. The graphic displays responses of 5 or higher.*

6

Artificial intelligence and journalism



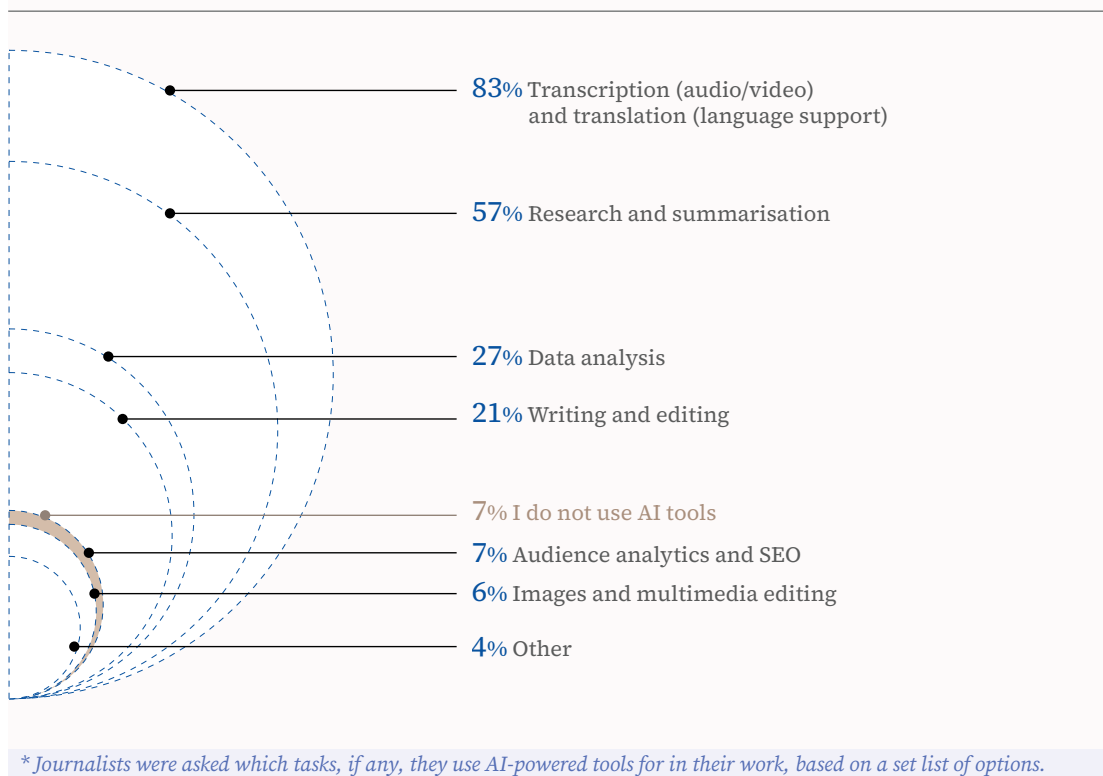
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND JOURNALISM

In 2026, a central question for many is how impactful innovations in AI, particularly generative AI, are for journalistic work. In the 2026 survey, we introduced a set of questions on this topic. Here, we focused on three aspects: first, how journalists use AI tools in their own work; second, their perceptions of how AI innovation is affecting the quality of news and media work in Brussels; and third, their level of support for the use of AI by EU institutions to enhance communication and information dissemination.

In our survey, 83% of the respondents reported using AI-powered tools for transcription, translation and language support, making these the tasks such tools are most often used for. Second came general research and summarisation tasks, followed by data analysis. AI tools are less commonly used for tasks such as writing and editing, image and multimedia editing, and audience analytics and search engine optimisation, which may fall more to other staff at media organisations. Interestingly, only 7% of the surveyed journalists reported not using AI-powered tools in their work.

