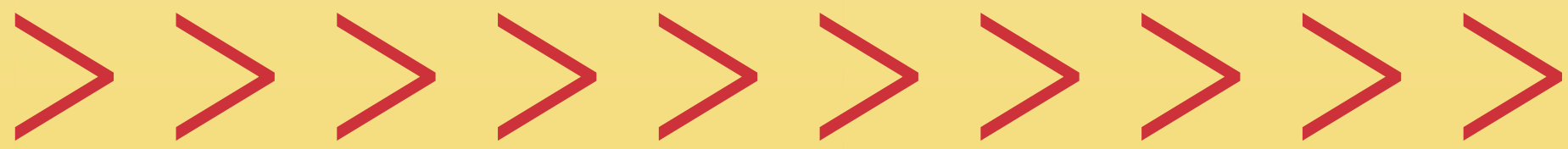




**Investigate
Europe**

2025

Annual Report



Contents

>	A word from our directors	03
>	Publications in numbers	04
>	Investigations	05
>	Impact	08
>	Media partners	11
>	Community	12
>	Awards and recognition	14
>	Finances	15
>	Our supporters	16



Since its beginning, Investigate Europe has been committed to reporting on the state of a Europe in constant flux. Last year was no exception, with 2025 seeing Brussels announce a controversial technological roadmap, political pressure building from wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and the social implications of years of growing far-right influence being felt across the continent.

Throughout it all, our international, multi-lingual newsroom was there. Our 20 reporters and editors led **seven major investigations** with over 40 European media partners, on topics ranging from the EU's AI Act, sanctions circumvention, illegal gambling networks, EU funds that benefitted an Israeli arms' manufacturer, online financial scams, historic landfills and rights violations against the trans community.

Our work received **widespread impact and recognition**, including a European Press Prize nomination, shortlisting for the Inge Feltrinelli Prize, and an IJ4EU Impact Award, among others. We also held a strong commitment to public engagement

and impact, presenting our investigations at major national and European-level conferences, including Dataharvest, iMEdD, Voices Festival, Data Skup, Zeg Festival, Re:publica and Junge Recherche to name a few. We spoke and led workshops at the University College Dublin, the University of Bergen Norway, San Pablo University of Journalism and the European Studies Institute, the Technological University Dresden and the Free University Berlin. We hosted **events across Europe** and increased both our online and European presence through increased partnerships with national media partners. Finally, we reviewed and adapted our managerial and editorial processes to reflect our growing story reporting reach and membership base.

Despite the mounting challenges facing our industry, including financial and structural, Investigate Europe continues to deliver brave, **independent investigative journalism in the public interest**, bringing together Europeans who value independent media about their countries and their continent.

We hope you enjoy reading.



Anne-Katrin Zapryanova
Managing Director



Mei-Ling McNamara
Editorial Director

2025 was Investigate Europe's
most productive year since our launch in 2016.

