



# Completion of the Front End of the Map of EU Political Information Environments

Michael Alexander and Josef Seethaler

DELIVERABLE 1.4

MeDeMAP – Mapping Media for Future Democracies

Grant Agreement number: 101094984



**Funded by  
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Document information

<b>Project information</b>	
Grant Agreement no.	101094984
Funding scheme	Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Actions
Project title	Mapping Media for Future Democracies
Project acronym	MeDeMAP
Project starting date	01/03/2023
<b>Document information</b>	
Work package no.	1
Work package title	Coordination
Work package lead beneficiary	OEAW
Task(s)	1.3
Deliverable no.	1.4
Deliverable title	Quantitative data input for the map of European political information environments
Deliverable type	DATA
Contractual date of deliverable	31/05/2024
Actual date of deliverable	31/08/2024
Editor(s)	-
Author(s)	Michael Alexander (OEAW), Josef Seethaler (OEAW)
Reviewer(s)	-
Version	1.0
Status	Pilot
Total number of pages (including cover)	13
Dissemination level	PUBLIC



## Document history

Version	Date	Submitted by	Changes
V1.0	31/08/2024	OEAU	

## *Table of contents*

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Structure of the Database .....	6
3. Structure of the Online Tool.....	9

# 1. Introduction

MeDeMAP endeavors to communicate research results to all those interested in the relationship between media and democracy, be they politicians, representatives of media authorities and self-regulation bodies, media owners, journalists, NGOs or citizens, who are most affected by how this relationship is shaped. Therefore, an interactive country mapping tool of European political information environments<sup>1</sup> has been developed, which is openly accessible to everyone.

The idea behind this tool is to illustrate to what extent and in what ways legal and political framework conditions, media supply and media use are interconnected in the EU Member States and what this means for the state of democracy and political participation in these countries. This tool makes it possible to compare the characteristics of several indicators for all EU member states and thus recognise possible relationships between the media law and regulatory framework conditions, the composition and quality of media offerings, the use of and trust in different media and the different notions of democracy and participation.

The **'Map of EU Political Information Environments'** is currently accessible at <https://medemap.cmclab.science>. It is still a pilot version for two reasons:

1. The pilot version has been deployed to collect and adopt user feedback in order to identify and rectify any potential issues and to improve the final version of the application. In particular we hope for suggestions for further development of both the analysis options and the types of data visualisation.
2. It has to be expected that further data will be added in the course of the project. This applies both to secondary data, particularly secondary time-series data for the EU-27<sup>2</sup> and to primary data resulting from ongoing qualitative research in WP3 (Legal and [Self-]Regulatory Framework), WP4 (The Supply Side) and WP5 (The Demand Side) on the ten countries in the consortium.

---

<sup>1</sup> Concerning the concept of 'political information environments' see: Van Aelst, P., Strömbäck, J., Aalberg, T., Esser, F., de Vreese, C., Matthes, J., Hopmann, D., Salgado, S., Hubé, N., Stępińska, A., Papathanassopoulos, S., Berganza, B., Legnante, G., Reinemann, C., Sheafer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2017). Political communication in a high-choice media environment: A challenge for democracy? *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 41(1), 3–27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551>

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed information about secondary data research see Seethaler, J., with collaboration of Maren Beaufort (2024). *Dataset for the Map of Legal and (Self-)Regulatory Frameworks for Media in the EU*. MeDeMAP Deliverable 3.1, V2.0. [https://www.medemap.eu/?page\\_id=374](https://www.medemap.eu/?page_id=374)

## 2. Structure of the Database

The structure of the database<sup>3</sup> on which the country mapping tool is mainly built is determined by the research in three MeDeMAP work packages, which relates to the various components of the political information environment: WP3 (Legal and (self-)regulatory framework), WP4 (The supply side) and WP5 (The demand side). A special feature of MeDeMAP is that not only the entire spectrum of news media, but in particular the various concepts of liberal democracy and the associated forms of participation are taken into account in all empirical studies.

Based on the research to date the database currently encompasses the following layers or sections:<sup>4</sup>

- EU Member States: Basic Data
- Democracy & Participation
- Legal and (Self-)Regulatory Framework: Human Dignity
- Legal and (Self-)Regulatory Framework: Freedom
- Legal and (Self-)Regulatory Framework: Pluralism
- Legal and (Self-)Regulatory Framework: Equality
- Legal and (Self-)Regulatory Framework: Rule of Law
- Supply Side
- Demand Side: Media Use
- Demand Side: Trust in Media

These sections may be modified and expanded as the project progresses.

