

Free Press Unlimited annual report 2021



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**FREE
PRESS
UNLIMITED**

People deserve to know

PEOPLE DESERVE TO KNOW

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Foreword

In 2021, two journalists, Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov, won the Nobel Peace Prize. This was a strong signal to all journalists worldwide putting themselves on the line. It was also very welcome after 2 years of increasing repression and difficulties brought about by the pandemic. There is also a growing realisation that keeping journalism alive as a beacon for access to reliable information is crucial. And in 2021, a growing number of leaders and institutions joined forces to combat the trend of declining press freedom. Free Press Unlimited has been at the heart of it, offering support for journalists in danger, but also pleading for a more structured, unified approach towards dealing with these issues that affect us all. However, in many countries, press freedom came under threat in 2021. The impact of the crises in Myanmar, Belarus, Sudan and Afghanistan was felt worldwide. Still, we are grateful for the widespread concern for this issue and the actions taken.

Operational changes

Free Press Unlimited went through an operational transition in 2021. Working with a deficit inherited from last year, led us to reconsider how we work and organise ourselves. In a collective team effort, we are proud to say we were able to raise enough funds to close budget gaps. We implemented a new information sharing

system to manage the corona, working-from-home, communication gaps. We also implemented overarching operational and strategic brainstorm meetings, to ensure creativity and focus in our work on six strategic themes, monitored by colleagues from all parts of the organisation. These six themes are: safety, viability, diversity, accountability, conflict and advocacy. Our Annual Report examines these themes in greater detail.

The new website, launched in April 2021, is also built around these themes. It is designed to reflect Free Press Unlimited's work in a clearer, more engaging way, another achievement we are proud of.

This year we have also started working towards a change in the Board of Directors. Leon Willems will make a transition at his own request within the organisation from 1 April 2022, and Ruth Kronenburg will be appointed as Executive Director of Free Press Unlimited. More about this in the 'Looking ahead' chapter on page 37.

Crisis team working at full speed

In many countries, especially those with democratically weak institutions, access to information and press freedom, and ultimately basic human rights, came under threat in 2021. The epitome of the crises was the complete overthrow of the government in Afghanistan by the Taliban.

Our Reporters Respond emergency team was at the heart of helping to evacuate and/or relocate those in danger. Despite the overwhelming number of requests, the team did a tremendous job, and worked around the clock to help evacuate and relocate as many media workers as possible. In close cooperation with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and a network of Dutch journalists, the Journalist Union and the Dutch Editors Forum, we were ultimately able to bring 28 journalists and their families (99 people in total) to safety.

Closer to home

The Netherlands, Free Press Unlimited's home base, ranks number 6 on the Press Freedom Index, but with a general deterioration in the state of press freedom worldwide, we must not become complacent when it comes to press freedom in Europe. Our Policy & Advocacy team put a lot of effort into building relationships with newly elected Dutch Members of

Parliament, so we can continue to stress the importance of keeping press freedom on the agenda. We organised a masterclass to inform the new members of parliament about press freedom and introduce our work. This had an immediate unexpected result when a motion from new members requesting the allocation of emergency visas to journalists in danger was adopted in Parliament.

At international level, Free Press Unlimited worked with partners to make European member states and their institutions aware of their duty of care and responsibilities, and show them where support for journalists is lacking.

However, closer to home, the killing of Dutch crime journalist Peter R de Vries in 2021, was a reminder of how important it is to continue our work of advocating for press freedom and safety of journalists in our home country.

Successful Covid-19 response

In 2021, we concluded the 'Covid-19 Response in Africa – Together for Reliable Information', that started in 2020 and took place in 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the objective to better inform people on protection against Covid-19. We are very happy and proud that the OECD/DAC evaluation of this project acknowledged that this ambitious and complex project was a success, calling it 'timely, relevant, and efficient'.

Fighting impunity

On 2 November, at the successful and inspiring opening hearing of the People's Tribunal on the Murder of Journalists, organised in the Hague, the city of Peace and Justice, Free Press Unlimited highlighted the role of governments to protect journalists and investigate crimes against journalists, by bringing powerful witnesses and moving testimonies of relatives and colleagues to the table.

The People's Tribunal was set up by Free Press Unlimited, Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists, as part of the A Safer World For The Truth project, to take action against rising violence against journalists. This project could not have been realised without the generous support of the Dutch Postcode Lottery.

With the restrictions of Covid-19 in mind, press freedom representatives and supporters from all over the world attended. They heard several witness statements from renowned international organisations, Nobel peace prize winner Maria Ressa, and testimonies from loved ones and colleagues of murdered journalists, like Hatice Cengiz, the fiancée of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was murdered in 2018, and Matthew Caruana Galizia, journalist and son of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, murdered in 2017. With the Tribunal being written about in more than 120 press releases in ten languages, the event generated a lot of attention for the plea to end impunity for crimes against journalists.

A positive shift

We at Free Press Unlimited have been saying for a while now, that for independent journalism to survive, there is a need for a new system of guarantees. Not only to protect journalists and press freedom, but to preserve journalism as a whole.

In the European Union, in which media freedom and journalism are essential pillars, there were great developments, including the Media Freedom Act and Democratic Action Plan. And in December, U.S. President Biden organised the Summit for Democracy, where press freedom and the survival of independent journalism were focus points.



Ruth Kronenburg, Director of Operations
Leon Willems, Director Policy & Programmes

Mission and Vision

Our vision

Free Press Unlimited firmly believes that everyone is entitled to have access to unbiased, reliable and relevant information. This enables them to assess and influence their own living conditions, and make the right decisions.

This vision is captured in our slogan: **'People deserve to know'**.

Our mission

Our mission stems from Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."*

Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Information are vital for gathering and spreading reliable, unbiased information. The media play a crucial role in providing people with free and unrestricted access to information that can help them make informed decisions and at the same time hold authorities accountable. Free Press Unlimited wants to make and keep objective news and information available to everyone, especially to people in countries where there is little or no press freedom.

Free Press Unlimited does this by supporting local media organisations and journalists with our knowledge, expertise, experience and advocacy tools. Our core values are expressed by the following keywords: Independent, Inspiring, Inventive, Dedicated and Tailored Approach.

Key figures 2021

Highlights

Total income

€16,197,796

Spent on the organisation's objective

€15,488,967

Acquisition, Management & Accounting

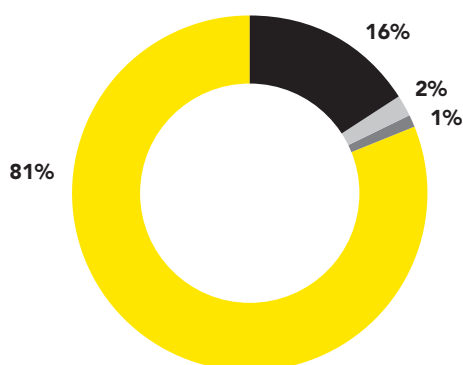
€853,315

Employees



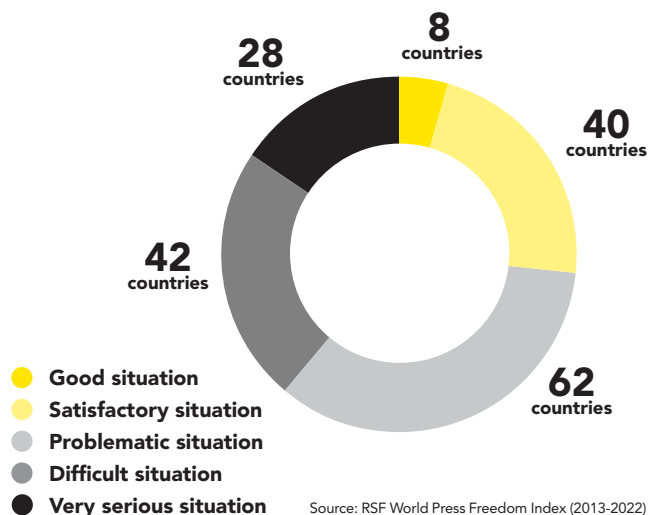
82 (73.6FTE)

Our income



- Government subsidies €13,116,215
- Lottery organisations €2,614,253
- Income from Other non profit organizations €329,067
- Other €138,261

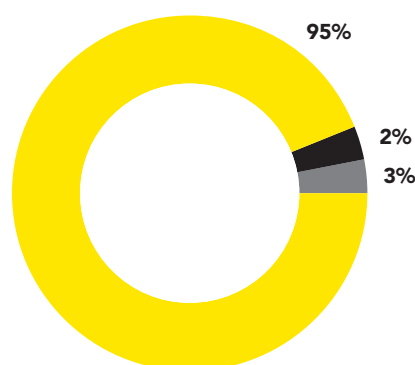
Press freedom monitor



Postcode Lottery Fund for journalists

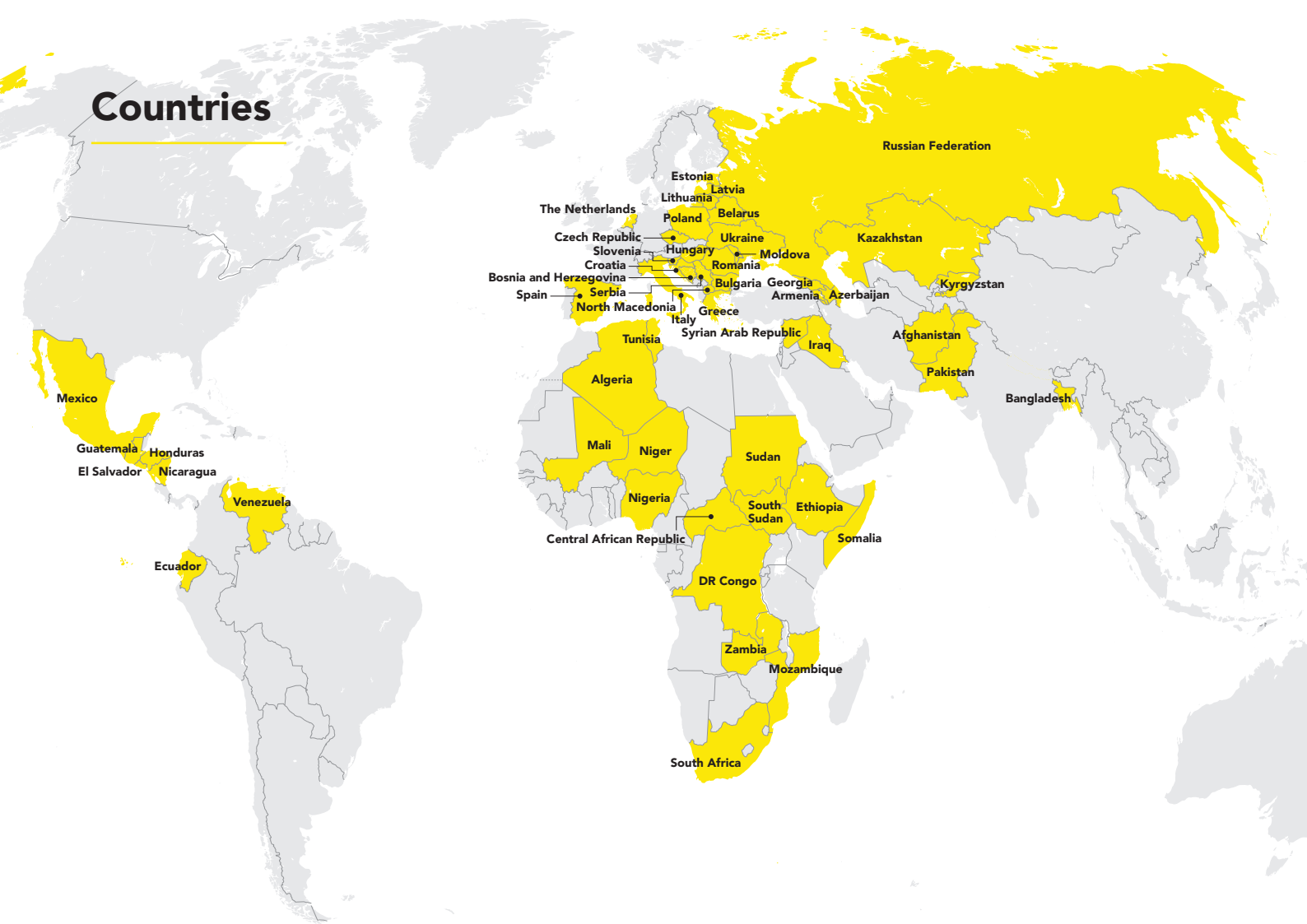
- ✉ 17 applications
- 📄 4 in-depth investigative reports
- 📖 3 publications

Our expenses

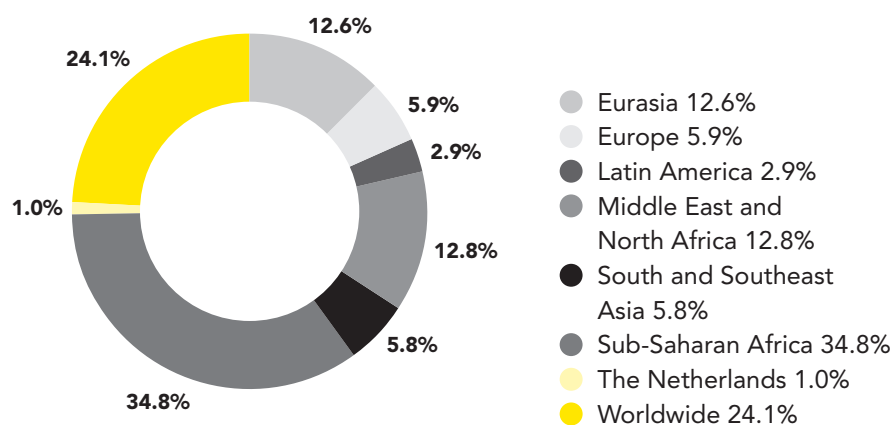


- Organisation's objective €15,488,967
- Acquisition costs funding €403,748
- Management & Accounting €449,567
- Financial gains and losses € -37,829

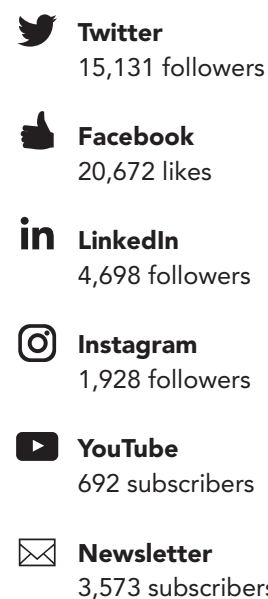
Countries



Geographic distribution of grants



Online reach



Numbers



52 Projects



120 Partners



54 Countries



700 Friends

Our approach

Free Press Unlimited works together with local media partners worldwide to support professional, critical and independent journalism. Currently, Free Press Unlimited is active in 54 countries, working with 120 partners on 52 projects.

By strengthening the capacity of media and journalists, through coaching, training, networking, innovations and funding we support investigative reporting and professional public interest journalism in many parts of the world, both in authoritarian regimes, conflict areas as well as emerging societies.

Free Press Unlimited has defined a clear common long term objective for all its projects and activities: *Media and journalists, as independent players in civil society, constitute a diverse and professional information landscape and serve as catalysts for change.*

Free Press Unlimited's overall strategy is based on knowledge of the context, and deep connections with our partners and local actors and a thorough needs assessment. Their knowledge and insights, combined with our expertise and experience, enable us to come up with the best approach for needed activities and projects.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are only able to advocate for inclusive, sustainable development if they have access to information, independent media, and freedom of expression. Our work therefore also supports a stronger civil society, enabling citizens to participate and achieve more equitable societies. This approach strengthens the connections between journalists and media, and their audiences, and enables media to report on issues that are important to their readers, listeners and viewers.

Making change happen

To reach our long-term objective, we have developed several intervention strategies which together form our overall strategy. Of course, the effectiveness of any strategy depends on the context of a country or region. For that reason, Free Press Unlimited always develops

its intervention strategies in close consultation with our partners or local actors. After all, they understand the local context better than we do. Their insights enable us to come up with the best strategy based on our expertise and experience.

All of our projects contribute to one or more of the three intermediate outcomes that ultimately lead to our long-term objective.

These are:

- The establishment of an enabling environment for the media
- Media serve the interests of the public and act as a watchdog on their behalf
- Journalists and media experts work professionally and are effective and sustainable

We have clustered our projects in six thematic focus areas, all of which contribute to one or more intermediate outcomes.