97

Coordinated
publications with
media partners

43

Media partners
internationally

25

Countries that
published our
investigations

7

In-depth
cross-border
investigations
published



Shady Bets

How Europe's gambling industry spun out of control

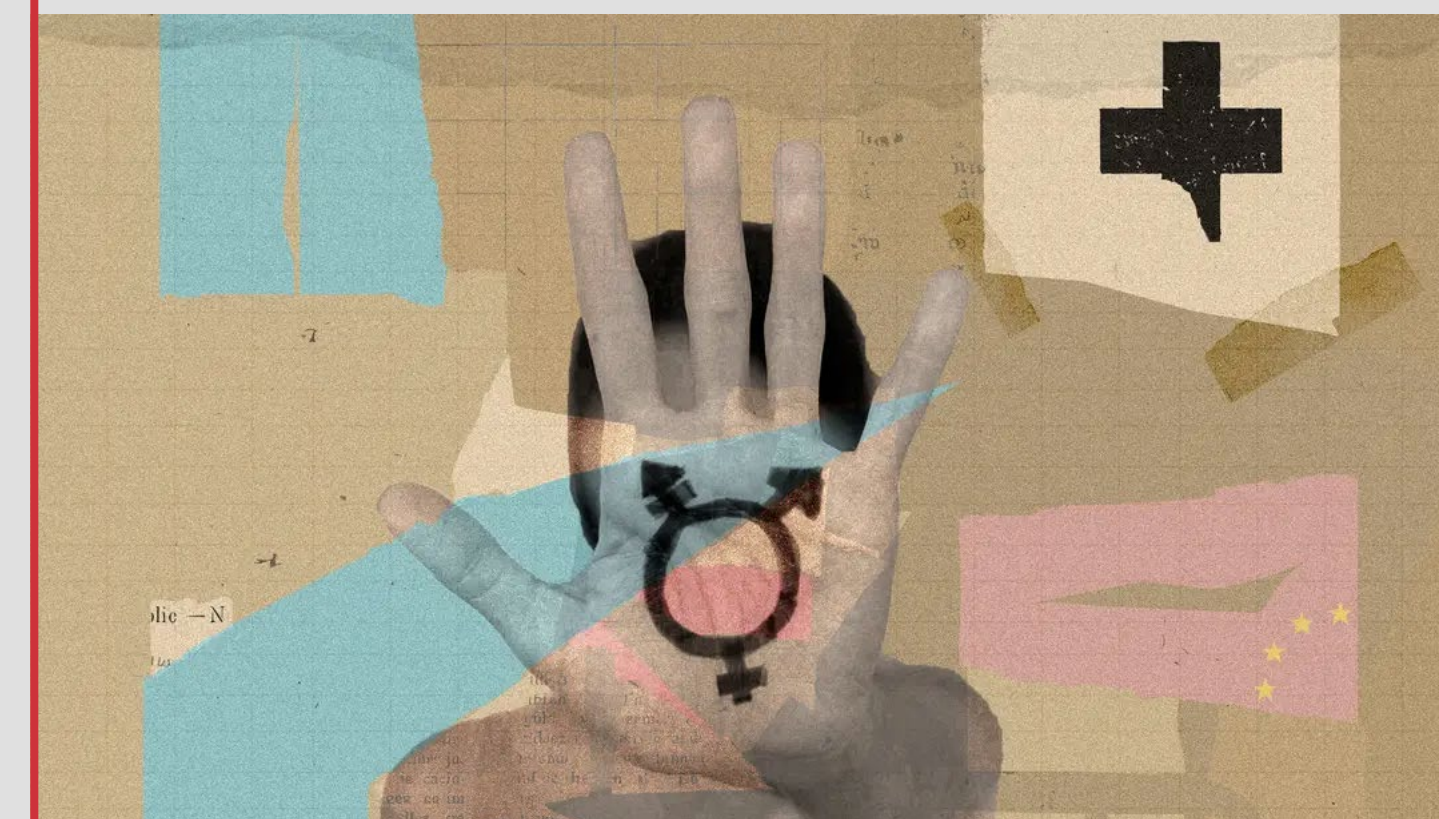
As online gambling revenues surged across Europe, Investigate Europe examined the hidden forces behind the industry's rapid expansion. The cross-border investigation uncovered **networks of unlicensed online casinos** operating throughout the continent and how regulatory loopholes and off-shore jurisdictions benefit from the lack of EU-wide rules, allowing the sector to flourish unchecked. The series also investigated gambling companies' **increasing influence in European football** and growing concerns from public health experts, who warn that governments have failed to keep pace with the **social harms associated with gambling**.



