

FUTURE MEDIA INITIATIVE

Making European media a strategic asset for competitiveness and democracy

EUROPEAN DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY UNDER THREAT

While Europe excels in quality content creation, non-European platforms capture most video-on-demand viewing, subscriptions and advertising revenue. This dominance not only creates economic dependency, but also results in a structural loss of control over data, distribution infrastructure and algorithmic decision-making. These platforms also amplify disinformation, erode trust in European media and marginalise verified content through biased algorithms – leaving European actors with limited control over their own information space. This imbalance undermines Europe's economic sustainability, digital sovereignty and democratic resilience. As big tech dominates content, data flows and distribution algorithms, **European media risks becoming a passive player in its own digital future.**

Without strategic investment in media innovation, Europe faces four interconnected risks:

- declining revenue across both commercial and public media;
- the marginalisation of European players;
- loss of cultural and democratic sovereignty; and
- the disengagement of (younger) audiences.

In addition, Europe is becoming increasingly dependent on non-European technologies, cloud infrastructures and platform ecosystems, further weakening its strategic digital autonomy. These pressures risk locking European companies into strategies of cost-cutting and consolidation rather than investment, innovation and growth.

European media pluralism is a fundamental pillar of democratic life. Europe must act against foreign control of our information flows, while simultaneously investing in sovereign digital infrastructures, data ecosystems and European technological standards. It must strengthen trust, increase transparency, promote multilingual and culturally diverse content, and reinforce pluralism – ensuring media to remain close to Europe's societies. Digital sovereignty in this context means the capacity to define and enforce the rules governing Europe's digital public space.

To reverse these trends, Europe must go beyond supporting content creation and invest strategically in sovereign media innovation – in technology, business models, and audience engagement across four critical areas:

1. content distribution;
2. personalisation and interactivity;
3. monetisation models; and
4. democracy and trust.

These innovations must be built on European technologies, with control over data and based on interoperable, open standards.

The Future Media Initiative delivers digital sovereignty through a structured innovation funnel powered by key enablers like AI, data, 5G, XR and blockchain. A core objective is to develop and scale European alternatives for critical digital building blocks. **EU co-financing plays a crucial role in reducing innovation risks and ensuring long-term competitiveness and sovereignty.**

FMI - A PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP

To turn these priorities into action, the Future Media Initiative (**FMI**) is proposing a strong private-public partnership model, led by the industry itself and being discussed with EU institutions. FMI unites public services media, commercial players, tech innovators and policymakers around a shared goal: **making Europe a global leader in media innovation**.

The initiative is based on the solid foundation of Future Media Hubs – an established European network in which about **60 leading media organisations and nearly 200 innovation experts** exchange strategies, ideas and experiences with the main goal to foster innovation and accelerate the development of the media industry.

Key achievements include:

- **Knowledge exchange:** 400+ inspiring use cases about monetisation, engaging formats, platforms, news, technology and AI, 9 collaborative projects, 188 published articles and 6 toolkits.
- **EU-level innovation leadership:** Trusted European Media Data Space (2023–2026), Seeds & Growth for Media (2023–2026), STADIEM (2020–2023) and Media Motor Europe (2020–2022).
- **Proven best practices:** RTBF committed to constructive journalism, after getting inspired by NRK's workshop; ERR adapted Yle's educational game Mystery Train, ...
- **Startup matchmaking:** 133 introductions in the Hubs with 97 one-on-one connections with members (and €3.8M investment (3 exits) via STADIEM)
- **Global visibility:** 89 events with 66 startup pitches at SXSW, IBC, Marché du Film and more.

FMI - DESIGNED TO INTEGRATE WITH EU FUNDS 2028-2034

The FMI is an **industry partnership proposal**, a powerful collaboration between Europe and industry leaders to mobilise up to **€500 million** for media innovation within the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034). It is designed to integrate with existing EU funds by anchoring media innovation within the proposed AgoraEU (MEDIA+) and the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), while providing pipelines to Horizon Europe (R&D). These investments should explicitly contribute to strengthening European control over data, distribution channels and critical technological infrastructure and capabilities. This coordinated investment mechanism applies a disciplined funnel approach to maximise impact and minimise risk – **ensuring that every euro invested brings measurable innovation outcomes and reinforces Europe's digital sovereignty**.