Tasks for which journalists use AI tools

*For which tasks (if any) do you use AI-powered tools in your work? (2026)**

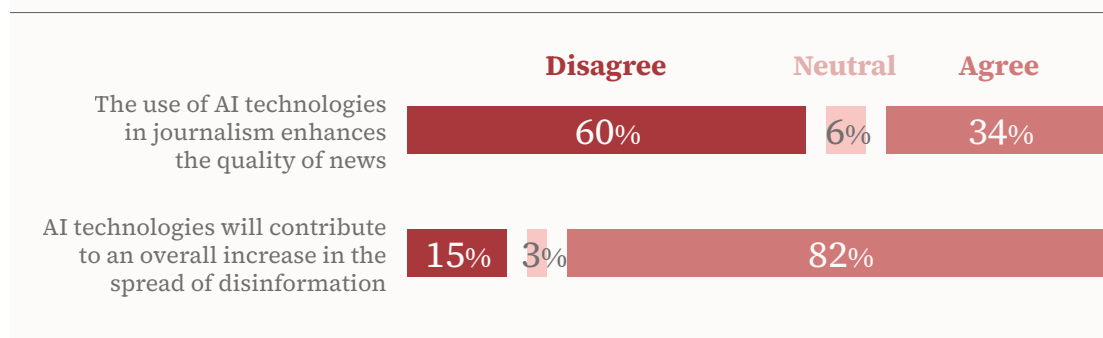


Next, we asked journalists how AI use affects their work and the quality of their output. Even though use of AI is widespread among them, Brussels journalists are rather wary of it. The majority believe that AI technologies diminish the quality of news. In addition, AI is widely perceived as contributing to the spread of disinformation.

Journalists who do not use AI tend to be more critical here, while those who do, particularly for writing or editing, are more likely to believe it improves the quality of journalism. This points to a potential practice–perception gap: using AI for specific tasks such as writing or editing may lead journalists to perceive improvements in these areas. Similarly, journalists who use AI in their own work are more likely to support its increased use by EU institutions, whereas those who do not use AI are less supportive of its adoption.

Perceived impact of AI on journalistic work (2026)

What is your level of agreement with the following statements?^{2*}

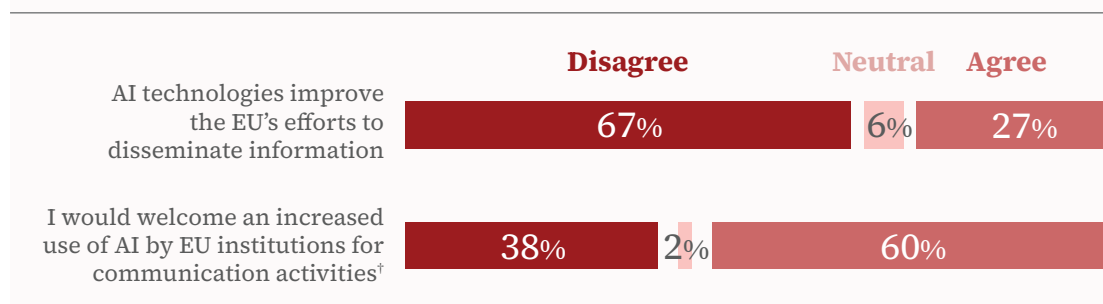


^{*} Journalists were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the above statements, from 1 – ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 – ‘strongly agree’. The graphic indicates responses grouped into three categories: ‘disagree’ (1-3), ‘neutral’ (4) and ‘agree’ (5-7).

Regarding EU media work, we see that 60% of journalists welcome the use of AI for certain tasks. For instance, AI-led tools may be able to address some of the major challenges Brussels journalists face, chief among them the multilingual nature of work in Brussels and the large volume of information many journalists have to process.

Perceived impact of AI on EU institutions' communication and information dissemination (2026)

What is your level of agreement with the following statements?^{2*}



^{*} Journalists were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the above statements, from 1 – ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 – ‘strongly agree’. The graphic indicates responses grouped into three categories: ‘disagree’ (1-3), ‘neutral’ (4) and ‘agree’ (5-7).

[†] e.g. machine translation of websites, use of AI-generated subtitles for doorsteps, press conferences and other audiovisual material.