European Defence Fund

millions benefiting Israeli state-owned drone manufacturer

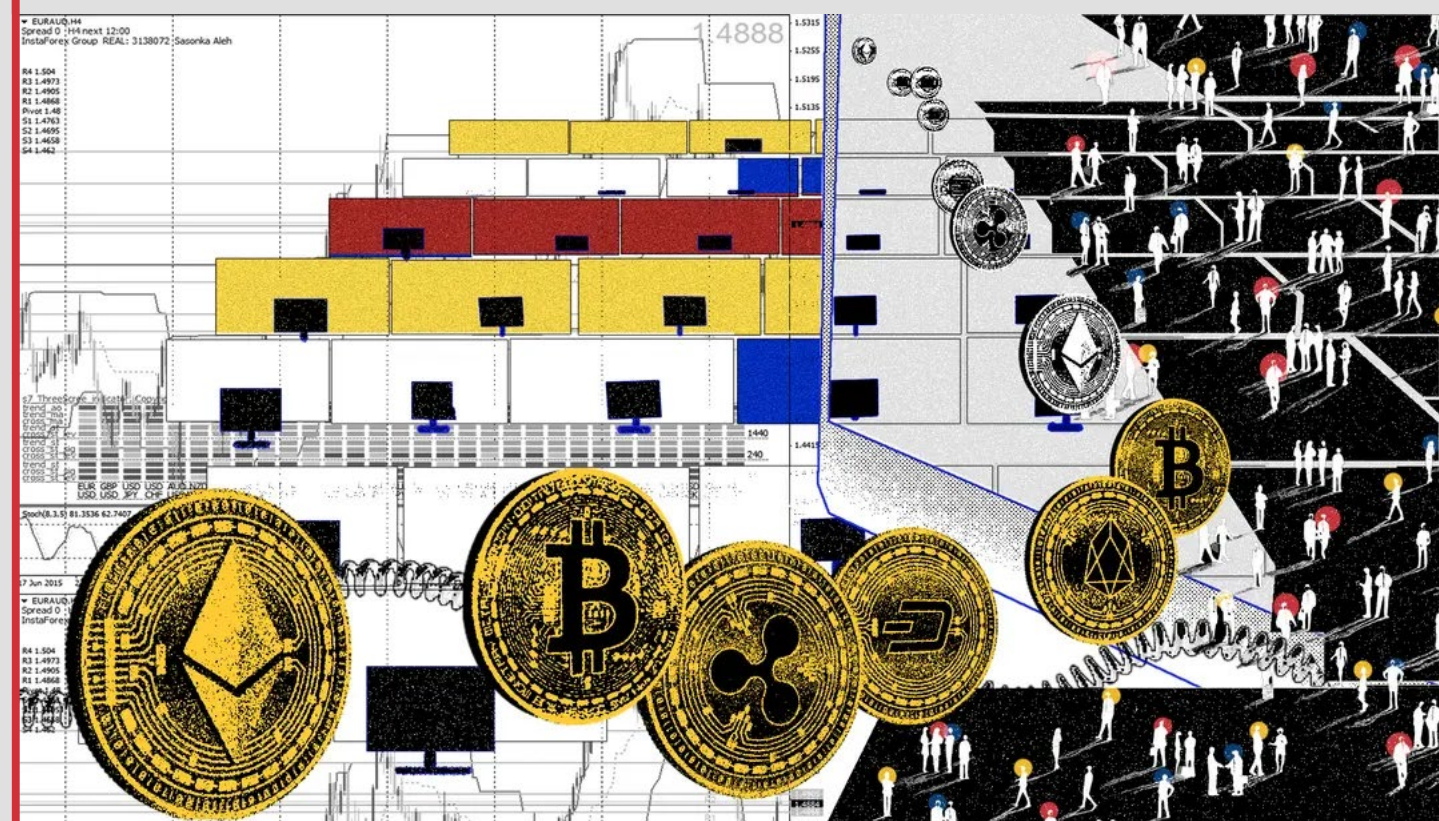
The European Defence Fund was established to boost Europe's defence industry, but our investigation uncovered that some of the funding is boosting companies beyond the bloc's intended beneficiaries. Working with Reporters United, Investigate Europe found that at least **€15 million had been awarded to Greek drone producer Intracom Defense** after it was acquired by Israel Aerospace Industries, Israel's largest state-owned defence company. The story raised **questions about the ethical controls** on this new pot of EU money, with Intracom Defense.



The Cruel Condition

Europe's trans community reckons with decades of sterilisation requirements

For decades, thousands of trans people across Europe were forced to choose between legal recognition of their identity and bodily autonomy. Through a first-of-its-kind cross-border analysis, Investigate Europe found that **at least 11,000 people** in six European countries had to show they had undergone **surgery rendering them infertile** as a condition for legally changing their gender written into national law. Combining previously unreported official data with personal testimonies, the investigation revealed the lasting human impact of policies that were repeatedly criticised by human rights bodies but remained in force for decades, bringing to light an overlooked chapter in Europe's recent track record in **LGBTQ+ rights**.



Scam Europe

Investigating the rise of online financial fraud

As online investment scams proliferate across Europe, Investigate Europe joined forces with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and media partners across the continent to examine the industry behind fraud. The series exposed the crypto firms and actors **profiting from deceptive investment schemes**, and explored how social media platforms and Big Tech companies enable targeted scams to reach citizens across Europe. The investigations also underline how **regulators have struggled to keep pace** with a fast-evolving billion-euro industry and laws like the Digital Services Act (DSA) fail to hold social media companies accountable for risks that their users face everyday.