**Sources.** Currently, the tool is solely based on **secondary data from multilateral governance organisations** such as the European Commission and the United Nations, **international institutions** such as the Council of Europe, the World Bank and the IMF, **recognised non-governmental organisations** such as Freedom House and World Justice Project, **research departments of renowned companies** such as the Economist Intelligence Unit, **university institutes** and **EU-funded projects**.<sup>5</sup> Here's a list of the data providers:

---

<sup>3</sup> For detailed information about the structure of the database see: Seethaler, J., & Beaufort, M., with contributions by Klimkiewicz, B., & Kompatsiaris, P. (2024). *Quantitative data input for the map of EU political information environments* [Data set]. MeDeMAP Deliverable 1.3, V2.0. [https://www.medemap.eu/?page\\_id=374](https://www.medemap.eu/?page_id=374)

<sup>4</sup> Please note that some indicators are linked to two sections.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of secondary data research see Seethaler, J., with collaboration of Maren Beaufort (2024). *Dataset for the Map of Legal and (Self-)Regulatory Frameworks for Media in the EU*. MeDeMAP Deliverable 3.1, V2.0. [https://www.medemap.eu/?page\\_id=374](https://www.medemap.eu/?page_id=374)

Dataset	Data provider – Reference
Democracy and trust during COVID-19	Eurofound <a href="https://www.eurofound.europa.eu">https://www.eurofound.europa.eu</a>
Economist Democracy Index	Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) <a href="https://www.eiu.com/n/">https://www.eiu.com/n/</a>
Eurobarometer	European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication <a href="https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home">https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home</a>
The Global State of Democracy, V8	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) <a href="https://www.idea.int/gsod/gsod/">https://www.idea.int/gsod/gsod/</a>
Media Pluralism Monitor	Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom <a href="https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/">https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/</a>
Rule of Law Index	World Justice Project <a href="https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index">https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index</a>
Varieties of Democracies (V-Dem)	University of Gothenburg <a href="https://www.v-dem.net/">https://www.v-dem.net/</a>
World Press Freedom Index	Reporters Without Borders (RSF) <a href="https://rsf.org/en/index">https://rsf.org/en/index</a>
Yearbook	European Audiovisual Observatory <a href="https://yearbook.obs.coe.int/">https://yearbook.obs.coe.int/</a>

**Time.** The data currently included in the map relates to the **year for which the most recent data is available**; it **will be supplemented by data for the entire project period** by the end of the project. Time comparison allows both changes to be analysed and data to be critically assessed.

**Critical interpretation.** In order to support both the critical use and interpretation of the data, (1) MeDeMAP endeavors to enable the **comparison of data not only over time, but also, whenever possible, to similarly defined indicators from different sources.**

(2) Comparing or relating data to each other is also facilitated by transforming **data for all indicators** so that it **lies within a value range of 0 to 100** and **points in the same direction** ('most' or 'best'), whereby '**best**' means that **increasing data level might indicate the possibility of an interpretation in a democracy-supporting sense.** For each indicator, it is indicated whether the direction towards 100 could mean 'best' or just 'most'.

Original data	Transformed data
Interval data: 0-100	0-100
Interval data: 0-1, 0-4, 0-10	Recoded: 0-100
Percentage data: 0%-100%	Recoded: 0-100
Percentage risk data: 0%-100%	Reversed: 0-100 <i>Example: If the source states a 40% risk for a democratically desirable characteristic, this figure is transformed to 60% in favour of democracy.</i>

(3) Moreover, country data for each indicator is grouped into three categories representing a (relatively) high, medium or low data level. Where possible, the threshold values are determined on the basis of the theoretically substantiated information from the sources. If this information is not available, a measure widely used in statistics to describe data series is used, which adds half a standard deviation to the mean value for the threshold value between the upper and middle data range and subtracts half a standard deviation from the mean value for the threshold value between the middle and lower data range. This procedure is not comparable to a theoretically sound definition of thresholds, but it does allow an initial orientation of how a country behaves in comparison to other countries.