7

Perceptions of Council media content

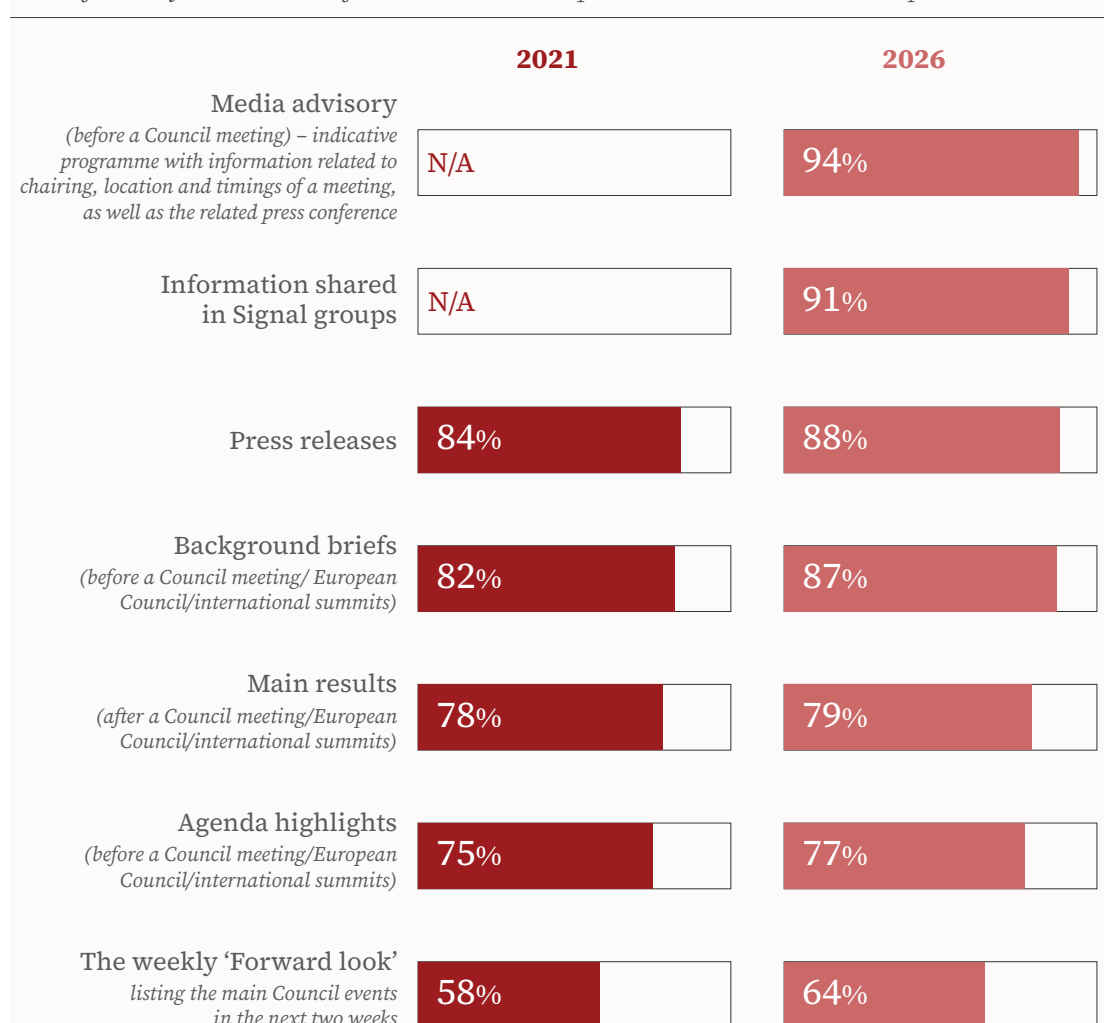


In 2021, the data showed that Council media products were widely used and positively received, with press releases and background briefs being the most frequently relied-upon sources, particularly among journalists working for online-only media.

The 2026 survey mirrors this observation. Overall, we see high usage of all listed Council media products among the journalists surveyed. When asked how often they use these products, media advisories (before a Council meeting), press releases, and background briefs ahead of a Council meeting or summit are among the most frequently used. Information shared in Signal groups is also one of the highest-rated sources, with a substantial proportion of respondents reporting very frequent use.

Perceived importance of Council media content (in 2021 and 2026)

How often do you make use of these Council/European Council written media products?*



* Journalists were asked how often they make use of these Council/European Council written media products in their work, from 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’. This graphic presents answers of 5 or higher.

8

Outlook



The results of this study signal both stability and change within the Brussels press corps. Comparisons with the 2021 report show that its size and composition have remained relatively stable over the past five years, a period that saw not only the COVID-19 pandemic but also the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, as well as several notable crises that have affected the journalistic system. The data we collected this year shows that being a Brussels correspondent remains a mid-career placement, that many journalists stay in Brussels for many years and that their reporting covers a wide range of national, pan-European and global topics.

However, this new study also adds several layers of change to this picture of working as a journalist in Brussels. First, we can see that social media remains a challenge: while journalists seem to have widely adopted it in their work, as a source or a channel for communicating with sources, they are also sometimes critical of its impact on journalistic work. This seems particularly true of journalists' perception of the role of new intermediaries emerging from social media environments, most notably content creators. As the boundaries between journalism and content creation blur, this is a space we need to monitor in the coming years (e.g. Banjac & Hanusch, 2022).

Another important change is the use of messaging apps. At first glance, this seems trivial, with messaging apps being simply an extension of SMS or other forms of digital communication such as email. However, messaging apps are more complex than one might think, as they are also used by other, sometimes malicious actors to disseminate disinformation, and they are not as 'private' as many of their users might surmise (e.g. Pierson, 2021). They bring a new dimension to the question of what 'trusted' sourcing channels are, especially as their role is likely to increase in the coming years.