Toxic Ground

Europe's landfill crisis exposed in groundbreaking mapping project

In a first-of-its-kind cross-border analysis, Investigate Europe, in partnership with Watershed Investigations, **mapped more than 60,000 waste sites** across the continent to uncover the hidden environmental risks they pose. Using data obtained through Freedom of Information requests, government agencies and public records, the investigation revealed that thousands of landfills are located in **flood-prone areas or near drinking water sources** and protected conservation sites. The project highlighted a largely overlooked legacy of Europe's waste management system and the **potential threats it poses to communities and ecosystems** in a changing climate.

Shady Bets

Our **Shady Bets** investigation became the target of bogus copyright claims designed to remove it from Google search results. Maxence Peigné subsequently discussed these attacks with the **European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)**, highlighting the need for stronger safeguards against the online censorship of journalism.

The investigation reached policymakers across Europe, leading to parliamentary questions in **Belgium**, the **UK** and the **European Parliament**, as well as in at least three **German Länder**.

Regulators in several countries expanded blacklists of Soft2bet-linked casinos following our reporting, and the company appears to have exited, or been pushed out of, the **UK market**.

Greece's Gaming Association filed a formal complaint citing our investigation, while players and lawyers reported that our revelations strengthened their claims.

Our research was presented at events including the **Symposium of the Gambling Research Unit** in Germany and Mettiamoci in Gioco in Italy, contributing to wider debates on gambling regulation and public health.

Scam Europe

After **Scam Europe**, the **Portuguese Football Federation** terminated its sponsorship agreement with VT Markets after our reporting revealed links between football organisations and unregulated online-trading companies.

The investigation also reached wider audiences through coverage by **The Guardian Football Weekly**, one of the largest football podcasts, and covered by Yogonet, a leading sports and betting news outlet.

Following publication, the **European Commission** published a press release indicating preliminary findings that TikTok and Meta may have breached transparency obligations under the Digital Services Act.

Portugal's final implementation of the Digital Services Act included both the media regulator and the data protection authority among its coordinating bodies, after concerns of online fraud and platform accountability.

AI Act

In **France**, our findings prompted a parliamentary debate just days after publication. **MP Ugo Bernalicis** challenged the government over its support for broader use of AI-powered surveillance technologies.

In **Greece**, Prime Minister Mitsotakis' spokesperson was repeatedly pressed by journalists to explain why the government had aligned itself with the French position on the use of AI by police and immigration authorities.

European Defence Fund

The revelations that at least €15 million in EU defence funding had been awarded to a company owned by Israel's largest state defence group sparked **demonstrations in Greece**.

Toxic Ground

Toxic Ground sparked significant public debate in communities such as Kalamata, Greece, leading to extensive local media coverage and community events planned by local authorities.

The investigation also reached political audiences. **MEPs** contacted Investigate Europe and shared the findings within their networks, while Earl Russell raised the issue in the **UK House of Lords** by asking the Environment and Climate Change Committee.

Civil society organisations drew on the investigation to support their advocacy efforts. **Zero Waste Portugal** used evidence from Toxic Ground to support a complaint to the European Commission regarding landfill operations in Portugal.

The project's data has continued to support scientific research and public authorities. Teams from **TU Wien**, the **Karlsruhe Institute of Technology** and the **German Environment Agency** requested access to the data for ongoing work on PFAS contamination, while **Cardiff University** and regional authorities in Normandy expressed interest in further analysis and mapping.

In the **UK**, the **Environment Agency** requested the testing data gathered by Watershed Investigations and has since begun conducting its own tests at the landfill sites we investigated, stating that it took our findings very seriously.

Long-term impact

In 2022, Investigate Europe and its partners investigated Perenco, a Franco-British oil giant, documenting repeated oil leaks, water contamination and serious health impacts affecting communities in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**.

Three years after publication, the company has been called to stand trial in France for alleged environmental damage following a complaint by **Friends of the Earth France** and **Sherpa** that drew on evidence uncovered through the investigation.

Beyond the stories

Our investigations were featured in interviews broadcasted by leading national and international media outlets, helping bring our findings to a broader audience.

Beyond reporting, our journalists contributed to the wider public interest journalism ecosystem by sharing their expertise at major conferences, training events and industry gatherings, including **Dataharvest**, the **Voices Festival**, the **ZEG Storytelling Festival**, the **SOMO Conference** and the **Netzwerk Recherche Annual Conference**.