These are:

- Safety of journalists
- Equity and inclusion in the media
- Media foster accountability
- Advocating for an enabling environment for independent media and journalists
- Media viability
- Media and conflict

How we measure the effect of our work

We systematically monitor and evaluate all our projects. This helps us to learn valuable lessons about what does and doesn't work, and enables us to be accountable to our supporters and donors. We use media-specific methods such as content monitoring and audience research, as well as qualitative research methods like Outcome Harvesting and in-depth interviews to measure both planned and unplanned results. Our evidence and story databases are publicly available, and offer a sound base for our plans, programmes and donor reports.

Our work

In 2021, the Knowledge and Quality (K&Q) team supported the establishment of six Thematic Task Forces to monitor the six thematic focus areas mentioned previously. A member of the Knowledge and Quality team facilitates each task force, to support knowledge creation and documentation, provide input from our existing knowledge base and to facilitate the exchange of information and lessons learned across task forces. The team formulated six outcomes and accompanying indicators to measure whether the task forces meet their intended purpose.

Safety of journalists

Legal Defense Fund

In many countries, journalists face criminal prosecution for trumped up charges of defamation, alleged contribution to terrorist groups, disrupting the public order, or engaging in cybercrimes (such as spreading of alleged fake news or misinformation). In addition to passing and changing laws, the phenomenon of SLAPP Suits (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) is also a widely used means of obstructing journalists. This is an accumulation of lawsuits meant to overwhelm journalists and force them to incur high costs. Ultimately, the journalist is unable to work. Another trend is Libel Tourism, where the fact that an online article can be read worldwide, is used to sue its writer worldwide. It is therefore possible for a journalist to have cases against him in several countries. It is also common to try and silence journalists by falsely accusing them of criminal offences that have nothing to do with their journalistic work. One example of this is the Moroccan journalist and activist, Omar Radi, who was charged with rape. In such cases, journalists can apply for support from the [Legal Defense Fund](#).



© Pradeep Gaur / Shutterstock

31 percent of the received and approved requests for support were cases in which media professionals faced prosecution. The Legal Defense Fund has helped these professionals to secure legal representation in court, in the first instance to avoid indictment or, in cases where a journalist has been detained, to be granted conditional release.

Since its establishment in 2018, the Legal Defense Fund has provided direct support in 626 cases where journalists were at risk. In 2021, 68 cases received direct support and another 127 received support through Free Press Unlimited's network of local partners (total of 195 cases).

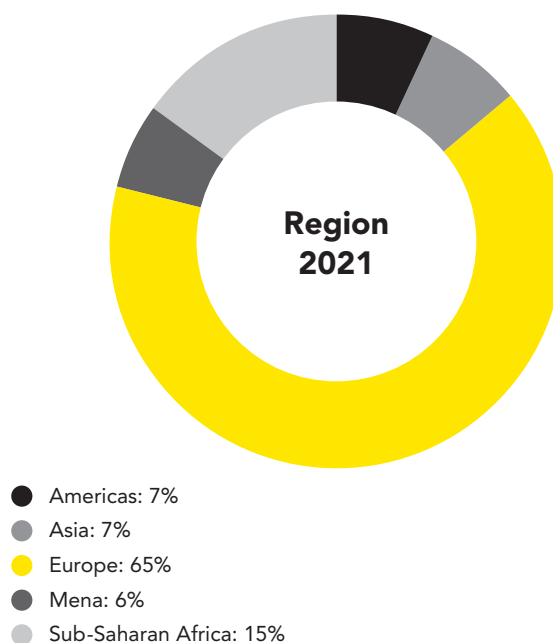
2021 was an alarming year for the safety of journalists. In addition to daily attacks on journalists worldwide, the Covid-19 pandemic and multiple political crises exacerbated their already vulnerable working conditions.

Additionally, the Legal Defense Fund also supported a significant number of journalists facing arbitrary arrest, detention or imprisonment while waiting for their trials to be concluded or who are in the process of appealing their conviction and require continuous legal advice and representation for prolonged periods of time. It has also been able to provide assistance in cases where journalists (and their families) do not have the means to cover the costs of judicial proceedings or fees or have completely lost their income due to their legal problems.

Support includes:

- Financial support to media professionals and media outlets (funds for lawyer fees, legal expertise and other legal costs)
- Financial support to partner and family of the media professional
- Advice and referrals to legal experts, safety resources, and other support organisations
- Preventative measures (such as a pre-publication analysis)
- Prison support
- Trial monitoring

The distribution of support per region is illustrated in the chart below.



Reporters Respond

2021 was an alarming year for the safety of journalists worldwide. In addition to daily attacks on journalists worldwide, in the performance of their jobs, the Covid-19 pandemic and multiple political crises exacerbated their already vulnerable and uncertain working conditions.

In Belarus, the alarming crackdown on journalists and independent media further intensified. Critical journalists and bloggers are subjected to threats and violence and are arrested in large numbers. Since the elections in August 2020, there have been more than 550 instances of journalists being arbitrarily detained and they have spent more than 3,000 days in jail collectively. Yet, despite these risks and the increase in propaganda in the state media, courageous journalists continue their work. Free Press Unlimited provided emergency support to over 30 Belarusian journalists.

In response to the hijacking of a plane and kidnapping of editor and blogger Raman Pratasevich, Free Press Unlimited co-wrote a joint call to make respect for press freedom a cornerstone of all demands towards Belarus.

In Myanmar, attacks on media professionals have increased dramatically since the coup d'état that once more left the country under the rule of the authoritarian Military Junta. This resulted in journalists being imprisoned without a trial or facing arrest warrants in retaliation for reporting 'fake news', which has forced countless journalists to go into exile. So far, 136 journalists have been arrested, 49 remain in detention

and at least three journalists have been killed (source: ASEAN). In a statement, undersigned by 14 press freedom organisations, Free Press Unlimited brought this to the attention of the international community.

In Ethiopia, harsh emergency laws have come into force since the start of the civil war between federal government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front; numerous journalists have been arrested, and press freedom violations are on the rise. Free Press Unlimited has provided support to journalists in Ethiopia as well as those who have been forced into exile. Multiple Ethiopian journalists and media professionals signed an open letter calling on the government to respect media rights. Through its partnerships with the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders, Free Press Unlimited supports this effort.

One of the most worrying and dramatic situations is the conditions for media workers and journalists in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban takeover, this has been marked by targeted pursuits, severe threats, oppression and censorship.

In Nicaragua, the government led by Daniel Ortega has escalated attacks, by taking digital newspaper, El Confidencial, offline, and compiling a list of 100 journalists under investigation for terrorism. In 2021, we supported over 50 Nicaraguan journalists under threat, mostly so they could temporarily relocate and continue their work as watchdogs of society.

In remote areas where journalists are at their most vulnerable, Free Press Unlimited and partner Fundación Latitudes currently provide safety trainings. Future training will be supplemented with various 'support hubs' to give local journalists access to a national and international network of fellow-journalists and media organisations. They provide access to safety equipment, the chance to apply for insurance and assistance with risk analyses.

One of the most worrying and dramatic situations is the conditions for media workers and journalists in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban takeover, this has been marked by targeted pursuits, severe threats, oppression and censorship. A large number of journalists have fled the country, but many more find themselves (and their family members) in life threatening situations.

Fortunately, many were evacuated out of Afghanistan or received some form of support:

- 28 journalists + 71 family members (99 people) were evacuated;
- 59 journalists + 138 family members (197 people) were evacuated from Kabul to Pakistan;
- 28 journalists in Afghanistan and in exile received other support, e.g. subsistence support.

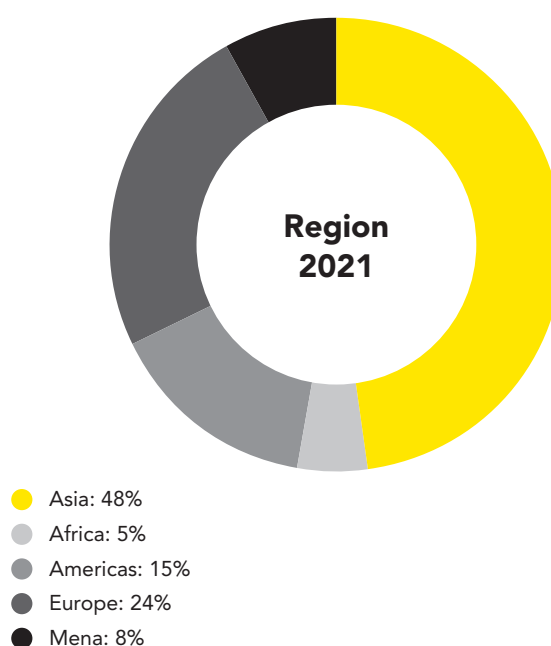
In 2021, Reporters Respond provided direct emergency assistance to 346 journalists (and over 200 of their family members) at risk. Due to the crisis situations in Afghanistan and Myanmar, almost 50% of the support was provided to journalists in Asia. Furthermore, due to the outbreak and continuation of national (political) crisis situations, for example, in Venezuela, Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nicaragua and Belarus, many journalists have been forced to relocate.

The type of support includes:

- emergency assistance;
- legal support; and
- safety advice.

In 2021, the majority of emergency assistance was to support journalists with temporary relocation, both within their countries as well as to flee abroad. Next to that, we provided emergency assistance for family members of journalists, to replace equipment, for basic needs, to take security measures, and for mental health support.

The support worldwide was distributed as follows:





Journalists at work during the pandemic in Pakistan. © Digital Rights Foundation

Equity and inclusion in the media

Free Press Unlimited promotes equal access to opportunities and resources to anyone who wishes to work in the media industry. Furthermore, Free Press Unlimited's aim is to enable the media to fulfil their role as informative gatekeepers and responsively shape powerful local or global narratives. We are also committed to representing a broad spectrum of lives and experiences.

Besides Free Press Unlimited's efforts to mainstream gender throughout all programmes, and its gender focused activities to improve the position of women in the media and representation through the media, other efforts to promote inclusion were the dispersed experiences focused on youth and rural communities. The intersectional approach, i.e.: the conscious acknowledgment that (minority) groups or (disadvantaged) individuals do experience different levels of exclusion and therefore require tailored strategies for engagement, as an overarching idea for creating more awareness for equity and inclusion in the media, is relatively new to Free Press Unlimited.

In all our efforts to provide media support, capacity building and advocacy, we proactively include our partners in our participatory approaches by taking into account their local needs, challenges, capacities and technological developments. There has also been a shift in our work with partners; rather than fulfilling the role of

project manager, now Free Press Unlimited more often acts as a facilitator, knowledge broker, bridge-builder and/or coach.

Internally, Free Press Unlimited staff is making efforts to adjust to these new roles by taking relevant training/coaching, by organising communities of practice and by being open to new knowledge partnerships.

In 2021, we continued to focus on the 'Safety of Journalists' project in the DRC. We looked in particular at the safety of women journalists. Our own research and that of other experts such as [Oxford Internet Institute](#), [Julie Posetti](#) and [ICFJ](#) shows that 73% of women journalists face online threats, and in 20% of the cases, this leads to physical attacks and intimidation. This has far-reaching consequences for the ability of all journalists to work freely.

Within that framework, Free Press Unlimited equipped women journalists to work safely and be aware of human security risks in regions where accountability for offenders is lacking. Moreover, we called perpetrators to account for the lack of institutional support on discriminatory crimes, advocacy activities and public hearings for crimes resulting from intersectional discrimination.

Gender media monitoring

Together with our local partner, South Asia Center for Media in Development (SACMID) in Bangladesh, Free Press Unlimited produced various tools and

workshops on gender and media under the [Protecting Independent Media Effective Development \(PRIMED\)](#) programme, which supports the public interest media in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone. The expected outcome of the PRIMED project is an improved capacity of the participating media outlets to manage their organisations.

Free Press Unlimited facilitated knowledge exchange between various parties across the globe and coached a local partner in training media outlets to produce gender sensitive media content. Free Press Unlimited developed workshops through 'co-creation', where Free Press Unlimited and the local partner worked intensively together to create modules that are tailored to the respective media outlets and context of the country.

We co-funded a Global Media Monitoring (GMM) method tailored to the Bangladesh context, followed by two quarterly gender media monitoring reports. The [Who Makes the News](#) report, for example, addresses the (under)representation of women in the media, gender stereotypes, objectification of women in media and other gender-related issues.

Free Press Unlimited supported new media initiatives that home in on changing the narrative in the media landscape by generating more diverse newsrooms, and also by covering news of unheard voices.

Free Press Unlimited facilitated cross-country learnings by connecting SACMID to an experienced gender media monitoring partner, Freedom Forum, in Nepal and to the PRIMED partners in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. Overall these activities contributed to an increased gender literate media (development) sector in which representatives from media outlets, journalists and CSOs participated. And in Bangladesh, gender experts are aware of the state of gender representation in Bangladeshi media.

The Viable Media for Empowered Societies (VIMES) project addresses the deteriorating condition of independent media and journalists, women in particular, in Central America and Eastern Europe. The media outlets that have joined VIMES are based in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua. Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Within the framework of that

project, Free Press Unlimited supported new media initiatives that home in on changing the narrative in the media landscape by generating more diverse newsrooms, and also by covering news of unheard voices. We focussed particularly on gender, Indigenous populations and on using new methodologies and publishing in local languages. In this project, Free Press Unlimited also supported different media outlets in strengthening their gender policies as an integral part of their viability strategy, adapted to their context. In March 2021, seven women journalists from Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia participated in a practical safety training, focused on physical safety. The women journalists learned how to avoid arrest, deal with interrogation, and react appropriately in case of an office search.

Free Press Unlimited's regional safety programme in Central America, where it works with partner Fundación Latitudes, is another project in which the gender-related perspective on safety was given particular attention. Journalists participating in the project build their capacity to understand the specific risk linked to their identities (gender) and those of their colleagues. This approach to safety training also resulted in the creation of safe space free from discrimination, in particular for women, members of the LGBTQI+ community, parents/ care givers and Indigenous journalists. Enayda Argueta of Fundación Latitudes says: "After the training, the journalists clearly have more self-confidence. They prepare for dangerous work better and learn that they should not abandon each other, because if you are alone in an emergency situation you are more likely to make a mistake than when you are in a group."

Key results

Since 2017, within the [Media4Women](#) project, Free Press Unlimited and partners initiate an annual global advocacy campaign on gender equality in the media, to highlight the need for a more inclusive and equal portrayal of women in the media and the importance of gender equality in and through the media. In 2021, the campaign attracted more than 50 partner organisations who, through their networks, reach audiences in over 100 countries. During the two weeks of the campaign, activists and practitioners around the world organise public discussions, marches, media monitoring, social media campaigns, competitions, special media programming and other initiatives to stand up for women in the media.

Free Press Unlimited and its partners also introduced Gender Equality Champions and put them in the spotlight with the aim of inspiring, supporting and empowering women working in the media worldwide. Read the stories on our web page [Gender Equality Champions](#) and be inspired.



Journalist at work in Syria. © Mohammad Bash / Shutterstock

Within the Safety of Journalists project in the DRC, Free Press Unlimited focused initially specifically on training and capacity building activities to equip the local partners with the gender-related knowledge to develop their programme further.

Media foster accountability

Media foster accountability is concerned with the role of professional, independent journalism in society. It is about building a society in which the media encourages power holders to respond to the needs of the public, and in which the public is empowered to make informed choices.

Independent media face serious challenges as a result of democratic backsliding and the accompanying trend of shrinking civic space. Political actors seek to delegitimize the work of independent media and limit their ability to uncover information, reach an audience, and hold power holders to account.

Money Trail

2021 saw the wrap-up of the successful three-year Free Press Unlimited project, Money Trail, supported by the Dutch Postcode Lottery. It focused on supporting (teams of) investigative journalists in their efforts to reveal financial wrongdoings. Together with Oxfam Novib, Finance Uncovered and Journalismfund.eu, Money Trail delivered training, financial grants and mentoring to 156 independent journalists and activists to investigate

tax abuse, money laundering and corruption in Asia, Africa and Europe. This resulted in 137 investigative (cross-border) stories and 340 publications worldwide, reaching millions of readers. Power holders were forced to take appropriate measures including discussions in parliaments, back-pedalled laws, policy and practice changes, tax penalties, formal inquiries, and the formation of investigative committees. The final report of the project, [The fight against corruption and inequality has been strengthened](#), highlights a number of impactful stories, such as the story about the secret fortune of the Kenyan president's family (based on the almost 12 million documents known as the Pandora Leaks). It was produced by Money Trail trainee Purity Mukami in collaboration with Finance Uncovered and the Dutch Postcode Lottery.