Data level	Threshold values	Colors (used in the tool)
High	<p>Above mean plus half a standard deviation</p> <p>If indicator = Economist Intelligence Unit – Democracy Index: above 80.00 = “Full democracies: Countries in which not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but which also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. The functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse. There is an effective system of checks and balances. The judiciary is independent and judicial decisions are enforced. There are only limited problems in the functioning of democracies.”</p> <p>If source = Media Pluralism Monitor data: above 66.667</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If an increasing data level might indicate the possibility of an interpretation in a democracy-supporting sense: <b>green (“best”)</b></li> <li>○ If such an interpretation is not appropriate (at least not a priori): <b>dark blue (“most”)</b></li> </ul>
Medium	<p>Between mean plus half a standard deviation and mean minus half a standard deviation</p> <p>If indicator = Economist Intelligence Unit – Democracy Index: between 60.00 and 80.00 = “Flawed democracies: These countries have free and fair elections and, even if there are problems (such as infringements on media freedom), basic civil liberties are respected. However, there are significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including problems in governance, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation.”</p> <p>Media Pluralism Monitor data: between 66.667 and 33.333</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If an increasing data level might indicate the possibility of an interpretation in a democracy-supporting sense: <b>orange</b></li> <li>○ If such an interpretation is not appropriate (at least not a priori): <b>mid blue</b></li> </ul>
Low	<p>Below mean minus half a standard deviation</p> <p>If indicator = Economist Intelligence Unit – Democracy Index: below 60.00 (not applicable to EU-27)</p> <p>If source = Media Pluralism Monitor: below 33.333</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If an increasing data level might indicate the possibility of an interpretation in a democracy-supporting sense: <b>red</b></li> <li>○ If such an interpretation is not appropriate (at least not a priori): <b>light blue</b></li> </ul>

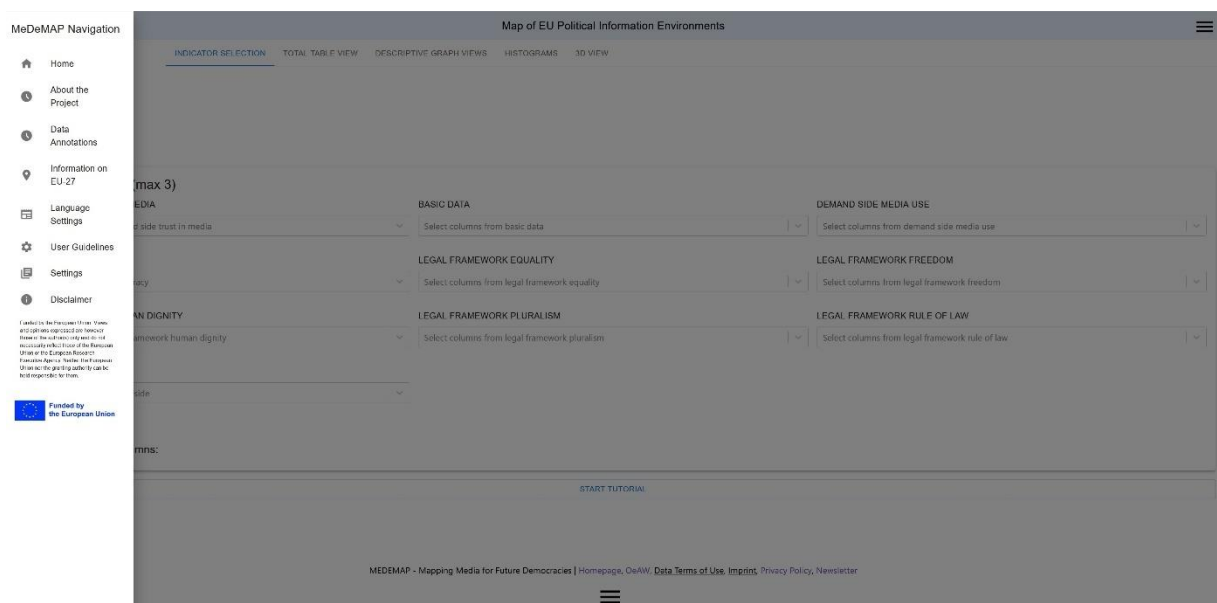


### 3. Structure of the Online Tool

After accessing the website this **loading screen** appears during the very short loading time of the tool:



The tool then starts with the **menu bar** on the left-hand side, which can be hidden and shown again using the menu icon  at the bottom or in the right upper corner of the website. The Escape key also makes the menu disappear.



The menu allows for accessing some essential information **About the Project**, extensive **Data Annotations** (which are based on MeDeMAP Deliverable 1.3; see footnote 3 on p. 6) and **Information on the EU-27 Member States**. Some settings can also be changed here.