They also spoke at important political institutions, including the **French and British Parliaments**, helping bring investigative findings directly into policy discussions.

In 2025, we have worked with 43 media from over 20 countries.

We have reached new regions, including **India**.

We have also expanded our partnerships to new major international outlets including **The Guardian** and **The Irish Times**.

We have also strengthened our broadcast outputs via collaborations with **ARTE** and **RTP**, creating strong opportunities for audiovisual impact.

NEW LINES MAGAZINE

THE IRISH TIMES
The Journal

euobserver
La Libre

arte
infoLibre

P
RTP

The Guardian
itvNEWS
THE OBSERVER
WATERSHED

Danwatch
undersagende journalistik

arte
DISCLOSE
Reporterre
Le média de l'écologie

Altreconomia
il Fatto Quotidiano
il manifesto
RPI MEDIA
Internazionale

Dagens Nyheter.

Dagsavisen

arte
DIE ZEIT
tagesschau
NETZPOLITIK.ORG
M
taz

DER STANDARD

PARTIZÁN

PAGE NOT FOUND

EESTI EKSPRESS
Delfi

FRONT STORY.

transtelex

BIRN
Balkan Insight
DENÍK N

REPORTERS UNITED
efsyn

meduza

[the reporters' collective]

AMPHORA
MEDIA

Media pick-ups

Our investigations generated significant media pick-ups beyond our publishing partners. The reporting was covered, cited, and amplified by leading national and international outlets, including **Politico**, **Deutsche Welle**, **Arte**, **Bloomberg**, and **CNN**, as well as by national public broadcasters such as **RTÉ**, Ireland’s national public service broadcaster, and influential newsletters and radio stations across Europe.

Our community in 2025

Investigate Europe’s journalism reached **hundreds of thousands of readers** across our website, newsletters and social media channels in 2025. Readers not only discovered our investigations but spent time **engaging** with them, sharing them and returning through our newsletters and partner networks.

+9,7 K

Subscribers to our newsletter

Our newsletter remained one of the strongest ways readers connected with our reporting