In a series of offline and online training events, Free Press Unlimited empowered Money Trail trainees to implement new, safer ways of carrying out their investigation. They learned to keep their data safe at rest and in transit, to know their adversaries (what to protect from whom), and how to keep themselves and their sources safe when communicating and sharing information with them.

A repository of digital security resources was created for journalists and CSOs in case of an emergency or if they needed to retrieve information learned during the training. Free Press Unlimited established a Technical Support Desk that offers participants digital security-related advice and support. As a result of our efforts,

75% of the journalists later reported that they had changed their online behaviour and had adopted more secure privacy tools and practices in their work.

Syria

Within our Syria programme, efforts to hold power holders to account continued in 2021. One strategy for increasing the impact of stories that compel power holders to respond, is to encourage media and CSOs to join forces. The co-production small grant fund allows media and CSOs to work together to produce quality reporting. The nine partnerships from this year represented Syrians from all areas of the country and in diaspora and covered a wide range of topical subjects. These included, but were not limited to, trafficking of illegal narcotics, access to civil documentation and basic rights to medical care and education, the impact of COVID-19 on displaced civilians and water and food security.

The first prize in the Syria Co-production fund competition was awarded to independent media outlet Hibr Press and civil society organisation Bonyan. The jury was impressed by the vivid realisation and creativity of their project [Escape from Death: Towards Camps and Behind Borders](#). The second prize went to independent media outlet Syria Direct and civil society organisation Violet, for their interesting idea and extraordinary implementation of their video and article on [Education in Idlib during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Finally, Syrian Investigative Reporting for Accountability Journalism (SIRAJ), and civil society organisation Access Centre for Human Rights won the third prize with their investigative piece [Legal Documents Seizures in Lebanon Strip Syrian Refugees of their Rights](#) with its expressiveness and its clear and convincing message.

In 2021, media in Syria also took an important step towards improving their own accountability. By introducing a complaints mechanism, all 26 media outlet members of the [Ethical Charter](#) for Syrian media can be held accountable for upholding the charter's principles: to produce content free from hate speech and enhanced with principles of gender equality, accuracy, credibility, honesty and fairness. Media outlets, and the audience have the opportunity to complain if they are concerned with the quality or correctness of content published by the media. This self-regulatory initiative will study any complaint, give its opinion and publish and circulate its decision.

Shrinking Space

At the start of 2021, Free Press Unlimited, carried out research and published the report [Independent media in the context of shrinking space](#), looking at strategies media apply in five different European countries where

they experience challenges of shrinking space. The report was accompanied by a [webinar](#) where two of the media featured in the report presented their case in the presence of several members of the EU Commission and Parliament.

The report states that, to generate impact for the stories and ensure accountability of those in power, media outlets working in adverse conditions must:

- be aware of the various forms of institutional surveillance and other control practices;
- be up-to-date and use the latest digital security technologies;
- allocate time and resources to secure stories from leaking to the public;
- build new and strengthen existing peer networks and collaborative tools;
- 'have the guts' to scare the power holders with revelations, think and do big;
- undertake rigorous fact-checking and stay true to the facts no matter how big is the story;
- seek and use the opportunity to confront the power holders with their findings;
- be present in the public but also be aware of journalists' rights and endorse them;
- articulate wide-ranging repressive tactics to garner and sustain attention for the story;
- engage and involve citizens in holding those on power accountable;
- conduct in-depth risk assessment before publication: understand power-dynamic and real potential of decision-makers to harm reputation of the media outlets and credibility of the stories.

Throughout 2021, online learning and sharing sessions were organised (seven in English, seven in French) on themes such as data journalism, investigative journalism, fact-checking, how to reach out to audiences who do not believe in Covid-19, how to put pressure on authorities to provide reliable information on Covid-19, and gender-sensitive reporting. Free Press Unlimited's partner CENOZO, a regional network of investigative journalists based in Burkina Faso, supported 15 journalists to write and produce impactful stories on Covid-19. According to a survey, more than half of the produced reports prompted a reaction from civil society and governments

in their respective countries. In South Sudan, Free Press Unlimited enabled Amalna to produce and broadcast 15 radio magazines to debunk the pandemic misconceptions and raise awareness of the practices that would alleviate the Covid-19 burden. Feedback from one of the listeners: “Thanks, for the good topic on people’s perception of face masks. Some people say they feel uncomfortable and find it difficult to breathe wearing face masks. I was not used to face masks either but now I see their value. So, now I put one on when I am in public places to avoid contracting the virus. More programmes like this will help people change their attitudes.”

The changing media market, the exponential growth of Big Tech companies, a decline in the trust in media, government interference in the working of media, and attacks on journalists are all affecting the media’s viability.

Media Viability

Media viability refers to all factors that influence the (continued) existence of independent media outlets. Within media viability, Free Press Unlimited plays various roles, i.e.: researcher, knowledge broker, networker, funder and innovation stimulator.

The changing media market, the exponential growth of Big Tech companies, a decline in the trust in media, government interference in the working of media, and attacks on journalists are all affecting the ability of media outlets to earn revenue and conduct independent reporting. Another serious threat to the viability of the media is media capture, i.e.: when powerful public or private groups take premeditated actions to control media institutions. It happens when governments pressure the media by tightening regulations, give more public money to those loyal to them, or when oligarchic companies are able to purchase and control private media outlets. This is a way for repressive authorities to take control, especially in the time leading up to elections.

The issues affecting the viability of media are complex, and require different interventions, from supporting media outlets directly, advocating at the level of governments, to educating the public on the importance of reliable information. For several years, Free Press Unlimited has been doing this, either with local partners

or on its own (particularly when it comes to advocacy) in different spheres of influence.

Free Press Unlimited distinguishes between four different elements that media can influence, and which together can have a positive impact:

1. A conducive operating model: this includes the structure of the media organisation, the capacity, roles and responsibilities of staff members, the work flow and systems in place.
2. A coherent business model: how the medium creates value (this can be monetary, but also social).
3. The relationship with their audiences: understanding and engaging with the audience, and building a loyal audience base.
4. Delivering quality content: bringing reliable information that is relevant to the audience and inclusive in nature.

Big Tech

The battle concerning the power of Big Tech companies over our space for public debate continues. These big tech giants are increasingly being scrutinised vis-a-vis the news media industry by governments across the globe through legislative and regulatory measures.

By disseminating media content for free on their platforms and monetising this content by scooping up advertising money through a business model with zero-sum outcomes for print and online media outlets, tech platforms, Google and Facebook in particular, are seriously eroding the financial viability of independent news media and journalism. Also, the negative role of algorithms in the increase of hate speech and disinformation has begun to lead to policy changes.

This will be a battleground for press freedom organisations like Free Press Unlimited for years to come. See our report: Media viability: Tackling Big Tech.

Key results

Free Press Unlimited’s efforts to promote media viability delivered the following results:

- Establishment of Free Press Unlimited as a researcher and knowledge broker. A publicly accessible resource page was set up around the theme providing relevant information on the wider theme and links to recent publications and broader networks. Extensive research on the business models of multiple small and medium sized media outlets around the world is ongoing. See: Media viability.

- Establishment of Free Press Unlimited as a training/coaching organisation: The set-up of a Summer School, with follow up via online coaching, resulted in structural changes for participating media. Since then, a handbook of the methodology which is used with partners such as with the VIMES programme in eastern Europe and central America has been developed. Concrete results include the set-up of a separate thematic site for a Nicaraguan media outlet, generating income by giving attention to specific topics.
- Free Press Unlimited has also become an innovation stimulator for media partners to experiment and set up different forms of business models in relation to audiences, for example, audience conversation labs, monetization of membership models and other innovations.

Advocating for an enabling environment for independent media and journalists

An enabling environment is essential for independent media and journalists to function as the fourth estate in society serving the interest of the public. Only then can they fulfil their vital role in society by bringing reliable and timely information to people and by holding decision makers and power holders to account.

On the 1st of March 2020, the Europe-wide rapid response mechanism [Media Freedom Rapid Response](#) (MFRR) for violations of press and media freedom was launched. The MFRR is run by a consortium led by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom in Leipzig (ECPMF). The project is designed to mitigate the consequences of the recently observed deterioration of press and media freedom in certain EU Member States and Candidate Countries.

The consortium consists of the ECPMF, ARTICLE 19, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), the Institute for Applied Informatics at the University of Leipzig (InfAI), International Press Institute (IPI) and CCI/Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT).

Slovenia

While Slovenia takes over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union in July 2021, media freedom organisations, civil society groups, and European institutions are concerned about the steady deterioration of media freedom within the country. Independent journalism in Slovenia has come under sustained pressure on multiple fronts, with the coalition government led by the Slovenian Democratic Party

(SDS) playing a dominant role. Although the country still displays an overall high level of media pluralism and freedom of expression, it is no longer a safe haven for free media. These conclusions are presented in the [Media Freedom Rapid Response](#) (MFRR) report that followed the online fact-finding mission to Slovenia between 24 May and 2 June 2021, in which Free Press Unlimited participated.

The fact-finding mission was jointly led by the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and the International Press Institute (IPI) in partnership with the Slovenian Journalists' Association (DNS), and was joined by Article 19, the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), and Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT). Representatives of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), European Broadcasting Union (EBU), South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), and the Public Media Alliance (PMA) also participated.

An enabling environment is essential for independent media and journalists to function as the fourth estate in society serving the interest of the public. Only then can they fulfil their vital role in society.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

If we are to promote press freedom, we must create a safer environment for journalists and media. For that reason, we implemented the regional programme 'Strengthening media freedom in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia', in which Free Press Unlimited partners with local journalists' association [BH Novinari](#), and with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee.

The programme focuses on enhancing the competencies of law enforcement, judicial authorities and journalists, and on creating a meaningful exchange between the judicial authorities and journalist associations. Journalists and judicial officials are trained in how to promote freedom of expression and ease pressure on journalists. Institutions must follow-up on threats and violence by applying or improving legislation on freedom of speech. This results in improved cooperation between associations of journalists and law enforcement, so they can respond adequately to threats against journalists.



Journalist covers protest in France. © Mr TACT HILL / Shutterstock

The programme helps judicial authorities gain a deeper understanding of how to apply relevant methods to investigate and prosecute these assaults on journalists.

Emergency visa for journalists

The Dutch elections resulted in the appointment of several new ministers and members of parliament in 2021. In March, Free Press Unlimited organised a masterclass to introduce them to our work and to bring attention to the matter of Safety of Journalists. We invited Professor Can Yeginsu, the author of the [Report on Providing Safe Refuge to Journalists at Risk](#), to the Masterclass on Press Freedom in The Hague, the Netherlands. He called on Dutch MPs to issue 50 to 100 [emergency visas](#) a year to journalists whose lives would otherwise be in danger.

On 22 June, the Dutch House of Representatives passed a vote on facilitating the issue of emergency visas for journalists. This means that the Netherlands may become the first European Member State to issue emergency visas for journalists in case of emergency.

Journalists and their families are coming increasingly under threat just for doing their job. One painfully clear example of this is the recent kidnapping of Belarusian journalist Roman Protasevich and his girlfriend. For that reason, the vote requested the Minister of Foreign

Affairs to inform the House about this before the recess, since a swift implementation is crucial.

By issuing emergency visas, the Netherlands can act as a safe haven for journalists, and by doing so save lives. However, this is not a structural solution to defending press freedom and the survival of independent journalism. The Netherlands must continue to support and protect journalists worldwide.

The vote symbolises an important step forward for press freedom. The vote was initiated during the State of Europe debate on 17 June 2021 and passed with a large majority: 15 parties voted in favour; 3 parties voted against.

Media and conflict

In many countries in the world, media organisations operate in conflict situations. Conflict areas are a challenging and threatening environment for media and journalists. The warring parties often try to obstruct the work of independent journalists. The hostile attitude of many authorities towards the media could impact the production of independent reporting by seeking to influence insiders in media organisations through bribes or provision of false information.

In a conflict situation, the media can act as a neutral party and provide context and impartial information. However, media can be used to spread false information or rumours which can create tension between warring parties and other stakeholders in the conflict. Therefore, particularly in conflict areas, Free Press Unlimited aims to ensure that (citizen) journalists are aware of, and dedicated to ethical and professional journalistic standards. There is a focus on media in the role of peacebuilder, whose task is to provide a platform for dialogue.

Central America & Venezuela

Outside of official war zones, Central America and Venezuela are among the riskiest places for journalists to work. In both Central America and Venezuela, Free Press Unlimited supports investigative media and journalists that bring different conflict-related themes such as corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering and connections between organised crime and the economic and political elite to light. Journalists who expose these ties are in constant danger, and are targeted by gangs and cartels seeking to secure access to power and resources.

Free Press Unlimited offers extensive safety courses that equip journalists to prepare themselves to some degree when going out to report.

Dissent and opposition are met with excessive state violence, particularly in Nicaragua and Venezuela, but increasingly in other Central American countries as well. This means that, in some areas, some topics are extremely underreported since journalists do not want to put themselves at risk. Free Press Unlimited offers extensive safety courses that equip journalists to prepare themselves to some degree when going out to report. Lobby and advocacy initiatives are set up at different local, national and regional levels, with mixed results.

In some countries National Protection Frameworks to protect journalists exist, but in some cases, these have connections with the journalists' aggressors. Free Press Unlimited collaborates with organisations that provide ongoing input on how to improve these much needed mechanisms.

Sahel and Nigeria

The Système D'M project, implemented by Malian media URTEL and Bamako-based Web TV outlet Kunafoni.com, with the support of Free Press Unlimited, has

enabled Malian youth to voice their opinions on the issues and challenges they face in daily life, such as safety and security, poor governance, poverty and lack of employment. In 2021, various training sessions for young (and aspiring) journalists were organised in various places across Mali. In addition, listening clubs and 'rap shows' produced by youth were broadcast on the Kunafoni platform.

In the framework of the project OCCIPRE (Observatoire Citoyen Contre l'Impunité et Pour la Redevabilité), financed by the European Union, Free Press Unlimited's local partners Amnesty International Mali and Tuwindi collaborate with Maison de la Presse (the Malian media umbrella organisation) to monitor violations against journalists and freedom of expression. The reports are published every 3 months and shared on the interactive platform SIRA, highlighting human rights violations committed on Malian territory in 2021. A network of 5 Malian media houses investigate cases of corruption and human rights violations based on alerts provided by citizens on the whistleblower platform, Kenekano. 66 Malian bloggers act as watchdogs with regards to the progress being made on or setbacks in the framework of the political transition after the military putsches from 2020 and 2021. Their blogs are published on the [Plateforme Xensa](#).

Media Narratives on Conflict and Humanitarian Crises in Nigeria is a 3.5-year long project implemented with the support of the Netherlands Embassy in Abuja. Free Press Unlimited and its Nigerian partner Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ) implemented this project jointly across Nigeria. In 2021, its third year, 187 campus journalists were trained on conflict-sensitive reporting and safety. A workshop on strengthening collaboration between the security sector and the media took place in August. Reporting grants (20 in total) for quality stories on conflict and humanitarian issues and the development of a Nigerian conflict and humanitarian crises resource have continued to be implemented without any disruptions.

In Northern Nigeria, the efforts of the PAGED Initiative focused on the community of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Activities consisted of four capacity-building workshops (reuniting 48 journalists), leading to 48 well-researched, in-depth reports. The PAGED Initiative also held two advocacy meetings with government agencies and ministries, to bring to light the intensification in challenges faced by IDPs during the peak points of the covid-19 pandemic.

In Niger, Free Press Unlimited continued to support the Agadez-based online medium, AirInfo, that monitors and covers stories on corruption, drug trafficking,

illegal migration and the war between the Nigerian army (supported by international forces) and Jihadist movements. Supporting the West African network of investigative journalists CENOZO is important to gain better understanding of the root causes of conflict.

Horn of Africa

In Somalia, Free Press Unlimited is implementing a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) project, Dan Wadaag, with Consortium partners VNG, CARE and Media Ink. A participative and inclusive contribution to DRM requires continuous lobby and advocacy activities to ensure that journalists and media workers maintain permanent rights for access to information and freedom of expression. It also requires journalists to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to professionally operate in the context of DRM. Dan Wadaag started in 2021 and Free Press Unlimited's activities are focused on:

- lobby and advocacy support for the media sector;
- capacity-building for MSOs at organisational level;
- professionalisation of journalists (carried out by Media INK).

These three intervention prongs reflect Free Press Unlimited's multi-level approach, which encompasses an institutional (lobbying and advocacy), an organisational (support) and an individual (professionalisation training; awareness raising) level of intervention.