Another area to keep an eye on is disinformation. Our survey results clearly show that disinformation is a point of concern; this is no surprise. However, the question of who is responsible for protecting citizens and journalists from exposure to disinformation in their work and lives is still an evolving discussion. Our findings highlight the work of fact-checkers in this information ecosystem, and increased use of both independent and institutional fact-checking services by the Brussels press corps is a likely scenario worth looking out for (e.g. Weikmann et al., 2026).

Lastly, and most prominently, this survey provides initial insights into how the use of AI-powered tools has changed the work of Brussels journalists so far. Given the fast-paced changes in AI innovation, our insights will need to be contextualised in the coming years, but there is an indication that journalists are both worried about the impact of AI on their work and quickly incorporating AI tools into their workflows. It seems that AI-powered tools could alleviate some of the more central concerns that have long been raised by Brussels correspondents, most notably the multilingual, information-dense communication between journalists and EU institutions (Lecheler, 2008). However, the longer-term impact on quality and independence of work within the European discourse on the regulation of platforms and digital innovation remains uncertain right now.

Annexes



ANNEX 1

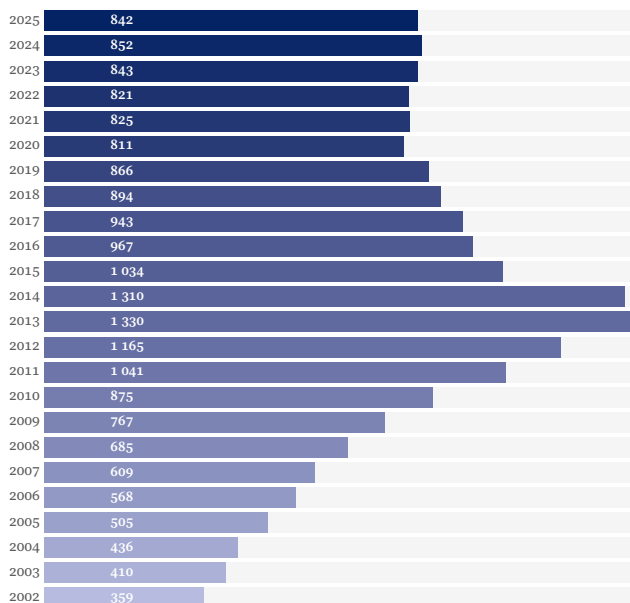
Historical evolution of the Brussels press corps 2002-2025

The findings presented below are based on data from the EU interinstitutional database 2002-2025².

The journalists

How many journalists are accredited to the EU institutions?

The data from the interinstitutional database suggest that the presence of accredited journalists at the EU institutions increased from around 360 in 2002 to around 1330 in 2013. From 2013 to 2025, this figure has decreased overall, albeit with periodic fluctuations and small increases. From 2020 to 2025, the number of accredited journalists has remained relatively stable, standing at around 850 in 2025.



How old are they?

The analysis shows that the average age of journalists in Brussels remained stable, oscillating between 41 and 45 years old during the period in question.

Are they mostly men or women?

The results show that every year between 2002 and 2025, there were more male than female accredited journalists in Brussels. However, it seems that the gender balance improved throughout this period. In 2003, the ratio was

around 2.65 (2.65 male journalists for every female journalist). This figure reached its minimum value in 2025, when the ratio was about 1.30.

How long do they remain in Brussels?

Taking 2025 as a year of reference within the 2002-2025 framework, the data shows, as in the previous report, that a journalist spends on average 7.90 years in Brussels (out of a total of 24 years). Nevertheless, the data also suggests that this number is skewed towards shorter stays, with more than 50% of journalists in the 2025 accreditation database recording – as in 2021 – a stay of five years or less.

How many of the journalists are freelance?

The analysis shows an increase in the proportion of freelance journalists from 2002 (around 25% of the total number of journalists accredited) to 2020, when freelance journalists accounted for up to around 30% of the total. Since then, however, a persistent decline has been observed, with a significant decrease of around 18 percentage points in 2025 compared to 2020 (12%).

The media

Where are the media organisations represented in the Brussels press corps from?

The available data shows that, from 2002 to 2020, the Brussels press corps was from news organisations based in 77 countries around the world, while this figure decreased to 72 in 2021 and then to 62 in 2025. In addition, media organisations from ‘pre-2004’ EU Member States³ (those which joined the EU before 2004) were the most represented throughout the 23-year period in question (approximately 55-60% each year, 2002-2025). However, it seems that the proportion of organisations from ‘post-2004’ Member States (those which joined the EU after 2004) doubled after the 2004 enlargement – from around 6% in 2002 to around 12% in 2020, before decreasing to 10% in 2025.