FMI - KEY OBJECTIVES

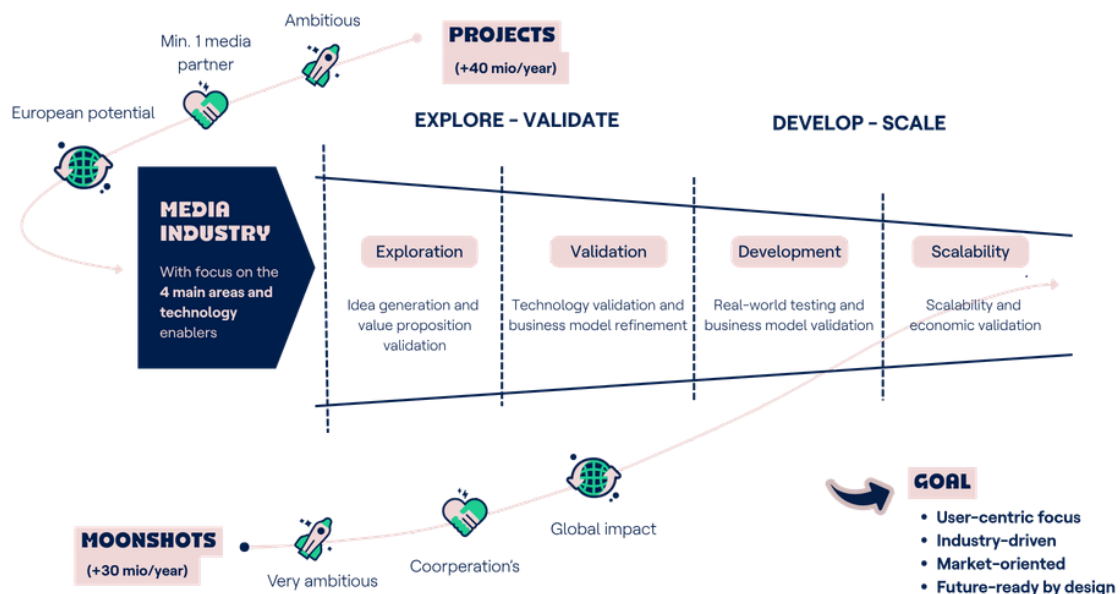
The Future Media Initiative has the following key objectives:

- **Digital sovereignty:** Build autonomous European media tech infrastructure, reducing dependency on non-EU platforms
- **Drive media innovation:** Transform bold ideas into practical, market-ready technology for content creation, distribution and audience experiences.
- **Secure long-term financial sustainability:** Develop innovative revenue models tailored to European needs, strengthening European value chains.
- **Champion diversity & protect democracy:** Strengthen Europe's media as a pillar of democracy by promoting pluralism, multilingual content and cultural diversity within a sovereign digital environment where Europe defines its own rules.

FMI - HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Future Media Initiative uses a disciplined innovation funnel with two open calls a year, **channelling a high volume of ideas into market-ready solutions**. It balances creativity in high-risk environments with concrete outcomes – hundreds enter, but only the strongest survive, stopping weaker projects early to prevent waste.

The funnel has four progressive stages tailored to different project maturities, with consistent evaluation, learning and independent jury selection. Selected projects receive matching EU funding equivalent to their own investment and, if successful, scaling support via an additional moonshot budget for maximum impact. Priority is given to solutions that strengthen European control over data, infrastructure and distribution.



The Future Media Initiative funnel:

- channels **high idea volume** into **a number of validated market-ready solutions**;
- fosters creative experimentation and impactful innovation within a **controlled, evidence-based** process;
- evaluates up to **128 ideas** and scales up to **8 solutions per year**;
- ensures **transparent, fair and independent** funding decisions;
- validates assumptions at each stage (**40% progression** per gate);
- **prevents large-scale, long-term waste by stopping weaker projects early**;
- supports a **balanced seven-year portfolio** across three innovation horizons;
- concentrates funding where it has **greatest impact**;
- dedicates **over €40 million per year** to funnel activities; and
- adds a **€30 million annual moonshot fund** for breakthrough innovations.

COLLABORATION & IMPACT

These collaborations will lead to real impact:

- faster adoption of cutting-edge technologies like AI and 5G;
- stronger business models that attract investment and drive European competitiveness;
- better access to high-quality European media; and
- more trust in media integrity.

In addition, they will reduce Europe's dependency on non-European platforms, strengthen control over critical digital infrastructure and contribute to building a sovereign European media ecosystem.