408,513

Page views

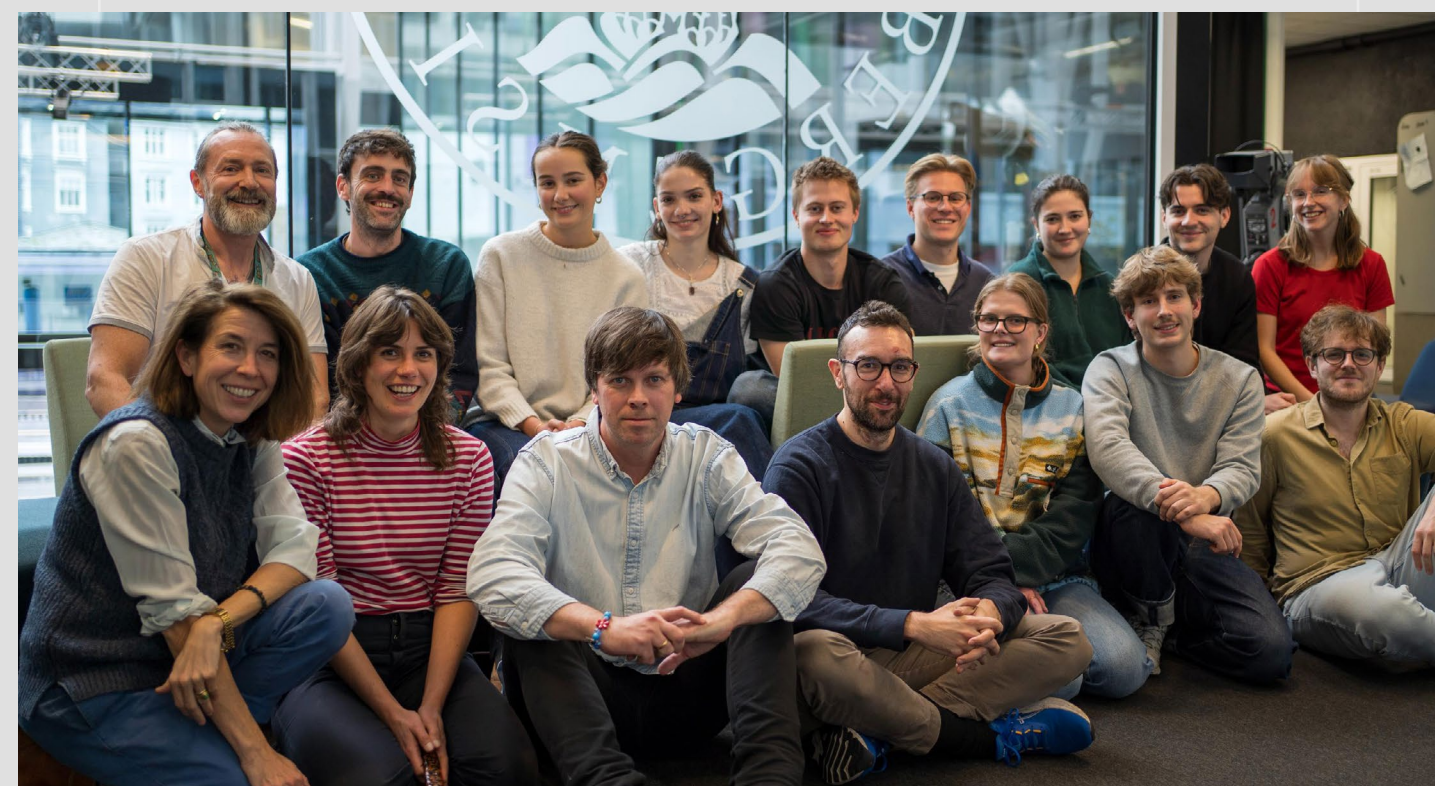
+ 38 K

followers across all social media platforms



Community event

During our team meeting in **Brussels**, we hosted an event that brought together readers, colleagues from fellow organisations, experts and advocates for an evening of **discussion and exchange**. As a cross-border newsroom working mostly remotely, opportunities to meet our audience **face-to-face** are among the most valuable moments of our year, helping us strengthen the community around Investigate Europe and ensuring our journalism remains connected to the people it serves.



Passing on investigative skills

As part of our teaching purposes, some of the Investigate Europe team travelled to **Norway** to teach aspiring journalists at the **University of Bergen**. We delivered a two-day programme sharing insights from our cross-border work, data investigations and helping develop the students' own investigative projects.

Partnerships

We promote **conversations and partnerships** with organisations including Follow the Money, Pulitzer Center, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, the Centre for Investigative Journalism and Watershed Investigations, and also journalistic organisations such as CIJ and the Global Investigative Network.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

 **Pulitzer Center**

 **The Centre for Investigative Journalism**

 **Global Investigative Journalism Network**

 **WATERSHED**  **BIRN**
BALKAN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING NETWORK

 **Reference CIRCLE**

Our investigations continued to receive recognition from journalism organisations across Europe, highlighting both the quality of our reporting and its public value.

Our journalists were awarded prestigious fellowships and grants in recognition of the quality and impact of their investigative reporting.

During 2025, **Nico Schmidt** was a **Pulitzer Center AI Accountability Reporting Fellow**, conducting an investigation into artificial intelligence.

Our **Editorial Director, Mei-Ling McNamara**, was awarded a scholarship to attend the Summer School for Journalists and Media Practitioners: The Future of the Information Sphere and Journalism, organised by **the Robert Schuman Centre**.

The Cruel Condition was shortlisted for the **2025 Inge Feltrinelli Prize**, recognising its investigation into the impact of sterilisation requirements on trans people across Europe.

Scam Europe was shortlisted for the **2026 Dejan Anastasijević Award** for Investigative Journalism, one of Serbia's most prestigious journalism prizes.



Photo credit: Chris Anagnostopoulos



Deadly Prices received the **2025 IJ4EU Impact Award** from the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), recognising the investigation's contribution to exposing Europe's secretive drug pricing system and unequal access to medicines.

Investigate Europe firmly believes that **investigative journalism is a public good**. Whilst commercial logic dictates competition, our approach is based on cooperation and sharing – within the team and within the broader media ecosystem in Europe and beyond.

Our organisational set-up as a **charitable non-profit European Cooperative** is based on a model in which people, not capital, are the main protagonists and stakeholders – independent from commercial pressure.

Our financial model is based on the following:

> Institutional Support

We rely on **donations from foundations and philanthropists** who recognise the value of investigative journalism in empowering citizens and protecting democracy. They enable our work without editorial interference.