² It should be noted that the IT tool used for accreditation has evolved considerably over time, making it impossible to thoroughly check the consistency of data. Detailed results are therefore to be taken with caution.

³ See above

What about the scope of news organisations?

The available data shows that most news organisations in Brussels were mostly national news media (an average of around 60% from 2002 to 2025), while outlets with a Europe-wide scope (averaging around 20%) or a regional scope (an average of approximately 10%) were less represented. Moreover, the analysis shows that the vast majority of news organisations making up the Brussels press corps have a general focus on politics (78% of the total outlets in 2025; 71% in 2020). The second largest group comprised economic/financial news organisations, which represented 6% of the total in 2025 (5% in 2020).

What are the most common media types?

The analysis shows that newspapers (with both print and online editions) were the most represented news organisations in Brussels throughout the period under review, accounting for an average of around 25% from 2002 to 2025. TV broadcasters averaged around 17% between 2002 and 2025. Meanwhile, news agencies and outlets that publish only online accounted for an average of around 15% during the 2010-2020 period.

Media types (2002-2025)

	Magazines (online + print)	News agencies	Newspapers (online + print)	Online outlets (only online)	Production companies	Radio broadcasters	TV broadcasters
2002	8%	14%	25%	15%	3%	11%	12%
2003	8%	14%	26%	15%	3%	11%	12%
2004	9%	14%	25%	14%	2%	12%	13%
2005	9%	14%	26%	16%	3%	10%	12%
2006	8%	14%	25%	16%	4%	9%	14%
2007	8%	13%	24%	15%	4%	9%	13%
2008	9%	13%	24%	15%	4%	9%	16%
2009	9%	13%	23%	16%	4%	9%	16%
2010	9%	13%	24%	15%	4%	8%	16%
2011	9%	14%	24%	14%	5%	8%	17%
2012	9%	13%	25%	14%	4%	9%	18%
2013	9%	13%	25%	13%	5%	8%	18%
2014	8%	14%	26%	12%	5%	8%	17%
2015	8%	13%	25%	14%	5%	9%	18%
2016	8%	14%	25%	14%	5%	9%	17%
2017	8%	15%	26%	13%	4%	9%	17%
2018	7%	15%	25%	13%	4%	9%	17%
2019	7%	16%	24%	13%	3%	10%	18%
2020	9%	15%	25%	13%	4%	9%	16%
2021	8%	14%	30%	16%	4%	8%	20%
2022	5%	16%	31%	14%	3%	9%	23%
2023	4%	16%	30%	15%	4%	9%	22%
2024	5%	15%	29%	16%	4%	8%	24%
2025	5%	14%	28%	17%	3%	7%	23%

Country of origin of news organisations (2002-2025)

	EU MS <i>(before 2004)</i>	New EU MS <i>(after 2004)</i>	Candidate Countries	EU Neighbourhood	EFTA	UK	Other non-EU countries
2002	58%	6%	4%	5%	3%	10%	14%
2003	57%	7%	5%	5%	3%	10%	14%
2004	54%	8%	4%	6%	3%	11%	13%
2005	57%	8%	4%	5%	3%	11%	12%
2006	56%	9%	4%	5%	3%	11%	13%
2007	55%	11%	4%	5%	3%	10%	13%
2008	54%	11%	4%	5%	3%	10%	13%
2009	54%	10%	4%	5%	3%	11%	13%
2010	54%	10%	4%	5%	3%	10%	13%
2011	53%	11%	4%	5%	3%	10%	15%
2012	53%	11%	4%	5%	3%	9%	15%
2013	53%	11%	4%	5%	3%	9%	15%
2014	54%	10%	4%	5%	3%	9%	15%
2015	56%	10%	4%	5%	3%	9%	14%
2016	56%	11%	4%	4%	3%	9%	14%
2017	55%	11%	4%	3%	2%	9%	15%
2018	56%	11%	4%	3%	3%	9%	15%
2019	56%	11%	4%	4%	3%	9%	14%
2020	55%	12%	3%	4%	2%	10%	13%
2021	57%	12%	5%	2%	3%	11%	11%
2022	57%	11%	5%	1%	4%	8%	13%
2023	57%	11%	6%	1%	4%	8%	13%
2024	58%	11%	6%	1%	4%	9%	12%
2025	58%	10%	5%	2%	4%	9%	12%