Having clicked away the menu bar, the centrepiece of the tool appears: the **Indicator Selection** page.

The usual information can be found in the **footer**: links to the MeDeMAP **Homepage** (<https://www.medemap.eu/>) and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (**OeAW**; <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/cmc>), the **Data Terms of Use**, the **Imprint** and a link to subscribe to MeDeMAP's **Newsletter** (<https://mailchi.mp/5ed498de5d00/medemapsignup>).

MEDEMAP - Mapping Media for Future Democracies | [Homepage](#), [OeAW](#), [Data Terms of Use](#), [Imprint](#), [Privacy Policy](#), [Newsletter](#)

The data available on this site is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows users to share and adapt the content for non-commercial purposes, provided proper attribution is given. This license ensures that users can freely use the data while respecting the terms outlined by the license.

For proper attribution, researchers are required to cite the following paper in any publications or works that use the data obtained from this site:

Seethaler, J., Beaufort, M., Klimkiewicz, B., & Kompatsiaris, P. (2024). *Quantitative data input for the map of EU political information environments (Version 2.0)*. MeDeMAP Deliverable 1.3, V2.0.

It is important to note that certain data corresponding to data sourced from other databases may be subject to different terms of use. Users are encouraged to refer to the **Data Annotations** for detailed information on acknowledgments and specific terms of use related to external data sources integrated into this site.

Near the bottom of the page a short but useful [tutorial](#) can be started.

[START TUTORIAL](#)

It guides the user through the selection process:

The screenshot shows the 'Indicator Selection (max 3)' page. It features several dropdown menus for selecting columns from different categories: DEMAND SIDE TRUST IN MEDIA, DEMOCRACY, BASIC DATA, LEGAL FRAMEWORK, LEGAL FRAMEWORK EQUALITY, and LEGAL FRAMEWORK PLURALISM. A white dialog box with a close button (X) is overlaid on the right side. The dialog text reads: 'Welcome to the Data Selection page. Here you can choose data columns for visualization.' At the bottom of the dialog are 'Skip' and 'Next' buttons.

This screenshot shows the same 'Indicator Selection (max 3)' page. A white dialog box is centered on the screen, providing instructions: 'Use these dropdown menus to select columns from different tables.' The dialog includes 'Skip', 'Back', and 'Next' buttons.

The screenshot shows the 'Indicator Selection (max 3)' page with a 'SUBMIT' button highlighted. A white dialog box is overlaid, stating: 'After selecting your data, click this button to submit your choices.' The dialog has 'Skip', 'Back', and 'Next' buttons.

This screenshot shows the 'Indicator Selection (max 3)' page with the 'SUBMIT' button highlighted. A white dialog box is overlaid, stating: 'Your selected options will appear here after submission.' The dialog has 'Back' and 'Last' buttons. Below the dialog, the 'Selected Indicator Columns:' section is visible, listing categories like DEMAND SIDE TRUST IN MEDIA, DEMOCRACY, BASIC DATA, and DEMAND SIDE MEDIA USE.

The user may select up to three indicators from any indicator sector for visualisation (and it is possible to clear the selection and create a new one). The available types of visualisations can be selected in the [header](#):

INDICATOR SELECTION	TOTAL TABLE VIEW	DESCRIPTIVE GRAPH VIEWS	HISTOGRAMS	3D VIEW
---------------------	------------------	-------------------------	------------	---------

- The **Descriptive Graph View** allows for an easy comparison of the data of the selected indicators by displaying three bar charts.
- The **Histogram** shows the distribution of the data according to consecutive, non-overlapping intervals ('bins'), thus, for example, allowing 'outliers' and data value clusters to be recognised at a glance. Histograms reveal patterns hidden within unordered data and exhibit an organized picture that makes interpretation and analysis much more manageable and effective.
- The **3D View** visualises the data values on the surface of a globe on which the Member States of the European Union are highlighted.

Another special feature of the 'Map of EU Political Information Environments' is the **Total Table View**. It presents all the data fed into the database and allows it to be exported as a CSV file. The tool thus fully complies with Horizon Europe's Open Access policy. The data values of the individual indicators can be filtered according to various criteria. For the countries selected in this way, the values for all other indicators in the respective indicator section are also shown, thus supporting a more focused comparison.

MeDeMAP – Mapping Media for Future Democracies

Deliverable 1.3

V2.0

(August 2024)