> Private Donations

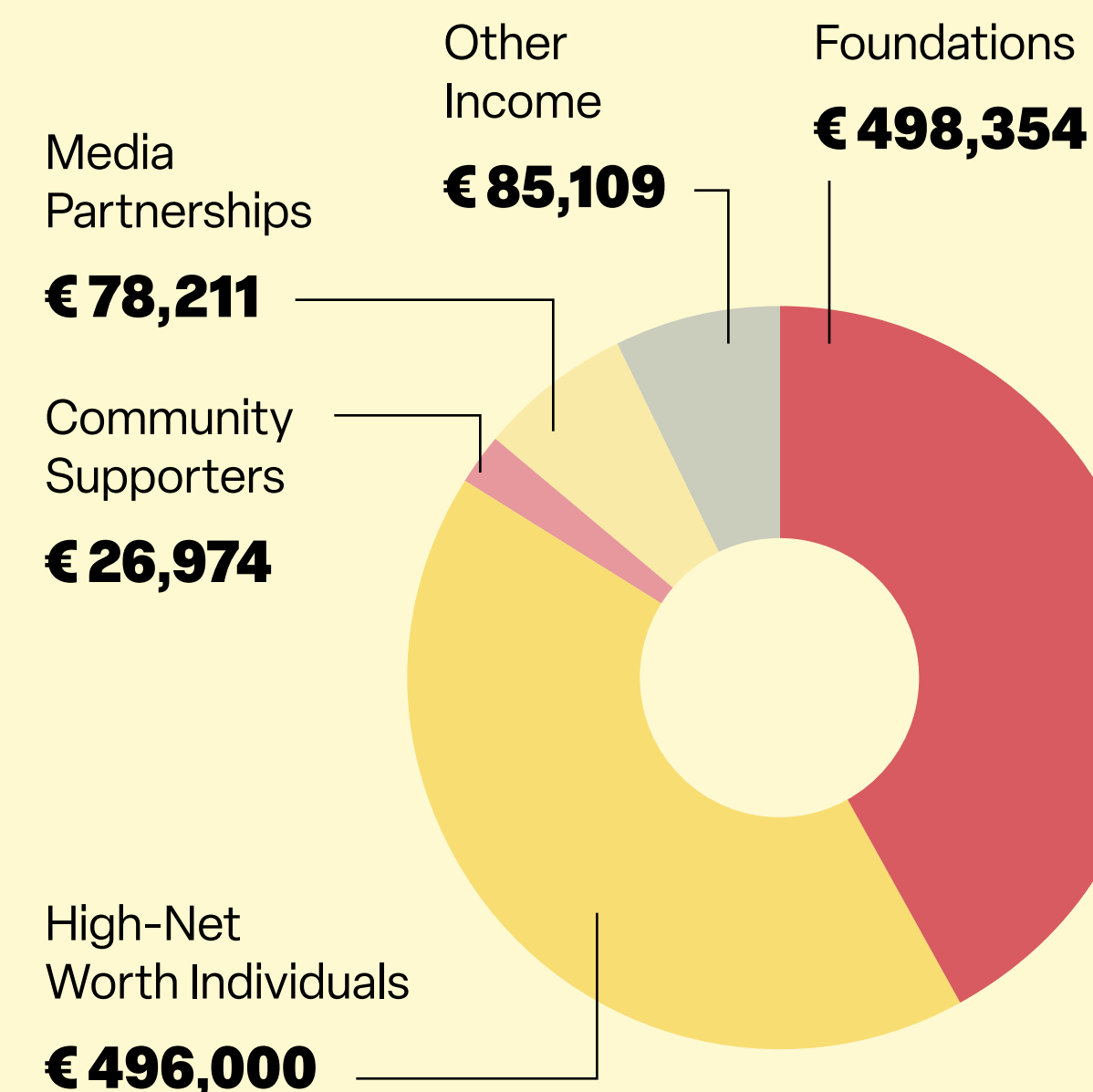
With large and small donations and regular monthly contributions, our **readers and supporters** make our work possible. This financial base strengthens us in the long term.

> Media Partners

We **sell stories to media partners** across Europe, which helps us not only financially but also increases our reach and helps the readers at national level understand Europe better.

Income

€1,184,648



Expenditure

€1,171,880



amedia stiftelsen



FRITT ORD



OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS



Schöpflin Stiftung :

Help us connect the dots



Our cross-border model and ability to hold the powerful to account is only possible thanks to the generous support of individual and collective donors.

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