Great Lakes and Central African Republic

In the war-affected south eastern area of Central African Republic, 6 community radios stations were established/rehabilitated last year. These radio stations, some of them in areas still occupied by rebel movements, offer a platform for dialogue and play a crucial role in the reestablishment of peace and social cohesion. New LF and HF equipment was installed, and the staff was trained on how to use and maintain it. Besides training on basic radio production skills with a focus on ethical journalism, the population of the 6 locations were supported in consolidating the good governance of 'their' radio station.

Free Press Unlimited's programme in Eastern Congo focused on training journalists in South and North Kivu in physical, digital, legal and psychosocial security. The programme addresses the fragility of the media and journalists in conflict-affected areas, with the aim of ensuring that independent information is available to the public. To that end, Free Press Unlimited takes a holistic approach to address their safety and security needs. In a highly fragile environment, rife with general mistrust among partners, Free Press Unlimited convened between partnering organisations to establish a solid

trust base. As knowledge broker, Free Press Unlimited transferred relevant skill-sets to the local organisations in order to strengthen their advocacy work.

The main lines of intervention include:

- carrying out (physical, digital, legal) capacity-building initiatives for journalists and media;
- providing legal, psychological, and economic emergency support for journalists in distress;
- supporting advocacy activities at the local level targeting law enforcement, armed forces and local authorities (tables de concentration).

A relevant component of this project is the women journalists' training and support, which was designed to address women's safety and security needs.

Middle East

Free Press Unlimited is part of the Planetary Security Initiative, a consortium led by Clingendael Institute and The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies in the new phase of the Planetary Security Initiative (PSI). During the coming 3.5 years Free Press Unlimited and Clingendael Institute will actively work with local journalists, academics and the youth in countries highly affected by the effects of climate change, mainly in the Middle-East and Levant-region, to increase public awareness and spark international debate. Free Press Unlimited organised multiple journalism production fellowships, trainings, webinars and conference sessions at the ARIJ conference in Jordan to underline the importance of journalism in highlighting the perspective of local communities and local solutions in dealing with the climate impact. The output of the productions supported policy makers and local actors, for example in Basra, Iraq to interact more productively with people affected by the impact of climate change and conflict. Journalists indicated how helpful it is to establish the link between local or regional conflicts and the topic of climate change and explore constructive journalism approaches.

Syria

Free Press Unlimited has worked in Syria since the early days of the uprisings to support journalists and later media outlets. Free Press Unlimited's Syria programme includes two projects: one focusing on Ethical Journalism standards for the emerging Syrian media sector (concluded in November 2021) funded by SIDA, the other focussing on media dialogue inside Syria and in Europe funded by the EU.

In 2021, nine media organisations (outlets and media institutions) increased their sustainability and therefore



Man reading newspaper in Nigeria. © Joost Bastmeijer

their chances of survival in a very complex and insecure conflict environment. The interventions included increasing the capacity to reach and engage an audience and create loyalty. In 2021, the final year of the 5-year programme, we took stock and gathered all results achieved, paying special attention to harvesting the impact. That resulted in a 'project documentation tool', available to the public.

Despite their external challenges, repression and for some their 'hybrid exiled status', evidence from the EJSN research and the capacity building activities run by the Free Press Unlimited's Syria team of experts shows that the media partners have succeeded well in integrating the ethical principles of independent media; it now is an integral part of their identity and motivates their journalism. By the end of 2021, most formal training has been replaced with ongoing coaching and mentoring, as the partners have reached a threshold level of personal and institutional skills - contributing to the sustainability of skills within the sector and allowing for more peer-to-peer learning. New Audience behaviour research, published in 2021, showed a shift in audience use of and preferences for news and information. At this stage of the conflict they want local information, focused more on solutions rather than on conflict. Notably, with the support and coaching of Free Press Unlimited, partners have been taking these recommendations and research into consideration in their development and editorial plans.

The external evaluation research confirmed that through convening and facilitating dialogue and collaboration efforts, media partners have made major progress towards creating meaningful dialogue space and have indeed embraced the value of dialogue. Media outlets inside Syria, whether in government controlled areas, in opposition areas or outside Syria in neighbouring countries, and diaspora have begun to talk with each other.

It is important to highlight here that the set-up of a 'dialogue infrastructure' by the dialogue team and Free Press Unlimited-trained facilitators has expanded the presence of dialogue across geographies and regions. Similarly, evidence suggests that the co-production fund is capable of encouraging the emergence of deeper links between Syrian CSO and media outlets, and that it can enhance the advocacy activities of the former and the reporting range of the latter.

The EU-funded programme [Ethical Journalism for Sustainable Peace](#) survived the effects of the Covid pandemic and in 2021 entered into a new phase of implementation. New partners joined the programme achieving good coverage of the whole country. The programme, aimed at shaping dialogue across dividing lines, is currently supporting 10 Syrian media outlets and civil society organisations to become stronger agents and promote the effective dialogue approach. The media involved used their ethical journalism to contribute to stabilisation and peace.

The innovation fund component was also launched. A collaboration of three major Syrian media outlets was established to produce and spread professional cohesive stories in a podcast format targeting multiple common community, culture and subculture issues such as social dilemmas, economic deficiencies, stigmatising stereotypes, gender injustice and abuse across all of Syria. It includes strengthening the capacity of these independent Syrian media in professional podcast production. The expected outcome of this collaboration is that alternative narratives that stimulate more critical reflection will emerge, through the production of unifying and appealing content relevant to all Syrians. The collaboration is itself a positive motivational boost for struggling media organisations and a model for collaborative media that has the ability to inspire others.

The fourth Small Grant Fund for Syrian CSO-Media Co-Production was launched. This co-production fund is aimed at building productive partnerships between Syrian CSOs and media in order to narrate original, impactful stories relevant to Syrian audiences across geographic and political lines, with focus on the inclusivity aspect of-the-ground realities and events.

Dabanga

Dabanga is an independent, Sudanese news and information broadcaster. Founded in 2008 to report on the Darfur crisis, Dabanga has expanded to provide coverage of all corners of the country. It reaches over 2.3 million people through shortwave radio and about 1 million through satellite television on a daily basis.

For many years, Free Press Unlimited enabled Dabanga's team of professional Sudanese journalists to work freely from studios in Amsterdam. However, Free Press Unlimited is a media development organisation and not a publisher. From the outset, Dabanga had the wish to become an independent media house as soon as it was feasible. Therefore, both organisations have worked towards complete autonomy in the areas of finance, management, and facilities for Dabanga.

In 2021, the vision of independence became a reality. Dabanga registered as an independent organisation, with a supervisory board and new offices. Free Press Unlimited and Dabanga will continue to collaborate on projects supporting press freedom and media capacity in Sudan.

Tamazuj

Radio Tamazuj is a daily news service and current affairs broadcaster covering South Sudan, the southern states of

Sudan, and the borderlands between the two countries. Programming includes reporting and discussion of politics, governance, peace-building, law, justice, culture, economy, education, gender, and human rights.

Free Press Unlimited supported Radio Tamazuj both financially and operationally. We worked together towards a professional, independent Radio Tamazuj that can continue to provide the South Sudanese population with reliable, uncensored information. By the end of 2020, that goal of independence was in sight, and was achieved in 2021.

Free Press for Eastern Europe

Collaboration between independent journalists all over Europe and connection with their audiences are increasingly becoming key factors for their success. This is especially important in countries where journalists are under increased risk of losing their jobs due to political or economic constraints. With greater support from their societies, these independent voices can become stronger and more impactful. Therefore, Free Press Unlimited and the Free Press Unlimited Czech office [Free Press for Eastern Europe \(FPEE\)](#) are running the project [Enhancing Audience-Supported Collaborations for Empowered Media and Societies](#), co-funded by the European Commission.

In this project, Free Press Unlimited and [FPEE](#) work together with [Prague Media School](#), and crowdfunding platform [Press Start](#). The project was set up in 2020, with the support of 5 local partners, and is now active in 8 countries. The aim is to support collaboration between journalists and other media professionals from eight European Union countries, and help them find additional sources of sustainable income through crowdfunding.

Each of the project partners brings their unique expertise and experience to support the participating journalists. Free Press Unlimited and Free Press for Eastern Europe are co-running a pioneer cross border collaboration of journalists that connects independent media from 15 Eastern European, Baltic and Central Asian countries. Prague Media School bases the courses for the project on the know-how it has gained through its work with mixed groups of media professionals from inside and outside the EU. Press Start was created by Transitions, which has been a leading journalism trainer in Central and Eastern Europe for over 20 years. The supporting partner of the project, Centre for Independent Journalism in Hungary, specialises in investigative journalism training.

Our stakeholders

Our partners

Cooperation with local media organisations is extremely valuable to Free Press Unlimited; they are our most important stakeholders. Together, we have developed and implemented multiple projects that provide millions of people with access to independent and reliable information.

In 2021, Free Press Unlimited worked with 120 partners (2020: 96) in 54 countries (2020: 39). During this corona-dominated year, cooperating was more complicated than ever before, as we were unable to have face to face meetings, which are the best way to support our partners' work. We are proud to say that, despite these extraordinary circumstances, our partners managed to continue their important work.

What makes a partnership with Free Press Unlimited unique, is Free Press Unlimited's strong involvement which goes beyond a typical donor-grantee relationship, partners indicate.

Our 8th annual Partner Satisfaction Survey, managed by the Free Press Unlimited Knowledge & Quality team, was shared with 77 partners. The rate for responses received was 82%, and 69% for complete responses. The majority of respondents was from Sub-Saharan Africa. Important conclusions of the survey were:

- **Satisfaction:** Partners are satisfied with their partnership with Free Press Unlimited (4.42 on a scale of -5 to 5).
 - The scores for support in mobilising financial resources, role in stimulating collaboration, and capacity development and training, are comparatively lower than other aspects (3.65, 3.69 and 3.70 respectively). However, the score for satisfaction for Free Press Unlimited support in mobilising financial resources and capacity development and training is higher than for 2020.

- Level of autonomy in implementing projects (4.72) scored highest.
- Allocation of (financial) resources scored (+0.63), the greatest increase in comparison to 2020.
- Monitoring and evaluation support scored (-0.44), a significant decrease in comparison to 2020.

- **Highlights:** Many partners indicated that the highlight of their partnership with Free Press Unlimited was that they were able to do something new that they would not have been able to do without Free Press Unlimited support and were thus able to achieve important milestones.
- **Requests for changes:** (47%) said they would change nothing. The most desired change was for long-term collaboration and support (21%), such as requests for more or continued funding, for longer partnerships or longer contracts, as well as the need for institutional funding (core funding).
- **Uniqueness:** What makes partnership with Free Press Unlimited unique, is Free Press Unlimited's strong involvement which goes beyond a typical donor-grantee relationship, Free Press Unlimited's flexibility and good understanding of the difficult contexts that the partners operate in, and the freedom and trust that Free Press Unlimited awards to its partners.

Our donors

A friend in need is a friend indeed. Our donors are true friends of independent journalism and for that Free Press Unlimited is particularly grateful.

In 2021, Free Press Unlimited submitted 39 project proposals, 4 of which were still pending at the end of the year. Of the remaining 35 submissions, 22 were approved: a success rate of 63%. In total, we succeeded in raising about €18.5 million for our projects in 2021, considerably more than in 2020 (€13.5 million). We thank all our donors for this continued support and their solidarity to our mission.

In 2021, journalism came under serious threat. Worldwide, crises put our emergency programme under pressure for almost the entire year. We are grateful for the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the exceptional flexibility in their support for our emergency programme. This reinforced our ability

to react in a timely, adequate manner, particularly in countries such as Myanmar, Afghanistan and Belarus.

This year, Free Press Unlimited celebrated 20 years' partnership with the Dutch Postcode Lottery, which, due to its millions of participants, is one of our most generous and consistent supporters. This outstanding, private philanthropy institution that supports human rights, sustainable development and press freedom, contributes €900,000 annually to Free Press Unlimited, and is our main core funder. The Postcode Lottery's unwavering belief in our mission and their exceptional willingness to take risks sets it apart from the crowd and has made it possible for Free Press Unlimited to set up the People's Tribunal on the Murder of Journalists in The Hague. Civil Society investigations into journalist murder have already resulted in the re-opening of one case and many more investigations will follow in 2022.

The Dutch Postcode Lottery Fund continued in the year 2021. In a year still heavily influenced by corona, 17 applications were made, 4 of which were in depth research requests. There have been only 3 publications. This is explained by the low number of applications in 2020 and the travel restrictions due to Covid-19.

In 2020 and 2021, we continued to build media's resilience worldwide to the 'war on science', providing an emergency and innovative response to Covid-19 disinformation in Africa and in Central and Eastern Europe with the help of the European Commission, United Kingdom and other international allies.

We received extensive support for our work in various parts of the world, such as Sub Saharan Africa and Central America, also from within the EU. In partnership with European colleagues within the EU, we plan to increase our work in the MENA region, an area which is becoming an increasing cause for concern with regard to press freedom.

Swedish SIDA supports our work on the inclusive approach to media development in conflict-prone societies and on promoting independent journalism in conflict countries in general. We appreciate the long term partnership, and see it as a privilege.

Over the past six years, we developed close relations with UNESCO and in 2021, we received financial support for several of our monitoring and research activities for the first time. We also worked on the safety of journalists and access to information at the level of international advocacy. In the quest for media freedom and media viability, we received support from the UK's FCDO for the Media Freedom campaign and for our work in Central Europe and Bangladesh.

Our Friends

Private donors are crucial for the work of Free Press Unlimited. They make an indispensable contribution to our organisation with their unearmarked gifts and as ambassadors. Free Press Unlimited has a loyal group of supporters and structurally donating donors, who we call friends. We are grateful for these Friends who support Free Press Unlimited's cause with their time, commitment and continuous financial assistance.

In addition to Friends who show their long time loyalty through recurring donations, we have noticed an increase in one-off donations. The new website makes it easier for donors from home and abroad to make their payments. All within GDPR guidelines.

A massive end-of-year campaign, where the focus was on the safety of journalists, gained us more than 130 new donations. 33 of these donors became Friends.

We would have liked to be in closer live contact with our friends throughout the year but unfortunately, due to Covid-19, we were limited to sending them personal cards, letters, updates on how their donation contributed to our mission and newsletters.

Campaigns

An important way of attracting new Friends is through campaigns. At the end of 2020 we organised two campaigns aimed at attracting new donors. This resulted in 1200 individual donors in 2021, 700 of whom are Friends, or recurring donors.

A massive end-of-year campaign, where the focus was on the safety of journalists, gained us more than 130 new donations. 33 of these donors became Friends. Added to the additional donations received from our existing Friends in response to a DM, we booked a record result in 2021.

In the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter movement and as an outcome of the 2020 Free Press Unlimited learning days and the internal discussion on how we as Free Press Unlimited can openly and safely discuss discrimination and racism, an organisation-wide webinar was provided in January 2021. After an interactive introduction to the topic, a workshop focusing on power relationships on the

work-floor provided participants with tool-sets on how to identify and mitigate such relationships. The staff also discussed ways of engaging in inclusive conversations on diversity. Action points for internal capacity on diversity, equity and inclusion were also picked up by a working group within Free Press Unlimited, for example looking at HR, communications, and other internal policies and procedures.

Other fundraising activity

In 2021, we held our first charity auction of press photos by famous Dutch press photographers. Initially, we planned to have an online auction on Catawiki and a more exclusive physical auction in *Beeld & Geluid Den Haag* for our special guests. Unfortunately, the physical auction had to be postponed until 2022 due to Covid-19 but the online auction was a success. Yielding more than €10,000, it proved to be a fun and effective way to gain more revenue. Without the help of many Dutch photographers and all participating parties we wouldn't have been able to pull this off.

We saw a total increase of 144% in unearmarked funding. €103,517 was received through our minor and middle donors, almost €10,000 from our major donors and we received an additional €20,000 donation from a private fund. This resulted in a total of €142,525 for 2021. Corporate sponsorships were not prioritised but we plan to focus on this in 2022.

With the aim of raising awareness for our work and attracting new private donors, we set up our ambassadors' programme in 2021. The aim was to encourage our Dutch Friends to tell the story about the role of press freedom in a democracy and about the work of Free Press Unlimited in their own communities.

In addition to our own fundraising in 2021, we extended our collaboration with several external platforms each with its own strategy for increasing donations for non-profits. These include:

- the [Social Handshake](#) which enables employees to donate through their paycheck;
- the [GIVT](#) app which makes it easy for individuals to donate digitally to us (their database of 80,000 Dutch members are already donating);
- the [Give for Good](#) foundation gives investors the chance to donate their dividend to us.