ANNEX 2

Survey

Block II - MEMBERSHIP BRUSSELS PRESS CORPS

- Q1** Are you a journalist holding a permanent accreditation to the EU institutions in Brussels?
- ☐ Yes
☐ No

- Q2** For how many years have you been based in Brussels?
- ☐ Less than 1 year
☐ From 1 to less than 5 years
☐ From 5 to less than 10 years
☐ More than 10 years

- Q3** And how many years have you been working on European affairs?
- ☐ Less than 1 year
☐ From 1 to less than 5 years
☐ From 5 to less than 10 years
☐ More than 10 years

- Q4** In your daily work, do you work on:
- ☐ EU affairs only
☐ EU affairs and other foreign affairs (e.g. Belgium, NATO)
☐ EU affairs and other national affairs (e.g. national politics, national economy)
☐ Other, please specify: (open-ended)

Block III - WORKING CONDITIONS

- Q5** Which of the following categories best describes your current employment?
- ☐ Full-time employment with one media organisation
☐ Part-time employment with one media organisation
☐ Freelancer *[if selected, show Q5_subq*]*
☐ Other, please specify: (open-ended)
**Q5_subq. For how many news outlets do you work? (open-ended)*

- Q6** Which of the following categories best describes your current position in your newsroom?
- ☐ Editor
☐ Department head
☐ Reporter / News writer
☐ Producer
☐ Trainee
☐ Other, please specify: (open-ended)

- Q7** What type of medium are you mostly working for? If you work for more than one, please select the two media you are mostly working for. *(two responses allowed)*
- ☐ Television (broadcast and/or online)
☐ Radio (broadcast and/or online)
☐ Newspaper/Magazine (print and/or their online editions)
☐ Online-only news outlet
☐ News agency
☐ Production company
☐ Other type of media outlet (please specify)

- Q8** What is the typical size of the media organisations you work for?
- ☐ Mostly small (1 to 20 employees)
☐ Mostly medium (21 to 100 employees)
☐ Mostly large (More than 100 employees)

- Q9** In which country is/are your medium/media (predominantly) distributed?
- ☐ Pan-European
☐ Global
☐ Non-EU – United Kingdom
☐ Non-EU – United States of America
☐ Non-EU – EFTA countries (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Liechtenstein)
☐ Non-EU – candidate countries
☐ Non-EU – other non-EU countries
☐ Austria
☐ Belgium
☐ Bulgaria
☐ Croatia
☐ Republic of Cyprus
☐ Czech Republic
☐ Denmark
☐ Estonia

- ☐ Finland
☐ France
☐ Greece
☐ Hungary
☐ Ireland
☐ Italy
☐ Latvia
☐ Lithuania
☐ Luxembourg
☐ Malta
☐ Netherlands
☐ Poland
☐ Portugal
☐ Romania
☐ Slovakia
☐ Slovenia
☐ Spain
☐ Sweden

Journalism is in a state of change. Over the last 5 years, do you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of the following aspects of work?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘decreased a lot’ to 7 – ‘increased a lot’

- Q10
- ☐ The use of AI
 - ☐ The use of social media
 - ☐ The use of messaging apps
 - ☐ The relevance of journalism for society
 - ☐ Interactions of journalists with their audiences
 - ☐ Time available for researching stories
 - ☐ Journalists’ freedom to make editorial decisions
 - ☐ The credibility of journalism
 - ☐ Disinformation, misinformation and fact-checking

In your daily work, how often do you directly participate in the production of the following?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’

- Q11
- ☐ Social media stories (e.g. on Instagram or TikTok)
 - ☐ Social media threads (e.g. X/Twitter threads, LinkedIn Articles/Posts)
 - ☐ Short video or audio content for web (e.g., Podcasts, YouTube Shorts)
 - ☐ Live feeds/blogs
 - ☐ Newsletters
 - ☐ Visualisations and/or infographics
 - ☐ Investigative journalism pieces
 - ☐ Automated production of content (e.g. using AI-tools)

Block IV - AGENDA SETTING

To what extent do you think the following media set the agenda in EU affairs news coverage?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘not at all’ to 7 – ‘very much’

- Q12
- ☐ EU-wide news media (e.g. Politico, Euractiv, Euronews)
 - ☐ International news agencies (e.g. AFP, EFE, DPA, Reuters)
 - ☐ National news media available in other EU languages (e.g. DW, RTL)
 - ☐ Media from English speaking countries with an international reach (e.g. FT, BBC, Wall Street Journal)
 - ☐ National news media focused on national audiences

In your personal view, which three news media organisations have the most influence in terms of agenda-setting in Brussels overall?

