FORUM INFORMATION DEMOCRACY

Developing solutions for redirecting advertisement towards quality journalism

Call for contributions for new policy brief

The landscape of advertising and media has undergone a profound transformation affecting the sustainability of quality journalism. The days when a company could simply contact a local newspaper to purchase a specific ad placement are long gone.

A monopolistic, complex and opaque advertising landscape

Today, news publishers and advertisers find themselves entangled in a complex web of opaque ad networks largely controlled by major tech platforms, which have taken monopolistic control over the entirety of the advertising ecosystem - encompassing the *sell-side*, *buy-side*, and *ad exchange market*. The dominance of these big tech companies has transformed how ads are placed: most are now decided algorithmically through programmatic advertising, with minimal human oversight, and often prioritizing sensationalist content and click-baiting over quality journalism.

A drastic decline in ad revenue for media

As big tech continues to capture the advertising market and revenues, the consequences for news publishers have been severe. Despite the advertising industry now generating trillions in revenue, news organizations have struggled to effectively monetize their content, leading to a staggering 33% drop in advertising revenue since 2019. Additionally, new GenAI search experiences (like ChatGPT, Bing, and Google Gemini) are diverting significant web traffic away from publishers, further undermining the economic viability of traditional ad placements.

Advertisers lack of control and oversight

Advertisers, meanwhile, are left in the dark about the performance of their campaigns, with the opacity of these ad networks concealing issues such as placements on disinformation websites and reduction in overall ad campaign effectiveness.

In light of these challenges, and while awaiting a more systemic change in the advertisement industry, this policy brief aims to **develop strategies for redirecting advertising revenue to support public interest journalism**, ultimately fostering a healthier and more sustainable media ecosystem that benefits both the media industry and advertisers.

What contributions are we seeking?

- **Analysis of the success of existing and proposed (non profit) initiatives** that connect advertisers with media, bypassing big tech platforms' automated advertising, at the national, regional, or local level.

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- **Public policies to incentivise responsible ad placements:** Proposed and adopted models to incentivize advertisers to place their ads in news publications (tax credits, deductions for local advertising, co-funding initiatives, sponsorship programs, etc.)
- **State advertisement models**: Examples of government allocations of advertising budgets to news organizations, and the necessary safeguards.

We encourage contributors to share insights, papers, and recommendations that highlight past, current, and future advertisement initiatives to fund public interest journalism, from all regions of the world.

Your contributions will shape a concise policy brief designed to examine how states can create a more favorable environment for advertisers to support news publishers within the existing digital advertising framework.

It will be directly shared with the 57 member states of the Partnership for Information and Democracy—an intergovernmental agreement launched in 2019 that gathers democratic states committed to advancing democratic standards in the information space. This policy brief will build upon the Forum's New Deal for Journalism report (2021), and recent policy brief on digital taxes to support quality journalism (2025). It aims to further explore concrete actionable recommendations to safeguard and promote an enabling environment for the media to thrive.

Input may be shared in English, French, German, Spanish or Portuguese.

Please submit your contributions by **1st December** to egruden@informationdemocracy.org