Being visible on all these platforms will hopefully increase our brand awareness in larger groups and our unearmarked income.

Our audience

Free Press Unlimited has an extremely diverse audience. It comprises, on the one hand, Dutch people of 40+ who live in the Randstad or in the city. They are generally left-wing, and well-educated. On the other hand, we also have a group of stakeholders that includes: journalists, human rights activists, policymakers and wealth funds who visit our website and also follow our social media. It is therefore essential that the information on our website has far-reaching appeal and encourages visitors to support us.

Given that the overload of information on our old website was confusing for visitors, developing a new, more accessible site was essential. Towards the end of 2020, the first steps were taken to design a new website, which was launched in April 2021. Feedback has been positive. Our audience appreciates the more focused way we now communicate about our work.

Based on the available data, the new Free Press Unlimited website attracted 77k visitors from its launch until the end of the year. Most visitors find our site by means of direct search, followed by organic and advertisement search. The English website attracted more visitors than the Dutch website. The two most popular pages are the 'Who We Are' and the 'Reporters Respond' pages.

In March 2021 we organised the annual [Media4Women](#) campaign. This was followed by an interesting initiative of our Policy & Advocacy team: the Dutch [persvrijheidmeter](#) (press freedom gauge) a tool to help Dutch people navigate the political environment and the different opinions and actions concerning press freedom during the elections.

In 2021, we also launched our very own in-house studio, FREE PRESS MATTERS. We used the studio for various video statements, for example, HOLD THE LINE for Maria Ressa.

In February and October 2021, we gained welcome visibility through Socutera by appearing on Dutch television. In December, we reinforced this by broadcasting our TV and radio commercial on a Dutch public broadcasting channel.



Bangladeshi journalist Rozina Islam wins the 2021 Free Press Award for Most Resilient Journalist. © Gracielle Rosetto

The opening hearing of the People's Tribunal took place on November 2nd. This was a great opportunity to invite our closest friends and partners to discuss the safety of journalists all around the world. We ended this serious but also interesting day with the Free Press LIVE award ceremony. Indian journalist, Bhat Burhan won the award for Newcomer of the Year, and Rozina Islam, from Bangladesh, for Most Resilient Journalist.

Social media

All our activities, both online and offline, are aimed at engaging new and existing Free Press Unlimited donors and Friends. We create multiple contact moments, both personal and bulk, and we encourage further commitment through social media. Our online activity

gives us more awareness under specific target groups and is adjusted during large and small campaigns.

In the last six months of 2021, we focused on the theme of Safety of Journalists. In the lead up to the event, The People's Tribunal on the Murder of Journalists, which took place in November, we used our social media to raise awareness for this theme.

Many donors receive a digital newsletter, issued either monthly, or more frequently during busy months. It is available in both Dutch and English. The Dutch version has 1687 subscribers, the English, 1886. The numbers continue to rise. On evaluation, the Dutch version has proven to be an efficient way to convert subscribers to donors, but the English version does not display the same conversion.

2021 saw a significant growth in the number of followers on the Free Press Unlimited social media channels. LinkedIn and Twitter showed a significant peak in number of followers, reaching 4698 and 15131, respectively. The number of Facebook followers rose to 20672 and Instagram to 1928. A less impressive increase, due to the fact that Facebook's Meta gives more exposure to sponsored content than to organic posts. Also the trends on Facebook and Instagram are changing, and in order to continue growing and reaching new audiences, we must follow the trends in combination with social ads. At the close of the year, YouTube followers numbered 692.

However, not only is the increase in numbers of followers to our channels important, engagement rates and social post reach are considered equally if not more important. Our Facebook page reached 230k people, Instagram 28k people and LinkedIn 167k people in 2021. We estimate our reach on Twitter to be in the millions.

Thus far, the donate buttons on Social Media have not been used much. Given the monthly growth in numbers of followers on some of our Social Media platforms: Facebook 21k and Instagram 2k, and the trend of donating through Social Media, we expect this to change. Twitter has also been experimenting with donation buttons and with our 15k followers this should become interesting for us in the future.

Organisation

In 2021, Free Press Unlimited underwent an organisational transition, as a direct result of not being selected for the Power of Voices partnership, a loss of 6,400,000 in yearly donor revenue. Which would mean a loss of more than 50 million in the upcoming 5 years in donor revenue. It forced us to ask ourselves: "What next?" and "How should we organise ourselves?"

We decided not to reorganise or trim back on staff as this would mainly affect our knowledge and advocacy department. We had significantly invested in these departments over the last couple of years and that had certainly paid off. A reorganisation would mean a disinvestment. Therefore, we decided to forego our yearly performance-based increase. We began fundraising on a large scale and succeeded in closing the gap within a year (we prognosed that it would take at least 2 years to close the gap). We managed to reduce the expected expected 300,000 budget shortfall to 100,000. This is a fantastic achievement by the whole organisation.

We identified six strategic themes: safety, viability, diversity, accountability, conflict and advocacy, and established task forces on the basis of those themes.

We initiated a new information structure, to better streamline the information within the organisation, and in response to the limitations we faced due to Covid. We identified six strategic themes: safety, viability, diversity,

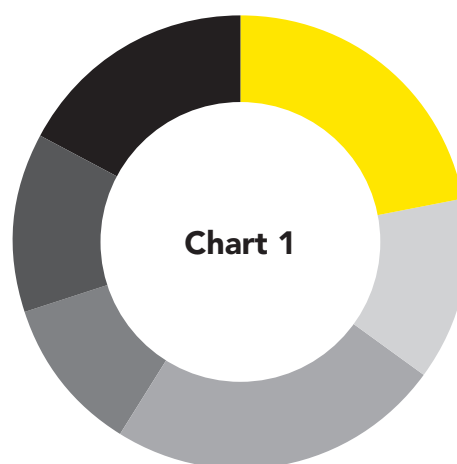
accountability, conflict and advocacy, and established task forces on the basis of those themes from within the organisation or from the field, each with a coordinator and knowledge officer. Staff from all parts of the organisation were invited to join the task forces. Specifically, we expected the task forces to identify our Unique Selling Points (USP) and provide more clarity through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. The plan for 2022 is to evaluate whether this has been achieved, but the general feedback from our staff about the new situation is positive; it has improved how information is shared within the organisation.

The transition also led to the introduction of other types of meetings:

- a programme meeting for team leaders;
- an operational meeting;
- a stratcom meeting; and
- a strategy meeting.

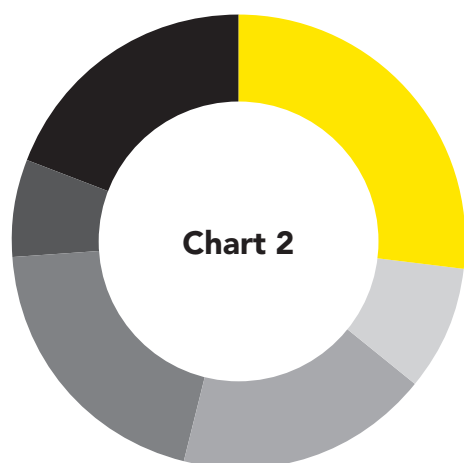
The charts below illustrate the distribution of our project activities and budget resources over the six strategic themes:

Chart 1: Proportion of Free Press Unlimited project activities addressing each Strategic Theme



- Media fostering Accountability: 22%
- Enabling Environment: 13%
- Safety and Protection: 24%
- Media and Conflict: 11%
- Inclusion and Equity: 13%
- Media Viability: 17%

Chart 2: Proportion of budget allocated to project activities addressing each Strategic Theme



- Media fostering Accountability: 27%
- Enabling Environment: 9%
- Safety and Protection: 18%
- Media and Conflict: 20%
- Inclusion and Equity: 7%
- Media Viability: 19%

Governance

Free Press Unlimited's governance structure is similar to that of 2020, with an equal Board of Directors and a Board of Supervisors with a revised profile.

In 2021 the board consisted of Leon Willems (Director Policy & Programmes) and Ruth Kronenburg (Director of Operations), and is responsible for daily management including strategy, policy, finance, human resources, etc. This Executive Team is responsible for daily policy management and is accountable to the Supervisory Board. The total annual gross remuneration including pension premiums of the Directors (both Leon Willems

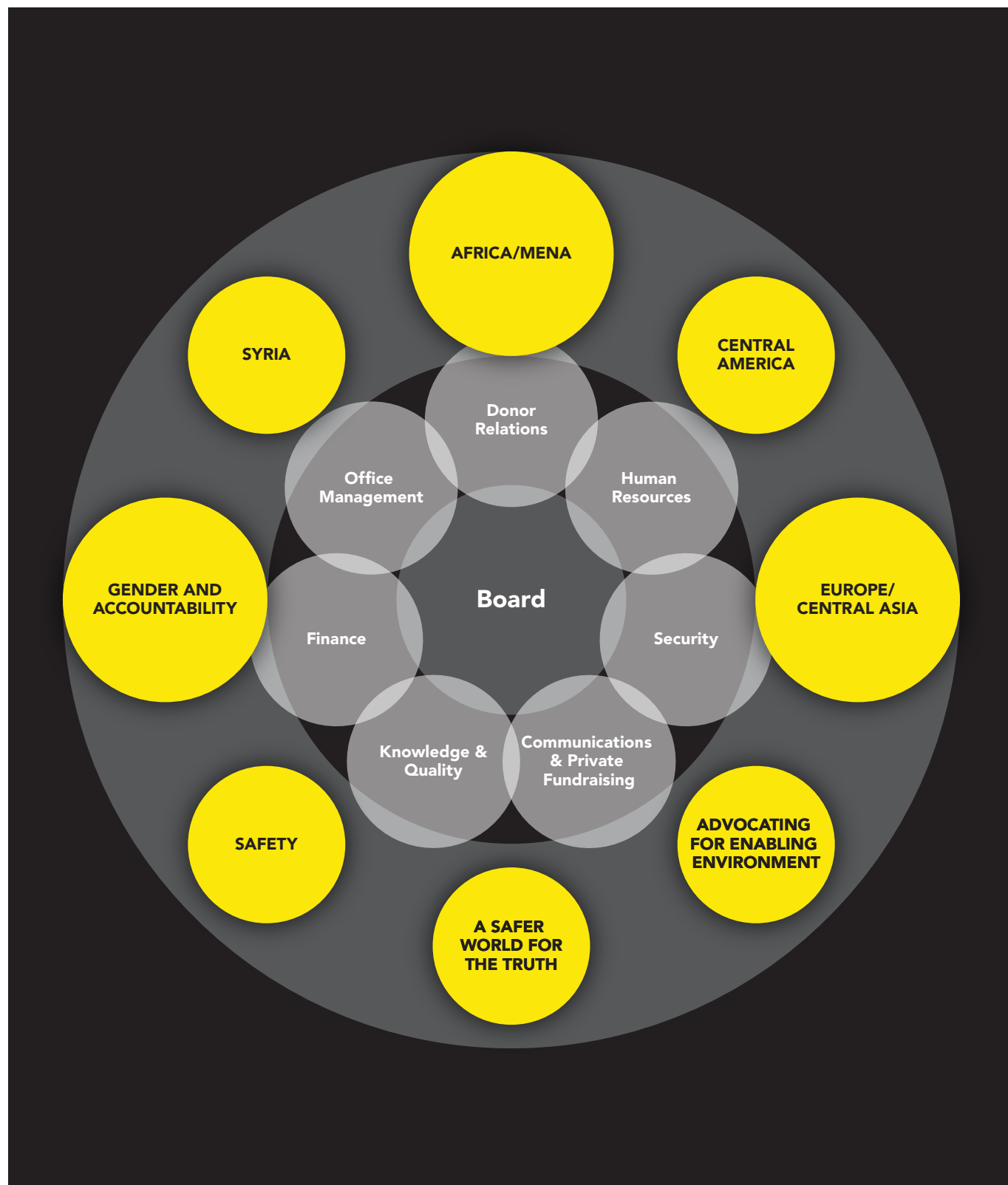
and Ruth Kronenburg €125,057) is in line with the remuneration scheme for directors set out by Goede Doelen Nederland and the Wijffels Code. Their unpaid additional activities are as special adviser to the Global Forum for Media Development (Leon Willems) and of the TNI Supervisory Board (Ruth Kronenburg) and member of the Executive Committee of the Global Forum for Media Development as of September 2021.

All team leaders and heads meet every month to discuss and coordinate operational matters that are important for the entire organisation, and to support each other as managers.

Rather than having a limited management team, Free Press Unlimited holds a strategic management meeting. This is a monthly meeting of the directors, and representatives from the programme, stratcom and operational teams. In addition, all team leaders and heads meet every month to discuss and coordinate operational matters that are important for the entire organisation, and to support each other as managers.

The Supervisory Board oversees the Free Press Unlimited organisation. It monitors the organisation's performance and intervenes if it feels this is necessary. The Supervisory Board is responsible for the organisation's overall strategy and makes decisions on the basis of the annual budgets and reports. See also the report of the Supervisory Board on page 38.

Organogram





HR policy

The three pillars of our HR policy demonstrate our appreciation of our employees:

1. **Employees are the most important asset of the organisation**
2. **Free Press Unlimited aims to be an appealing employer**
3. **We are constantly working to further professionalise the human resources (HR) department.**

A successful organisation invests in its employees in terms of training, development, commitment and consciously invests in good cooperation. To challenge, stimulate and inspire employees, Free Press Unlimited, in collaboration with a career agency and the Dutch government, provided professional career-advice (NL leert door). This career-advice lasted 3 months in total. 28 employees signed up for the programme.

In 2021, we filled several vacancies in the project teams and support teams. We welcomed a total of 10 new staff members, and 11 people left the organisation. During the year, we welcomed 2 interns to our project teams and 4 to support teams. By the end of 2021 (2020: 84 in total), we have a staff of 70, consisting of: 47 women and 23 men, filling 63.26 FTE of which 2 FTE are located in Poland and Brussels. The average age is 39 years. This does not include the employees of Dabanga. A transfer of undertaking has taken place for Dabanga activities. As of 1 October 2021 Dabanga operates completely independently and 12 employees (10,3 FTE) have been transferred to the new Dabanga foundation.

Wellbeing

The sick leave percentage was 5.86% including partial reintegration. Average absenteeism in the Netherlands is 5.1%. Flu and Covid-19 were the main reasons for absenteeism.

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a global challenge affecting all of us, and impacting on our work and our personal life. A point of attention remains the work-life balance and lack of connection. To find a little more balance, we continue to be flexible for employees who prefer to work at the office even though the government recommends working from home as much as possible.

Education and training

Free Press Unlimited offered its employees courses in Arabic at various levels. One employee followed the AMID Young Professional traineeship. Throughout the year, employees can undergo training in how to use our internal wiki and digital security. Two employees used their refresher leave (Opfrisverlof) for training purposes.

Integrity and safeguarding

Integrity policy

Our integrity policy, launched in 2019, is based on two previous Free Press Unlimited policies:

- a code of conduct
- a fraud & corruption policy.

Anyone representing Free Press Unlimited, staff, partners or trainers, is required to sign the codes and uphold the principles of our integrity policy. In addition, our new employees are informed of this policy during their introduction programme.

Also, our integrity policy is part of all contracts signed with Free Press Unlimited, from external consultants to local partners.

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a global challenge affecting all of us, and impacting on our work and our personal life. A point of attention remains the work-life balance and lack of connection.

Complaints procedure

An improved complaints and reporting mechanism also forms part of our integrity policy. A dedicated integrity officer ensures that our policy is being implemented, and investigates possible cases of misconduct. In 2021, no official complaints were reported.

Confidential Counsellor

Since 2017, Free Press Unlimited has worked with an external Confidential Counsellor. On an annual basis she discusses reports with the Board of Directors and with the Works Council. In 2021, she also had contact with the Integrity Officer to advise on the improvement of the complaints procedure. In 2021, no reports of misconduct

were submitted. There were 9 reports related to working relations, mainly with supervisors. None of these reports led to a complaint; they were discussed with the confidential counsellor to find ways to deal with this in a constructive manner. Free Press Unlimited is happy that staff members know their way to the confidential counsellor and stimulates staff to do so regularly.

Works Council

The Works Council aims to create a fair, healthy and safe working environment at Free Press Unlimited, operating in a positive, constructive and inclusive way. The Works Council kicked off the year with 5 members, who met on average twice a month, including bilateral meetings. Elections were held in the summer of 2021, and 2 new members joined the Works Council replacing those who stepped down.