(open-ended)

Q13

Please name three media outlets that you regularly turn to when researching a story about EU affairs.

(open-ended)

Q14

Block V - NETWORK

How would you describe your relationship with the following members of your professional network?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘very distant’ to 7 – ‘very close’

- Q15
- ☐ Brussels journalists from my country
 - ☐ Brussels journalists from other EU countries
 - ☐ EU officials from my country
 - ☐ EU officials from other EU countries
 - ☐ National officials (based in the Permanent Representation) from my country
 - ☐ National officials (based in the Permanent Representation) from other EU countries

Block VI - WORK AUTONOMY

For what reasons do you collaborate with colleagues based at home (i.e. in your country of origin and working for your media)?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘almost never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’

- Q16
- ☐ To exchange information for possible stories
 - ☐ To actively contribute to stories
 - ☐ To cover an important event in Brussels (e.g. an EU summit)
 - ☐ By attending a press briefing or press event in Brussels on their behalf

Block VII - TOPICS & FRAMING

When reporting on EU affairs, which four topics do you cover most often?

(four responses allowed)

- Q17
- ☐ Culture, education and youth
 - ☐ Employment and social rights
 - ☐ Consumer affairs and public health
 - ☐ Economy, finance and the euro
 - ☐ Health
 - ☐ Business, taxation and competition
 - ☐ Research and innovation
 - ☐ Enlargement, external relations and trade
 - ☐ International aid, development and cooperation
 - ☐ EU regional and urban development
 - ☐ Transport and travel
 - ☐ Asylum and migration
 - ☐ Institutional affairs
 - ☐ Food, farming and fisheries
 - ☐ Agriculture and rural development
 - ☐ Statistics
 - ☐ Security and defence
 - ☐ Energy, environment and climate
 - ☐ Justice and citizens’ rights

Block VIII - SOCIAL MEDIA & MESSAGING APPS

Q18	How important are social media for reporting or producing your stories? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘not important at all’ to 7 – ‘extremely important’</i>	Q19	In your work as a journalist, how often do you use social media posts authored by the following figures? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’</i> ☐ Academics and experts ☐ Journalists ☐ EU officials ☐ Press officers/spokespersons ☐ National officials ☐ Political figures (EU and national) ☐ Regular citizens
Q20	How often do you use the following social media platforms in your work as a journalist to find and disseminate information? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’</i> ☐ X (formerly Twitter) ☐ Bluesky ☐ LinkedIn ☐ YouTube ☐ Facebook ☐ Instagram ☐ TikTok ☐ Other (please specify)	Q21	And how credible do you find information shared on the following social media platforms in your work as a journalist? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘not at all credible’ to 7 – ‘very credible’</i> ☐ Twitter (X) ☐ Bluesky ☐ LinkedIn ☐ YouTube ☐ Facebook ☐ Instagram ☐ TikTok ☐ Other (please specify)
Q22	Overall, how would you rate the impact of social media on your work as a journalist? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘very negative’ to 7 – ‘very positive’</i>	Q23	Overall, how would you rate the role of content creators within the news and information ecosystem? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘very negative’ to 7 – ‘very positive’</i>
Q24	Which messaging apps do you use most frequently as a journalist? <i>(maximum three)</i> ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Telegram ☐ Signal ☐ Facebook Messenger ☐ Viber ☐ Other (please specify)	Q25	How often do you use messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal) as a source for news or news-related communication? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’</i>

Block IX - SOURCING

Q26	How important do you consider the following activities in Brussels for your work? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘not important’ to 7 – ‘very important’</i> ☐ Press activities of the President of the European Council ☐ Press activities by Member States in Brussels ☐ Off-the-record press briefing organised by EU institutions ☐ Press conferences of the European Parliament/Activities of the President ☐ Press conferences of the European Commission/Activities of the President ☐ Press activities around Council meetings (press conferences & doorsteps) ☐ Midday press briefing ☐ Organised informal exchanges (e.g. Rentrée breakfast)	Q27	How often do you use the following channels when making contact with your sources? <i>7-point scale: 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’</i> ☐ Pre-arranged physical meetings ☐ Telephone (phone calls) ☐ SMS ☐ Messaging apps (WhatsApp, Signal, etc.) ☐ Messages on social media (Instagram, X, etc.) ☐ E-mail ☐ Spontaneous interactions in the corridors of the European institutions ☐ Receptions and other events ☐ Press conferences and other press events (e.g. briefings)
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How important are the following sources for you when working on a story?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘not at all important’ to 7 – ‘very important’