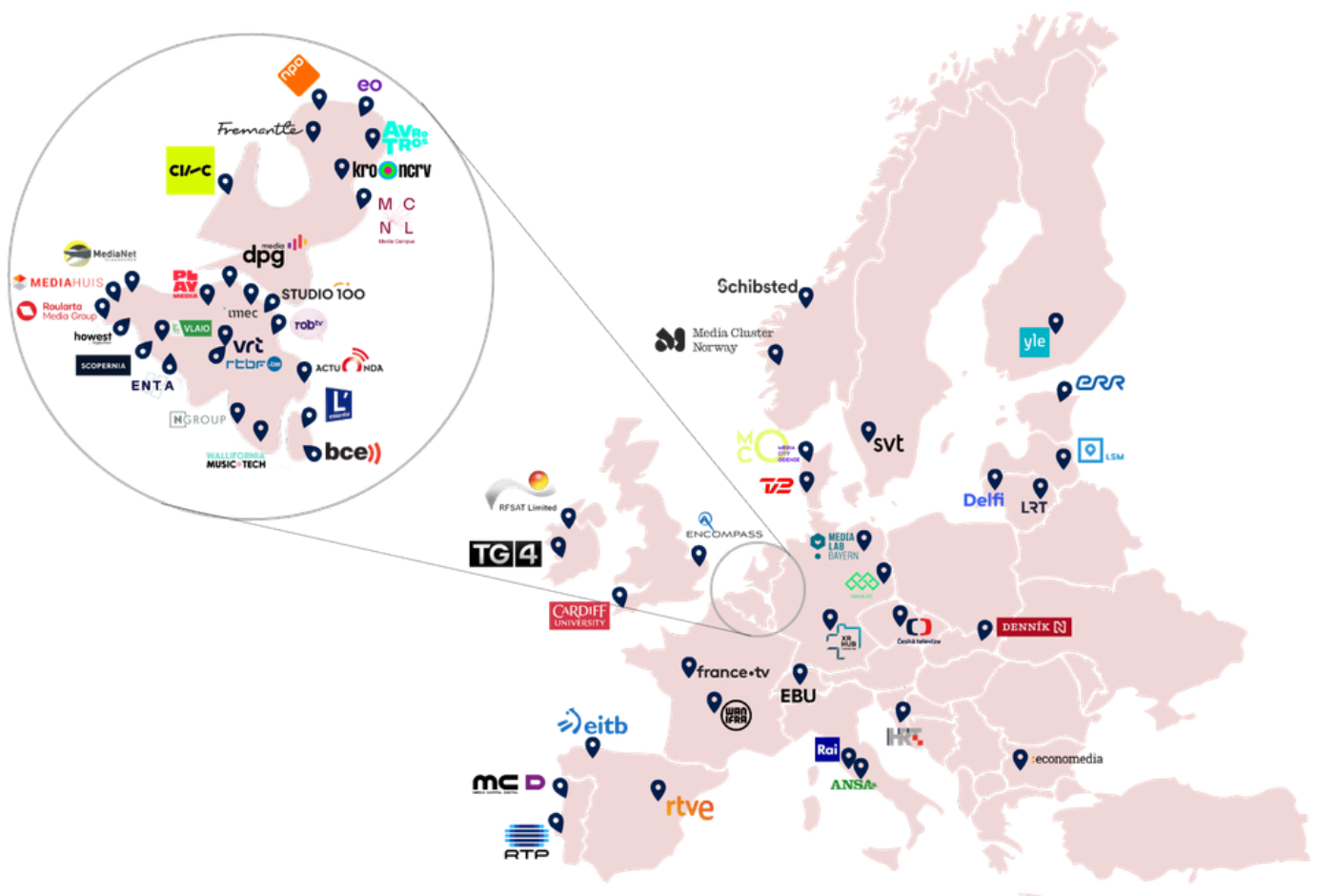
FMI - OUR ASK TO EUROPE

At this moment we are meeting with the EU Commission (DG Connect, cabinets of Henna Virkkunen and Michael McGrath), several Members of the European Parliament, Member States and Council representatives.

Our ask to Europe is as follows: *Position FMI as the Digital Sovereignty Pillar for AgoraEU MEDIA and European Competitiveness Fund*

- Recognise FMI as a strategic enabler for the European Democracy Shield and Digital Independence.
- Position FMI as a candidate flagship to operationalise the AgoraEU objectives.
- Support a joint exploration process, with the EU Commission, Member States and industry partners.

MEDIA (RELATED) COMPANIES ALREADY SUPPORTING FMI



WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO RECLAIM EUROPE'S DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY - ENSURING OUR MEDIA ECOSYSTEM THRIVES INDEPENDENTLY AND STRENGTHENS EUROPE'S GROWTH, CULTURAL PROXIMITY AND DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE.

For more information, visit our [website](#) or contact Sarah.Geeroms@vrt.be