As with all Free Press Unlimited staff, the Works Council had to adapt to new ways of working, due mainly to Covid-19 restrictions. At the same time challenges within Free Press Unlimited required our presence and regular contribution.

The Works Council continued the monthly council meetings and meetings with the Board of Directors. Works Council meetings are open to colleagues to join as observers, and they are encouraged to voice their

concerns and opinions regarding the functioning of the organisation. In 2021, the Works Council met twice with the Board of Supervisors, and organised all-staff meetings in order to make decisions on endorsements and provide advice.

In 2021, the Works Council endorsed and advised on the following:

- Proposition to change the leave days rule and proposed amendment to the Personnel Manual
- Change in the recruitment procedure
- Radio Dabanga's HR documents and policies, and Radio Dabanga's financial manual and other financial documents, in the run up to the independence of Radio Dabanga
- Bee Safe app as an office attendance registration tool
- Salary increase request, with an inflation correction of EUR 137,50 gross per month per employee, and a mid-year review for the performance management system
- Other matters such as Covid-19 protocol, HR, change in Board of Directors, medical examination survey, change in Arbo service provider.



Young journalist Mamarha Afridi works in Pakistan's most rural areas. © Mehrab Afridi

Knowledge and quality

Expertise and continuous learning

Free Press Unlimited has a committed Knowledge and Quality team and invests in the expertise and knowledge systems of our organisation. These efforts benefit our work at large and enable us to adapt our strategies, become more effective and increase our impact. We focus on supporting continuous learning and on developing new knowledge.

Experiences gained through our activities are shared across the organisation and embedded in improvements of our strategies and procedures. As a knowledge-based organisation, those are key to our performance.

Conducting research and producing guides helps us to better understand the problems we aim to solve, and also form a valuable contribution from Free Press Unlimited to the organisations with whom we cooperate.

The evaluation of the Covid-19 Response project in Africa concluded that the project contributed to the survival of numerous media at risk.

We supported several programmes with planning, monitoring and evaluation. Notable evaluations in 2021 were a Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) review of the Syria programme in September and October.

The conclusion was that the intervention addressed the needs of its target groups, strived to foster their capacity to be an agent of peace in a polarised and volatile country, facilitating spaces of dialogues among different voices coming from all the geography of Syria. One of the strengths of this intervention is that it is not an isolated initiative which takes place in an unfamiliar context or where no benchmarks exist. The synergies with the SIDA-funded programme have been fundamental, as they have ensured a very successful design of programmatic and implementation strategies.

SIDA has committed to continue to support the thematic area of this intervention, namely media and dialogue, gender justice, inclusivity and accountability in all Syrian geography, with a special emphasis on supporting independent ethical journalism in Syrian media. This continuous and sustained support from SIDA has seen increasing interest also from the EU as it has potential to contribute to the sustainability of the independent Syrian media. To that end, it is important that these two strategic partners position themselves as “policy champion on advocating for fundamental rights like access to reliable and verified information, and the freedom of expression and opinion”.

In the context of the PRIMED programme, Knowledge and Quality conducted three Gender Analysis investigations into the media sector in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone.

As mentioned in the foreword, in 2021, the [Covid-19 Response in Africa – Together for Reliable Information](#), that started in 2020 and took place in 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the objective to better inform people on protection against Covid-19 was concluded. It sought to gauge impact, measure learning and provide input for future projects as well as ensure accountability to the EU, the project’s donor. We are very happy and proud that the OECD/DAC evaluation of this project acknowledged that this ambitious and complex project was a success, calling it “timely, relevant, and efficient”.

The evaluator found that the project was particularly sustainable in two areas.

1. It contributed to the survival of numerous media organisations that were at risk.
2. It promoted skills-building in the area of fact-checking.

Key lessons and recommendations include:

- Local expertise exists and can be utilised with excellent results.
- Mobile-based platforms can be more effective than web-based particularly if there are connectivity or power issues.



Hatice Cengiz, the fiancée of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was murdered in 2018, gives a witness testimony during the People's Tribunal Opening Hearing on 2 November 2021. © Gracielle Rosetto

- If target countries are decided in the proposal stage, it can lead to a more dynamic start. This is particularly important in a project with a limited timeframe such as this.
- Be cognizant that start up phases, particularly when working with a large number of local partners, can take significant time and adjust the timeframe accordingly.
- Develop M&E frameworks that are suitable for emergency contexts; much of what was done in this project was done with a development framework.
- Don't be afraid to try something new. Emergency contexts often provide the opportunity to try, test and innovate and much can be learned.

Research agenda

Many political actors would rather not be held accountable by independent media: they seek to delegitimize the work of these media and limit their ability to uncover information and to reach an audience. In the context of increasing pressure on media freedom in several European countries, such as Serbia, Slovenia, Romania and Hungary, Free Press Unlimited carried out research, and in May 2021, published the report [Independent journalism in contexts of shrinking civic space](#). The outcome of the study can serve as recommendations for other media and media development organisations that encounter the same challenges.

The report identifies three crucial objectives of independent media, namely:

1. All audiences have access to independent media.
2. Independent media are seen as credible.
3. Independent media hold power holders to account.

Corruption thrives in times of crisis. To counterbalance this, it is especially important that independent media has access to public information. In the first half of 2021, K&Q, with Freedom House, conducted a study on how Covid-19 measures have affected Right to Information laws. This includes a summary of recommendations to counteract this:

- Provide technical support and training for online work.
- Ensure that emergency measures are accountable, proportionate, and time-restricted.
- Ensure that free and independent media can thrive, and people have access to fact-based information.
- Support free and fair elections that respect public health.
- Provide emergency funding that allows democracy and human rights organisations to continue daily work.

- Identify human rights abuses, condemn them when they occur, and hold perpetrators to account.
- Combat corruption in pandemic response efforts.

Across the world, many independent media struggle to survive. Research conducted by Free Press Unlimited in 2020 showed that traditional business models are losing their effectiveness, due to any combination of competition from tech platforms, challenging political environments and economic deprivation among their target audiences. In 2021, we followed this up with national consultations in ten different countries: Brazil, El Salvador, Indonesia, Jamaica, Lebanon, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and Tunisia.

A Resource Guide on the Enabling Environment for the Media was finalised in 2021, containing an overview of international legal standards and a comparison of media regulation at the national level.

In each of these consultations, a varied group of stakeholders discussed the challenges and solutions regarding media viability for independent media outlets in their context. In particular, the income streams and business models of media, access to (online) advertisement, the impact of big tech, and the way independent media are affected by the contexts in which they operate, were highlighted. This resulted in a database of findings on challenges and solutions for media viability, on issues and on countries.

Knowledge Management

In 2021, the K&Q team expanded the base of relevant knowledge available on our dedicated website, and supported its use. We updated the evidence base with the latest research findings and evaluations on all aspects of media development, both from our own work as well as relevant publications by others.

Based on the lessons learned in the national consultations on media viability, 5 webinars were organised and then made available on the Media Viability section of our website. They brought together media outlets from different countries facing similar

challenges and offering inspiring solutions. Each outlet also has a focus on a specific strategy or business model for independent media. These are available as a resource for media outlets with an interest in applying any of these strategies for income generation. They contain valuable lessons on:

- Monetizing Trust: Best practices for a membership model.
- (Native) Advertising by Niche Media.
- Reselling Content: Turning editorial content into saleable and scalable products.
- Community Radio: diversifying income models.
- Fact Checking as a Business Model.

A Resource Guide on the Enabling Environment for the Media was developed and finalised in the first half of 2021. It contains an overview of international legal standards as well as a comparison of media regulation at the national level. In addition, it offers practical tools and recommendations for advocacy on the enabling environment for the media. At the end of the year, the guide was further supplemented with a toolkit developed for Shadow Reporting on SDG 16.10.

Quality management

We use several recognised quality standards to routinely check how we as an organisation are performing. These are:

- ISO 9001. Free Press Unlimited has the most recent 'Partos ISO 9001:2015 version 2018' certificate, which includes additions on integrity. It covers the processes in our project cycle as well as the system (PROMIS) we use to implement and monitor the project cycle.
- CBF-Recognised Charity. This quality label dates from 2016, and is an initiative of cooperating quality label organisations such as CBF and Goede Doelen Nederland.
- IATI. In 2021, we published the final report on projects in the Strategic Partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in accordance with IATI standards. We further published on three other on-going projects with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Embassies.
- Our own Integrity Policy, to which all employees must adhere, and those of Goede Doelen Nederland.

Continuity

Risk management

Free Press Unlimited enjoys a vibrant and inclusive security culture, which we maintain and update regularly. Our in-house security team organises regular awareness-raising events and provides ongoing digital security training. In addition, Free Press Unlimited's staff can receive tailor-made (technical) support.

Our risk management is based on the international ISO 31000 standards.

The table below lists the most important risks, how likely they are, their consequences, and the measures we take to reduce these risks. This table is in line with the RJ650 guideline, amongst others.

Risk Description	Threat	Mitigation Measures	Risk Level	Risk Response
Continuity of the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding of media projects more difficult due to the decreased attention (including from donors) for press freedom, human rights, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active policy influencing via GFMD for Sustainable Development Goal 'access to information'. Active policy influencing for media development in EU and Dutch politics. Actively searching for alternative funding. 	High	Accept
Reputation is compromised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor project execution by Free Press Unlimited and/or partners Negative communication/attention around the organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with and regular monitoring of project procedures. The integrity policy (including code of conduct) forms part of all contracts. Crisis management plan is integrated and management is trained in crisis communication. 	High	Reduce
Fraud & corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fraud or other false information is discovered during the execution of a project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance with project procedures, including financial controls, spot checks and limiting sub-grants (one year) Fraud & corruption policy in place and part of contracting procedures 	Medium	Accept
Information security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidentiality of Free Press Unlimited data is breached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information security policy in place Regular digital security training of employees High security awareness culture within the organisation 	High	Reduce
Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the performance of a project, Free Press Unlimited or its partner(s) fail to keep to the agreements made with the donor and/or the requirements applicable within the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular checks and balances from the finance department and project staff Compliance with demands forms part of the project start-up procedure Policies and procedures are clear and up-to-date 	Medium	Accept



Sustainability

Free Press Unlimited believes it has a responsibility to reduce and prevent any possible negative impact on our natural environment. While remaining focused on our key objectives in support of press freedom and safety of journalists all over the world, we accept the challenge of adopting a more systematic approach to further reduce our collective carbon footprint and investigate how Free Press Unlimited can become a net-zero organisation before 2030. For this challenge, it is important for us to engage with all our partners and relevant stakeholders to realise our sustainability goals in a fair manner.

Free Press Unlimited aims to keep its carbon footprint to a minimum. We use green energy from renewable sources and fly climate-neutral. We encourage travelling by public transport and working from home; due to the corona crisis, our staff spent most of their time working from home in 2021. Our paper consumption remained stable, despite the increase in the number of employees. Wherever possible we choose the greenest, most sustainable variant when purchasing products, installations and services.

Building on efforts of previous years, Free Press Unlimited continued to increase awareness of environmentally friendly transport options both for commuting as well as for contact with (foreign) partners. If flying is necessary, we offset emissions via the Climate Neutral Group. In addition, Free Press Unlimited endorses a paperless office where possible, and uses environmentally-friendly suppliers, cleaning products, sustainable energy sources and organic products for lunch and events.

Our ambition for 2022 is to establish a CO₂ emissions baseline including a number of key short-term and long-term measurable goals to reduce our organisation's impact on the environment. Together they will form a Sustainability Action Plan, which will be our main guideline in the coming years.

Looking ahead

Plans for 2022

As from 1 April 2022, Leon Willems will make a transition from the Board of Directors to a new role as senior advisor international partnerships within the organisation. Ruth Kronenburg will then be appointed Executive Director of Free Press Unlimited. We plan to develop a toolbox for successful advocacy for 2022. This will hopefully be finalised in the first half of 2022 and can be used as a resource for colleagues when developing advocacy actions to improve the enabling environment for journalists and independent media. For instance, this toolbox takes into consideration that for advocacy on the local level to be effective, in most cases you should be constructive rather than aggressive. That entails forging coalitions, drawing up concrete (policy/legislative) proposals and engaging with power holders.

With the Policy & Advocacy team we aim to continue our policy and advocacy work to counter the previously mentioned trends and to promote an enabling environment for independent media and journalists. Our main focus areas will still be to advocate for the safety of journalists and to incentivize the prosecution of violence against them and to address the persistent impunity in the cases of murdered journalists. The chairmanship of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2022 will create opportunities for direct engagement with the Media Freedom Coalition to improve the safety of journalists across the globe. Another platform for our advocacy on this issue is our role in the Media Freedom Rapid Response Mechanism, to raise awareness on media freedom issues in the EU and to advocate for improvements in policy, practice and legislation.

We will also continue our advocacy work to raise awareness about the online harassment women journalists face. We will engage with the Coalition on Online Abuse to join forces in this endeavour. We plan to inform the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, Irene Khan, and support her efforts to create international norms on this issue; we also plan to engage with relevant decision makers at EU level.

We will continue to advocate actively against legal intimidation of journalists and raise awareness on the issue of SLAPPs (Strategic Litigation against Public Participation) against journalists. In 2022, we will provide inputs to the EU Directive on this issue, currently in development. We will cooperate with our legal team to advocate on the

outcomes of strategic litigation supported by Free Press Unlimited in countries across the world.

Finally, in 2022 we aim to develop a policy position on the potential of government regulation to promote the survival of independent public interest journalism. Part of this endeavour will be advocacy towards the EU Media Freedom Act, which will strengthen the independence of media.

Ukraine

Over the past decade, Ukraine has become a regional leader in journalism and press freedom. Now, after Russia's invasion, the future of the country and its independent media is precarious.

Free Press Unlimited, in collaboration with Reporters without Borders (RSF), have scaled up our support and assistance to journalists at risk. Together we are committed to providing practical support and other help in the longer term, in order to keep independent reporting alive even in a possible occupied Ukraine.

On 4 March 2022, Free Press Unlimited launched the Media Lifeline Ukraine initiative.

On 4 March 2022, Free Press Unlimited launched the Media Lifeline Ukraine initiative, with support of Dutch media stakeholders. Media Lifeline Ukraine aims to secure the free flow of information for the public in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. Media Lifeline is a one stop shop, to respond to all the needs of partners and journalists in Ukraine and beyond, for the longer term.

Cooperation is vital now and will continue to be in future, in order to provide ongoing support to the courageous journalists and independent media outlets who are informing the public about the war in Ukraine.

We call on all authorities in countries that have the means to do so, to pay attention to the plight of those journalists who are most vulnerable and do all in their power to assist them in this difficult time.

For the latest news on Ukraine please check the Free Press Unlimited website.

Board of Supervisors' Report

2021 was dominated by the effects of the Corona epidemic. It required a lot of adaptability and improvisation from both the organisation and the Board of Supervisors. Among other things, it led to a lot of digital contact, which put the building of work relationships and in-depth contact somewhat under pressure. Nevertheless, the board was at all times able to carry out its work correctly, due in part to good support from the organisation.

In 2021, the Board of Supervisors met with the Board of Directors on 4 occasions. During each meeting they discussed the context of the organisation, developments in the field of press freedom and the safety of journalists, Free Press Unlimited's international cooperation, fundraising, strategy development and developments in the organisations. Prior to the meetings with the Board of Supervisors, the Works Council was consulted twice in 2021, to discuss developments and decision-making in the organisation.

In mid-2021, the Board of Supervisors had two meetings regarding the strategy and fundraising, during which the organisation gave presentations on a number of international programmes.

Composition of the Board of Supervisors

In 2021, the Board of Supervisors consisted of the following members:

- Monica Bremer** (vice-chair as of 6 December 2019, Chair as per 9 December 2020), 1st term, end of current term: 6 December 2024.
Occupation & other positions: lawyer and partner at

Bremer & De Zwaan, Consultant at Ministry of Justice and Safety, Member of the Board of Supervisors of Dutch broadcasting corporation VPRO, Supervisory Director of Bosch Transmission Technology BV.