- Q28
- ☐ Officials of the Council/European Council
 - ☐ Ministers and other members of Member States governments
 - ☐ Officials of the European Commission
 - ☐ European Commissioners
 - ☐ Officials of the European Parliament
 - ☐ Members of the European Parliament
 - ☐ Other national politicians
 - ☐ Other journalists
 - ☐ Lobbyists
 - ☐ Academics
 - ☐ Civil society organisations

And how important are the following persons responsible for media work?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘not at all important’ to 7 – ‘very important’

- Q29
- ☐ Council’s press officers
 - ☐ Press officers of Member States delegations
 - ☐ Spokesperson(s) of the President of the European Council
 - ☐ Spokespersons of the Council’s rotating presidency
 - ☐ Spokesperson of the president of the Eurogroup
 - ☐ Spokesperson(s) and press officers of the European Commission
 - ☐ Spokesperson(s) and press officers of the European Parliament

Block X - DISINFORMATION

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

7-point scale: 1 – ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 – ‘strongly agree’

- Q30
- Disinformation is a big threat to the integrity of news media
- I frequently encounter disinformation in the media I consume.
- I am often confronted with disinformation in the media about the EU or its policies and decisions.
- Journalists in Europe are adequately prepared to address and counter disinformation
- EU institutions are being effective in countering disinformation – for example by rectifying stories and proactively putting out facts

What measures do you believe are most effective in combating disinformation in Europe?

(Select up to three)

- Q31
- ☐ Fact-checking by public institutions
 - ☐ Fact-checking by independent organisations
 - ☐ Stronger EU-level policies or regulatory initiatives for social media platforms
 - ☐ Proactively correcting disinformation
 - ☐ Increased media literacy education for citizens
 - ☐ Artificial intelligence tools for automatic fact-checking
 - ☐ More fact-checking training in journalism education

- Q32
- What other measures do you think EU institutions should focus on when combating disinformation? (open-ended)**

Block XI - AI & JOURNALISM

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

7-point scale: 1 – ‘strongly disagree’ to 7 – ‘strongly agree’

- Q33
- The use of AI technologies in journalism enhances the quality of news.
- AI technologies will contribute to an overall increase in the spread of disinformation.
- AI technologies improve the EU’s efforts to disseminate information.
- I would welcome an increased use of AI by EU institutions for communication activities [e.g. machine translation of websites, the use of AI-generated subtitles for doorsteps, press conferences, and other audiovisual material].

For which tasks, if any, do you use AI-powered tools in your journalism work? (Select all that apply)

- Q34
- ☐ Research and summarisation
 - ☐ Writing and editing
 - ☐ Transcription (audio/video) and translation (language support)
 - ☐ Data analysis
 - ☐ Images and multimedia editing
 - ☐ Audience analytics and SEO
 - ☐ I do not use AI tools
 - ☐ Other (please specify)

Block XII - COUNCIL

How often do you make use of the following Council/European Council written media products in your work?

7-point scale: 1 – ‘never’ to 7 – ‘all the time’

- Q35
- ☐ Press release
 - ☐ The weekly ‘Forward look’ listing the main Council events in the next two weeks
 - ☐ Main results (after a Council/the European Council/ international summits)
 - ☐ Background briefs (before a Council/the European Council/international summits)
 - ☐ Agenda highlights (before a Council/the European Council/international summits)
 - ☐ Media advisory (before a Council) – indicative programme with information related to chairing, location, and timings of a meeting, as well as its press conference
 - ☐ Information shared in Signal groups

Block XIII - SOCIO DEMOGRAPHICS

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Q36</p> <p>How many years have you been working as a journalist?</p> <p>___ years</p> | <p>Q37</p> <p>How old are you ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Under 18 ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-44 ☐ 45-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ Above 64 | |
| <hr/> | | |
| <p>Q38</p> <p>What gender do you identify as?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Man ☐ Woman ☐ Non-binary ☐ Prefer not to reply | <p>Q39</p> <p>What is your nationality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Non-EU ☐ Austrian ☐ Belgian ☐ Bulgarian ☐ Croatian ☐ Cypriot ☐ Czech ☐ Danish ☐ Dutch ☐ Estonian ☐ Finnish ☐ French ☐ German ☐ Greek ☐ Hungarian | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Irish ☐ Italian ☐ Latvian ☐ Lithuanian ☐ Luxembourgish ☐ Maltese ☐ Polish ☐ Portuguese ☐ Romanian ☐ Slovakian ☐ Slovenian ☐ Spanish ☐ Swedish |

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