- Paul Hofstra** (chair of FAC as of 6 December 2019), 1st term, end of current term: 6 December 2024.
Occupation & other positions: External member of the audit committee of IND, Committee member at BADO (Operations and auditing of decentralised government), Member of the expert group at the Zijlstra Center of VU University for administration and governance, treasurer of the Groene Beheer foundation, treasurer of the Fonds 1877 foundation, member of the Chamber for Internal Investigations at the Institute for Financial Crime (IFFC).
- Ronald Gijsbertsen** (proposed by the Works Council), 2nd term, end of current term: June 2023. Occupation & other positions: Director of De Kunstenbond, Board member of De Creatieve Coalitie, member of the Board of Supervisors of Participe.
- Nani Jansen Reventlow** (member of the Board of Supervisors as of 1st January 2021) Occupation & other positions: Founder of Systemic Justice, board member of Lighthouse Reports, board member of the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, board member of Bureau Clara Wichmann, board member of Security Council Report, board member of Global Voices, member of the Human Rights Watch Policy Committee.
- Ellen Soerjatin**: co-founder/lawyer at Evers Soerjatin corporate litigation boutique; supervisory board member Petrobras Compensation Foundation; member Advisory Committee of the Netherlands Register of Court Experts on the admission standards for forensic accountants; appointments by the Amsterdam Enterprise Chambers as investigator, interim supervisory director or administrator of shares; member of the Forensic Accountancy Chamber and the Internal Investigations Chamber of the Institute for Financial Crime.



Dutch journalist at work at a climate demonstration in Amsterdam. © Dutchmen Photography / Shutterstock

- Hennah Draaibaar** (member of the Board of Supervisors as of 1st January 2021) Occupation & other position: Founder and Director of The Back Lot Foundation; Media consultant of the president of Suriname, Chandrika Santokhi; Digital media trainer at RNTC; Editor in Chief, 10 minutes Youth News; Documentary filmmaker.

Financial Audit Committee

The Financial Audit Committee (FAC) held its regular meetings in the spring and autumn with the main agenda items being the 2020 financial statements, which were provided with an unqualified auditor's report from the auditor Dubois + Co, and the preparatory work in the context of the choice of a new auditor. As of the reporting year 2022, PKF Wallast will take care of the audit for the organisation.

Board of Directors Transition

In February 2021, the remuneration committee of the Board of Supervisors conducted a job evaluation interview with both directors.

Finally, in the second half of the report year, the Board of Supervisors focused mainly on preparing the transition proposed by the Board from a two-member board to a one-member board headed by Ruth Kronenburg. To this end, the Board of Supervisors sought advice from a number of external parties, among others. This advice eventually led to the creation of new job profiles, a new employment contract and a settlement agreement. These formal documents ultimately formed the basis for the decision-making change in the management, which took effect on 1 April 2022.

Paul Hofstra, acting chairman of the Board of Supervisors

Financial report 2021

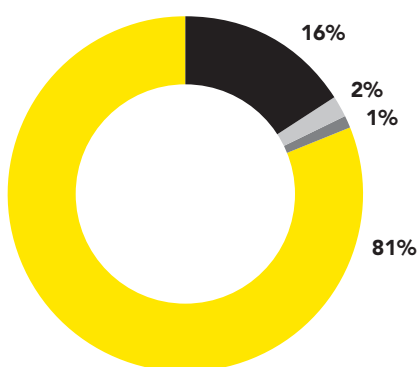
Summary

All amounts in euro

Summary Annual Report Free Press Unlimited 2021

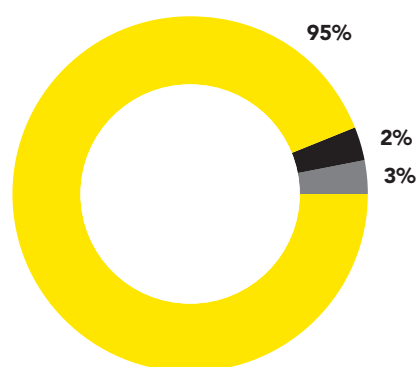
Total income	16,197,796	
Spent on organisation's objective	15,488,967	
Acquisition, Management & Accounting	853,315	
Number of fte's ultimo 2021	73.6	
Our income		
Income from Government subsidies	13,116,215	81.0%
Income from Lotteries	2,614,253	16.1%
Income from Other non profit organizations	329,067	2.0%
Other income	138,261	0.9%
	16,197,796	100.0%
Our expenses		
Organisation's objective	15,488,967	95.0%
Acquisition costs funding	403,748	2.5%
Management & Accounting	449,567	2.8%
Financial gains and losses	-37,829	-0.2%
Total expenses	16,304,453	100.0%
Dotation Reserves and Funds	-106,657	
Total	16,197,796	

Our income



- Government subsidies
- Lotteries
- Other non-profit organisations
- Other income

Our expenses



- Organisation's objective
- Acquisition costs funding
- Management & Accounting
- Financial gains and losses

Introduction

As predicted and budgeted in 2020, our income decreased compared to previous years to a level of around 17 million euro. This was mainly due to the fact we were unsuccessful to acquire the Power of Voices programme. Together with our staff, we decided not to cut off two important departments namely Policy & Advocacy and Knowledge & Quality but this led to a negative result for 2021.

In the same year we were able to fundraise a lot but mainly for the year 2022 and onwards. Nevertheless, the collective effort of everyone to fundraise and carry the burden together, is something to be very proud of. We were able to decrease the foreseen deficit of roughly €300,000 to €103,000.

Free Press Unlimited has been active in fundraising throughout the year. As a result, subsidies may be awarded throughout the year. However, the budget is drawn up and approved in September of the preceding year, meaning that the organisation includes an assumption regarding the expected income.

The total income was approximately €1 million lower than budgeted. This is mainly due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays in our projects. Main reason for these projects with lower income was the inability to travel or to give physical training on location due to the crisis. For our projects in Syria, Central America, VIMES and A Safer World For The Truth also other reasons have led to lower income. Those are mainly caused by significant changes in the execution of the project, sometimes due to a worsened situation in the target country.

On the contrary our Reporters Respond / Legal Defense Fund showed much higher income than budgeted due to successful fundraising and the intensified attention for safety issues for individual journalists. Almost all income raised is programme-related and is incidental. The structural contribution from the Dutch Postcode Lottery and incomes from private individuals are the only gifts which are not earmarked, jointly 6.4% (2020: 4.5%) of the total income raised. Last year, those funds were used in part to restore the continuity reserve to its required level. The funds were also used to cover the unfunded youth programme WADADA and a part of our Policy & Advocacy activities.

We plan to invest more on unearmarked funds although we are aware that this means extra deployment of time and capacity. However, the major challenge is and will be prolonging or finding new long-term grants. All fundraising activities are therefore aimed at achieving this. Meanwhile we will do everything in our power to continue defending the importance of press freedom and freedom of speech in a seemingly less free environment, to help our partners survive and support where we can.

Ruth Kronenburg,
April 2022



Balance sheet as of 31 December 2021

All amounts in euro

Assets	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
Fixed Assets		
Intangible fixed assets		
Website	45,225	19,693
Tangible fixed assets		
Renovation	46,648	64,808
Office furniture and equipment	39,143	44,994
Hardware and software	61,207	78,152
Total tangible fixed assets	146,998	187,954
Total fixed assets	192,223	207,647
Current assets		
Accruals	925,110	201,065
Accounts receivable and advances	56,067	12,795
Grants to be received	3,730,750	1,954,369
Total current assets	4,711,927	2,168,229
Liquid assets		
The Netherlands	5,410,019	12,405,060
Abroad	377,871	516,565
Total liquid assets	5,787,890	12,921,625
Total assets	10,692,040	15,297,501



Balance sheet as of 31 December 2021

All amounts in euro

Liabilities	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
Reserves and funds		
Continuity reserve	2,518,930	2,622,054
Security Fund	23,957	27,490
Total reserves and funds	2,542,887	2,649,544
Provisions	0	65,000
Current liabilities		
Payables related to staff	193,630	211,106
Payable to suppliers	257,855	243,393
Other short-term liabilities	415,368	459,010
Obligations related to current projects	1,142,769	2,074,965
Grants received in advance	6,139,531	9,594,484
Total current liabilities	8,149,153	12,582,957
Total liabilities	10,692,040	15,297,501



Statement of income and expense

All amounts in euro

Income	2021	budget 2021	2020
Income from government subsidies	13,116,215	14,320,000	19,144,675
Income from lottery organisations	2,614,253	2,750,000	2,097,832
Income from other non-profit organizations	329,067	75,000	366,632
Income from companies	17,260	135,000	15,283
Income from individuals	121,001	100,000	76,612
Total income	16,197,796	17,380,000	21,701,034
Expenditure			
Media support programme	15,488,967	16,349,960	20,414,311
Cost of income generation	403,748	755,469	442,197
Management and accounting costs	449,567	562,196	501,676
Total expenditure	16,342,282	17,667,625	21,358,184
Result excluding financial gains and losses	-144,486	-287,625	342,851
Interest expense	-21,012	-15,000	-14,497
Interest income	13	0	145
Currency exchange results	14,288	-10,000	-22,244
Extraordinary gains and losses	44,541	0	0
Financial gains and losses	37,829	-25,000	-36,596
Balance of income and expenses	-106,657	-312,625	306,255
Appropriation of the balance			
Additions to / withdrawals from:			
Continuity reserve	-103,124	-312,625	306,255
Security Fund	-3,533	0	0
Total	-106,657	-312,625	306,255
Financial ratios			
Spent on the organisation's objective/Total generated income	95.6%	94.1%	94.1%
Spent on organisation's objective/Total expenses	94.8%	92.5%	95.6%
Costs of income generation/Total generated income	2.5%	4.3%	2.0%
Management and accounting costs/Total expenditure	2.8%	3.2%	2.3%



Cash flow statement

All amounts in euro

	2021	2020
<i>Operational activities</i>		
Balance of income and expenses during the financial year	-106,657	306,255
Depreciations	100,568	74,260
Changes in provisions	-65,000	65,000
Gross cash flow on the basis of operational activities	-71,089	445,515
Changes in current assets	-2,543,698	103,007
Changes in current liabilities	-4,433,805	866,454
Net cash flow on the basis of operational activities	-7,048,591	1,414,976
<i>Investment activities</i>		
Changes to fixed assets	-85,144	-132,587
Changes in liquid assets	-7,133,735	1,282,389
Liquid assets at the start of the financial year	12,921,625	11,639,236
Liquid assets at the end of the financial year	5,787,890	12,921,625
Changes in liquid assets	-7,133,735	1,282,389

Accounting principles

The Annual Accounts have been prepared in accordance with Guideline 650 for Fundraising Organisations (Richtlijn 650, revised 2016). These guidelines are in line with international standards, general guidelines and the guidelines of the CBF.

Accounting principles for the balance sheet

Consolidation

The financial report for 2021 has been drawn up on the basis of a consolidation of the financial accounts of Stichting Free Press Unlimited and our office in eastern Europe. Furthermore the following foundations are also included. These foundations operate independently but are financially incorporated with Free Press Unlimited. We are obliged to include these figures in our accounts, to comply with the stipulations of the guideline for annual reporting and our formal consultation and participation structure. Nevertheless, Free Press Unlimited intends for this to be a purely financial arrangement. Free Press Unlimited wishes to emphasise that in actuality, all consolidated foundations operate independently.

- Stichting Dabanga Foundation
- Sudd Press Limited

Intangible fixed assets

The intangible fixed assets are valued at their purchase cost minus the depreciations determined on the basis of the asset's estimated lifespan. The depreciation term for the website is 3 years (33.3%).

Tangible fixed assets

The tangible fixed assets are valued at the purchase price minus the depreciations based on the estimated life span. The depreciation period for hardware and software is 3 years (33.3%). Office inventory is written off over 5 years (20%) and renovations over 7 years (14.3%). All (in) tangible fixed assets are held for business operations.

Receivables and accrued receivables

Receivables and accrued receivables are valued at nominal value minus certain impairments.

Provisions

A provision is recognised when the foundation has a legal or constructive obligation, arising from past events, the amount can be estimated reliably and it is probable that an outflow of resources will be required to settle the obligation. Provisions are stated at the nominal value of the expenses that are expected to be required to settle the liabilities.

Obligations in connection with current projects

The item 'Obligations in connection with current projects' is the balance of contracts actually entered into with partner organisations (obligations) minus advance payments to these partner organisations.

Grants received in advance/Grants to be received

Many grants have a term that extends beyond a single calendar year. The difference between the advance awarded by the donor (the organisation issuing the grant) in a specific financial year and the project funds that are spent in that same year (realised grant income) is accounted for on the balance sheet as a 'Grants received in advance'. If the realised grant income amounts exceed the donor's advance, the difference is entered on the balance sheet as a receivable.

Accrued liabilities

Accrued liabilities are valued at nominal value.

Accounting principles for the statement of income and expenses

Grant income

Grant income amounts are allocated on the basis of the realised direct and indirect spending on the organisation's objective within the guidelines established in the grant decision.

Income from lottery organisations

Processing of earmarked income from lottery organisations takes place in the year in which the amount is allocated. If on the balance sheet date this is a firm commitment and relates to the current financial year without explicit repayment obligations, it is stated as a receivable and as income.

Contributions and donations

Contributions and donations are accounted for in their year of receipt. Consequently, contributions and donations received in advance are not taken into account.

Allocation of costs

Management and administration costs, the costs of the organisation's fundraising activities and costs of various objectives have been calculated based on an apportionment formula in accordance with the revised Dutch Accounting Standards for Fundraising Institutions (Richtlijn 650, revised in 2016), as explained on page 61 and 62.

Balance of income and expenses

The balance of income and expenses is calculated as the income that can be allocated to the relevant financial year minus the expenses required to realise this income.

Notes to the balance sheet

All amounts in euro

Assets				
Intangible fixed assets		total		
Balance at the start of the financial year				
Purchase costs		78,087		
Cumulative depreciations		-58,394		
Book value at the start of the financial year		19,693		
Changes over the course of the year				
Additions to fixed assets		44,040		
Depreciations		-18,508		
Balance of changes over the course of the year		25,532		
Balance at the end of the financial year				
Purchase costs		122,127		
Cumulative depreciations		-76,902		
Book value at the end of the financial year		45,225		
Tangible fixed assets required for regular operations	total	office	hardware/ software	renovation
Balance at the start of the financial year				
Purchase costs	687,790	156,035	245,563	286,193
Cumulative depreciations	-499,836	-111,040	-167,411	-221,385
Book value at the start of the financial year	187,954	44,994	78,151	64,808
Changes over the course of the year				
Additions to fixed assets	41,104	11,786	29,318	0
Depreciations	-82,060	-17,637	-46,263	-18,161
Balance of changes over the course of the year	-40,956	-5,851	-16,944	-18,161
Balance at the end of the financial year				
Purchase costs	728,894	167.821	274,881	286,193
Cumulative depreciations	-581,896	-128,677	-213,674	-239,545
Book value at the end of the financial year	146,998	39,143	61,207	46,648

The investments in 2021 consist of improvements to the website, studio equipment, laptops and an invoice management system.



Notes to the balance sheet continued

All amounts in euro

Current assets	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
<i>Accruals</i>		
Other prepayments	893,997	169,952
Various securities	31,113	31,113
Total	925,110	201,065
<i>Accounts receivable and advances</i>		
Advances to own staff	8,996	294
Advances to external contractors	45,049	12,501
Pension premiums	2,023	0
Total	56,067	12,795
<i>Grants to be received</i>		
Dutch Postcode Lottery	900,000	900,000
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Various projects	762,439	373,487
US Government	363,723	239,094
European Union	1,314,737	114,185
Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Int. Zusammenarbeit	69,696	109,486
UK Government	115,824	82,421
NUFFIC	67,834	81,625
Various	136,497	54,071
Total	3,730,750	1,954,369

The grant to be received from the Dutch Postcode Lottery is related to the yearly structural funding for €0.9 million.

The grant to be received from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is related to the projects No News is Bad News (€293,446), Somalia (€188,897), Justice and Safety (€150,344) and 5 other projects.

The grant received in advance from the European Union is related to nine projects in mainly Africa and Eurasia.

Notes to the balance sheet continued

All amounts in euro

Liquid assets	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
<i>The Netherlands</i>		
ASN Bank	1,411,347	6,428,099
ABN AMRO Bank	2,099,689	2,774,546
ING Bank	1,897,700	3,199,407
Cash	1,283	3,008
Total	5,410,019	12,405,060
<i>Abroad</i>		
Eastern Europe office	269,207	407,569
Eastern Africa office	108,665	108,996
Total	377,871	516,565

The liquid assets are at the free disposal of the organisation. A total amount of €195,483 (2020: €188,123) in balances on USD accounts have been included and €162,544 (2020: €33,455) in balances on GBP accounts. The total position of the bank accounts at year-end 2021 is lower mainly due to the spending of the prepayments for the projects 'A Safer World for the Truth' and 'Mind the Children; which caused the high balance as per last year. Furthermore our total balance of 'Grant to be received' increased significantly compared to last year with an increase of almost €1,7mio due to several projects funded by the European Union where we managed to lower the pre-financing amounts to avoid negative interest charges as much as possible. See also the notes on the Grants received in advance.

The organisation does not have any significant liquidity or currency risks. In most cases, projects are pre-financed by a donor. In addition, most grant and donor contracts are drawn up in euros. For those subsidy programmes where the receipt of the funds is in a different currency, the euro equivalent is adjusted in the budget to the actual amount to be spent, immediately on receipt.

Free Press Unlimited is a supporter of banking according to the Fair Bank Guide. The Fair Bank Guide compares providers of bank accounts on the Dutch market on several sustainability themes, such as environment, human rights and animal welfare. Due to the nature and location of our activities we are however forced to also maintain accounts with banks that do not perform as good on these themes.

Notes to the balance sheet continued

All amounts in euro

Liabilities		
Reserves and funds	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
<i>Continuity reserve</i>		
Balance as of January 1	2,622,054	2,315,799
Appropriation of reserve	-103,124	306,255
Balance as of December 31	2,518,930	2,622,054
<i>Security Fund</i>		
Balance as of January 1	27,490	27,490
Contributions	10,000	0
Spent on objective	-13,533	0
Balance as of December 31	23,957	27,490

The balance of the operating income for 2021 will be subtracted from the continuity reserve, bringing it to 81% of one year's operating expense (2020: 75%). This is above the organisation's self-imposed minimum as described below.

Policy in relation to the continuity reserve

The Supervisory Board and the board have agreed to a reservation policy to ensure the continuity of the Foundation. The reserve required for this is set equal to one year of operating costs and therefore more

than meets the CBF regulations (max. 1.5 years). This reserve is accounted for as a continuity reserve but relates to freely disposable capital. With the reserve, a financial loss can be absorbed without an immediate danger to the continuity or the fulfilment of obligations already entered into. The operating costs of Free Press Unlimited in one year are set at €3,1 million for the financial year 2021. It has been agreed that, depending on the size of the organisation, the reserve is at least 70 percent and at most 150 percent of €3,1 million.

Provisions	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
Balance as of January 1	65,000	0
Allocated	-65,000	65,000
Balance as of December 31	0	65,000

This provision was recognized in 2020 as it was probable that an outflow of resources would be required to settle obligations that are a result of financial audits initiated by governmental donors. Since there are currently no such audits with these qualifications the full amount of the provision is allocated to the continuity reserve.

Notes to the balance sheet *continued*

All amounts in euro

Current Liabilities	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
Obligations in connection with current projects	1,142,769	2,074,965
Payable to suppliers	257,855	243,393
Reserves for holiday allowances	192,560	208,240
Provisions for statutory leave entitlements	174,461	174,836
Other short-term liabilities	240,907	278,167
Taxes and social premiums	1,070	2,866
Pension premiums	0	6,006
Total	2,009,622	2,988,474

The item 'Other short-term liabilities' includes an amount of € 166.679 (2020: €44,028) charged against the balance of our office in Eastern Europe.

Grants received in advance or to be returned	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
Dutch Postcode Lottery - Various projects	1,685,703	3,302,285
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Various projects	2,977,607	3,053,747
European Union	545,783	1,828,866
SIDA - Syria	781,519	932,783
Oxfam Novib	0	152,962
Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	25,103	123,231
US Government	16,486	72,484
Open Society Foundation	34,726	35,082
Various	72,604	93,044
Total	6,139,531	9,594,484

The grant received in advance from the Dutch Postcode Lottery consists of the projects 'A Safer World for the Truth' for €1.1 million (2020: €2.2 million) and 'Mind the Children' for €524,000 (2020: €1.1 million). The full amounts for the entire project duration were received at the end of 2019.

The grant received in advance from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is related to the projects Radio Tamazuj (€1,071,546), VIMES (€477,395), Justice and Safety (€347,875), Radio Dabanga 4000004905 (€248,503) and 10 other projects.

The grant received in advance per 31/12/2021 from the European Union is mainly related to two projects in Central America. As per 31/12/2020 it contained an amount of €190,416 related to a project for the benefit of press freedom of Syria which was partly disputed by FPU, in 2021 the EC made a final decision and agreed with the majority of the disputed part of this amount. See therefore our Extraordinary gains and losses in the statement of income and expenses.



Notes to the balance sheet *continued*

All amounts in euro

Financial obligations that are not included on the balance sheet

Free Press Unlimited entered into a rental agreement for an office space and 5 parking spaces at Weesperstraat 3-5 in Amsterdam. The agreement was extended for another five years on October 1, 2018. The rent for 2021 is €164,944 per year. A bank guarantee of €44,383 has been issued for this agreement.

In June 2019 an operational lease contract for a multifunctional copier was entered for six years. The annual costs amount to €6,891 with additional charges for additional consumption.

For the Radio Dabanga project, Free Press Unlimited has signed a lease for office space in Amsterdam. The lease was formed on 1 March 2020 and has a duration of 5 years. The rent for 2021 is €66,354 per year. A deposit of €16,453 has been provided for this lease.

Notes to the statement of income and expenses

All amounts in euro

Income	2021	budget 2021	2020
<i>Income from government grants</i>			
Anonymous donor - Central America	554,034	450,000	91,514
DFID/ BBC Media Action - PRIMED	205,179	275,000	106,558
DRL - TOTEM	220,444	250,000	97,742
Dutch Min. of Foreign Affairs - No News is Bad News	0	0	6,261,736
Dutch Min. of Foreign Affairs - RR/Legal Defense Fund	1,330,483	460,000	569,964
Dutch Min. of Foreign Affairs - VIMES	846,373	1,050,000	492,028
Embassy of the Netherlands - Congo-Kinshasa	209,026	235,000	191,761
Embassy of the Netherlands - Costa Rica	208,424	190,000	60,769
Embassy of the Netherlands - Mozambique	64,450	0	0
Embassy of the Netherlands - Nigeria	83,672	100,000	104,023
Embassy of the Netherlands - Pakistan	325,880	400,000	0
Embassy of the Netherlands - Western Balkan	187,754	350,000	15,349
European Union - C.A.R.	198,284	250,000	374,992
European Union - COVID-19 Response Africa	696,282	900,000	3,586,343
European Union - ECPMF	124,204	100,000	84,909
Various governments - Great Lakes	640,574	210,000	760,766
Various governments - Mali	522,079	370,000	293,527
Various governments - Radio Dabanga	1,278,565	1,900,000	1,629,349
Various governments - Radio Tamazuj	1,187,483	1,550,000	958,338
Various governments - Eurasia	1,734,429	1,925,000	1,484,635
Various governments - Somalia	235,293	385,000	50,584
Various governments - Syria	1,748,450	2,000,000	1,690,019
Various governments - Venezuela	230,872	510,000	47,499
Various projects	283,981	460,000	192,269
	13,116,215	14,320,000	19,144,675
<i>Income from lottery organisations</i>			
Dutch Postcode Lottery – Structural funding	900,000	900,000	900,000
<i>Dutch Postcode Lottery (additional project contribution)</i>			
Dutch Postcode Lottery – A Safer World for the Truth	1,073,903	1,000,000	734,426
Dutch Postcode Lottery – Mind the Children	542,679	600,000	389,244
Swedish Postcode Lottery – Keeping It Real	0	0	27,288
Dutch Postcode Lottery – Oxfam – Money Trail	97,671	100,000	17,902
Dutch Postcode Lottery – various projects	0	150,000	28,972
	2,614,253	2,750,000	2,097,832
<i>Income from other non-profit organizations</i>			

Notes to the statement of income and expenses *continued*

All amounts in euro

Income	2021	budget 2021	2020
Cordaid - C.A.R. / D.R.C.	0	0	216,135
NUFFIC - Ethiopia	67,834	75,000	81,625
Various foundations - Eurasia	103,404	0	0
Various projects	157,829	0	68,872
	329,067	75,000	366,632
<i>Income from companies</i>			
Various contributions Publeaks	17,090	35,000	0
Various	170	100,000	15,283
	17,260	135,000	15,283
<i>Contributions from private donors</i>	121,001	100,000	76,612
Total generated income	16,197,796	17,380,000	21,701,034

Explanation regarding the differences

Free Press Unlimited has been active in fundraising throughout the year. As a result, subsidies may be awarded throughout the year. However, the budget is drawn up and approved in September of the preceding year, meaning that the organisation includes an assumption regarding the expected income.

The total income was approximately €1 million lower than budgeted. This is mainly due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays in our projects. Main reason for these projects with lower income was the inability to travel or to give physical training on location due to the crisis. For our projects in Syria, Central America, VIMES and A Safer world for the truth also other reasons have led to lower income. Those are mainly caused by significant changes in the execution of

the project, sometimes due to a worsened situation in the target country. On the contrary our several projects related to Reporters Respond / Legal Defence Fund showed much higher income than budgeted due to successful fundraising and the intensified attention for safety issues for individual journalists.

Almost all income raised is programme-related and is incidental. The structural contribution from the Dutch Postcode Lottery and incomes from private individuals are the only gifts which are not earmarked, jointly 6.3% (2020: 4.5%) of the total income raised. Last year, those funds were used in part to restore the continuity reserve to its required level. The funds were also used to cover the unfunded youth programme WADADA and a part of our Policy & Advocacy activities.



Notes to the statement of income and expenses *continued*

All amounts in euro

Expenses	2021	budget 2021	2020
<i>Spent on the organisation's objective</i> (not including the allocated costs of Free Press Unlimited's own organisation)			
A Safer World for the Truth	998,732	934,500	549,035
C.A.R.	157,006	185,000	349,850
Central America	816,488	863,000	87,841
Congo-Kinshasa	159,876	146,500	170,016
COVID-19 Response Africa	399,174	528,250	3,567,236
Ethiopia	36,400	157,000	47,291
Great Lakes	549,734	495,000	691,888
Legal Defense Fund / Reporters Respond	1,083,995	932,500	430,775
Mali	426,270	229,000	232,777
Mind the Children	462,014	465,000	348,394
Money Trail	26,096	50,000	-23,128
Pakistan	247,417	245,000	0
Eurasia	1,654,761	1,652,000	1,424,014
Somalia	132,616	220,000	13,996
South Sudan / Radio Tamazuj	1,063,436	1,252,300	848,110
Strategic Partnership: No News is Bad News	0	0	3,883,160
Sudan / Radio Dabanga (all donors)	607,260	1,037,325	1,628,597
Sudan / Radio Dabanga (MFA 4000004905)	1,497	0	0
Syria	1,100,440	1,525,000	1,174,759
TOTEM	134,051	169,000	75,602
VIMES	707,060	890,000	399,640
Western Balkan	123,538	225,000	0
Various projects	979,907	309,675	553,919
	11,867,767	12,657,550	16,453,770
Allocated costs of own organisation	4,474,514	5,010,075	4,904,413
Total expenses	16,342,282	17,667,625	21,358,184

Remuneration of the members of the Board of Directors & Supervisory Board

All amounts in euro

Stichting Free Press Unlimited falls within the scope of the Dutch Standardisation of Top Incomes Act (Wet normering topinkomens), which came into force on 1 January 2013. In 2021, the applicable remuneration maximum for Free Press Unlimited was €216,000. This is the maximum for the sector of Development organisations (Ontwikkelingssamenwerking).

The remuneration policy is explained below and in the Report of the Board of Directors in the 2021 Annual Report. These notes also show that the members of Free Press Unlimited's Board of Supervisors are not reimbursed for their activities.

Table 1a. Senior Executives

Details for 2021	Willems, L.A.M. (Leon)	Kronenburg, R.C.E. (Ruth)
Details of position	Director of Policy and Programmes	Director of Operations
Start and end of position in 2021	01/01-31/12	01/01-31/12
Part-time factor in FTE	1.0	1.0
Employment contract	Yes	Yes
Remuneration		
Remuneration plus taxable expense allowances	110,261	110,261
Remuneration payable in the future	14,796	14,796
Subtotal	125,057	125,057
Individual remuneration cap	191,000	191,000
Less: unduly paid	Not applicable	Not applicable
Total remuneration	125,057	125,057
Reason why maximum may or may not be exceeded	Not applicable	Not applicable
Notes to unduly paid amounts	Not applicable	Not applicable
Basic Score for Director roles (BSD-points)*	418	418

Remuneration of the members of the Board of Directors & Supervisory Board

continued

All amounts in euro

Table 1a. Senior Executives

Details for 2020		
Start and end of position in 2020	01/01-31/12	01/01-31/12
Part-time factor in FTE	1.0	1.0
Employment contract	Yes	Yes
Remuneration plus taxable expense allowances	116,422	112,231
Remuneration payable in the future	14,263	14,263
Subtotal	130,685	126,494
Individual remuneration cap	189,000	189,000
Total remuneration	130,685	126,494
Basic Score for Director roles (BSD-points)*	418	418

* The Basic Score for Director roles needs to be determined as a result of the "Regulation for remuneration of directors of charitable organisations". This arrangement regulates remuneration for directors with a points system, the Basic Score for Director roles (BSD-points). The BSD-points are awarded on the basis of several quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the charitable organisation, classified in three main criteria: the size, complexity and organisational context. The score is approved annually by the Supervisory Board and assessed by the Central Fundraising Office (CBF). On 31-5-2022 the Supervisory Board approved the score mentioned above for 2020 as well as 2021.

Remuneration of the members of the Board of Directors *continued*

All amounts in euro

Table 1d*. Senior supervisory roles with remuneration of €1,700 or less (end 2021)

Position	Name
Chairperson Supervisory Board	Monica Bremer
Member Supervisory Board	Ronald Gijsbertsen
Member Supervisory Board/ Chair Financial Audit Comm.	Paul Hofstra
Member Supervisory Board / Financial Audit Comm.	Ellen Soerjatin
Member Supervisory Board	Nani Jansen Reventlow
Member Supervisory Board	Hennah Draaibaar

* Tables 1b and 1c are not applicable to our financial report.

Staffing ratios

At the end of 2021, Free Press Unlimited employed the equivalent of 73.6 FTE (2020: 76.3 FTE). This includes for 54% permanent and for 46% temporary employment contracts, which is a similar ratio as in 2020. The workforce can be subdivided into 63.3 FTE (2020: 63.8 FTE) in organisation positions at Free Press Unlimited and 10.3 FTE (2020: 12.5 FTE) working on the Radio Dabanga project. For further details, see the Report of the Board of Directors in the 2021 Annual Report.

Specification and allocation of costs according to category

All amounts in euro

	Spend on objective Media support	Acquisition of grants	costs of management and accounting	Total 2021	Budget 2021	Total 2020
Grants for partner organisations/ own activities	11,830,358	31,027	6,447	11,867,833	12,657,550	16,453,770
Communication costs	126,011	12,837	15,262	154,110	209,171	212,241
Employee costs	3,072,152	312,975	372,090	3,757,218	4,064,620	4,065,452
Housing costs	158,813	16,179	19,235	194,227	225,905	198,714
Office and general costs	233,488	23,787	28,279	285,554	435,077	362,644
Depreciations	68,144	6,942	8,253	83,340	75,302	65,361
Total	15,488,967	403,748	449,567	16,342,282	17,667,625	21,358,184

Spent on objective

Expenditure on the Media support objective in accordance with the statutes:

- the promotion of free and pluriform opinion forming, democratic relationships and sustainable peace, for example, by improving the freedom of expression and press freedom, all over the world.
- the provision of help to developing countries, repressive states and conflict countries, through the implementation of development projects in the area of media and their audience;
- the training and dispatch of experts and other assistants to developing countries, conflict countries and repressive states and the training of persons from those states;
- the promotion of the interests of the media, media organisations and their audience.

Specification and allocation of costs according to category *continued*

All amounts in euro

As prescribed in the Guideline 650 costs are allocated to the objective, income fundraising and management & administration. Allocation is done on the basis of the following principles:

- directly attributable expenses are directly allocated
- non-directly attributable expenses are allocated on the basis of an allocation key, based on the number of FTE per category:

	2021	2020	
Media support	81.8%	81.5%	
Acquisition of government grants	8.3%	8.5%	
Management & accounting	9.9%	10.0%	
	100.0%	100.0%	
Employee costs as shown above can be subdivided into:			
	Total 2021	Budget 2021	Total 2020
Salary costs	2,620,090	2,805,684	2,806,259
Social security contributions	568,363	607,682	607,806
Pension premiums	394,669	387,466	387,546
Other staff costs	174,096	263,787	263,841
	3,757,218	4,064,620	4,065,452

Free Press Unlimited works to ensure that impartial news and information are and remain available to people across the globe. Particularly in countries where there is little to no press freedom.

Colophon

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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