

Albania: Profile of Media Ownership and Potential Foreign Influence Channels

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Introduction

What are the entry points for foreign actors to shape and influence the narrative in the Albanian media market? This profile seeks to address some of the entry points related to media ownership and Russian state-owned media. AidData recognizes that malign influence may affect narrative creation in other ways, including through the republishing of foreign content in domestic media outlets, interactions on social media, and journalist biases. However, this project focuses solely on direct and indirect ownership of traditional domestic media outlets to identify potential entry points for Russian influence through elites and media owners. By better understanding Albania's domestic media ownership environment, including what media outlets citizens consume and who the owners of those outlets are, we can anticipate entry points where malign actors may try to influence domestic narratives.

Albanian media ownership initially appears transparent, as the government runs a publicly available database of registered business entities and their owners. However, online outlets are not required to report funders and restrictions on ownership reporting are applied unevenly, so the true owners of Albanian media are often hidden.¹ Since owners of top media houses have the potential to influence the content and tone of topics covered by journalists in their employ, understanding who owns the media is crucial to identifying avenues for influence and potential bias in reporting. In this profile, we begin to close this gap with an in-depth look at domestic media ownership in Albania.

This media ownership profile and the supporting data were prepared by AidData, a research lab at William & Mary's Global Research Institute.² The data for this profile were collected manually by AidData staff and student research assistants. We began by conducting web searches to identify a list of media in

¹ "Albania 2019: Media Sustainability Index." International Research and Exchanges Board. Published 2020.

<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2019-albania.pdf>

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Albania, and then identified a list of the top-ranked outlets in terms of overall consumption. We then used this information to gather the ownership data. We used cross-country sources when available (e.g., Alexa³), as well as the Albanian National Business Center, survey data, media watchdog sources, and other open source data.

In the following sections, we provide summary data on the presence of Russian state-owned media, top outlets, and media ownership in Albania as of September 2021 (or the most contemporary data available). This profile focuses on the ownership of traditional broadcast, print, and online media outlets. Social media is not included in this analysis. By mapping out the ownership and reach of traditional forms of media, these profiles lend insights into potential channels for foreign influence in the top consumed outlets.

Russian Media Footprints

The most direct form of Kremlin influence in Albania's media landscape is via Russian state-owned media (see Table 1). Only one of the eleven Russian state-owned media outlets we tracked has a physical presence in Albania, which provides the Kremlin with a very weak channel to directly communicate with, and ultimately influence, Albanian citizens. Physical presence includes physical infrastructure, such as cable packages, physical office space or local bureaus, and radio broadcasters, but excludes satellite broadcasting and online or streaming availability. Table 1 provides a footprint of Russian state-owned media presence in Albania, but does not speak to how well-consumed each outlet is by Albanian citizens.

³ Alexa is an online analysis tool. AidData staff used Alexa's API to gauge website traffic. <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo>.

Table 1: Russian state-owned media in Albania, 2021

Television		Print		Radio		News Agency	
Russia I	✗	Rossiyskaya Gazeta	✓	Sputnik	✗	TASS	✗
Russia 24	✗					Sputnik	✗
Russia K	✗						
RTR-Planeta	✗						
TV Centre	✗						
Channel One	✗						
RT	✗						

Other indirect forms of Russian influence are possible, including domestic outlets republishing narratives and pro-Russian journalists in-country. In this profile, AidData has captured direct Russian channels of influence through state-owned media infrastructure.

Top Media Outlets

Table 2 identifies the top five most-consumed media outlets in Albania by medium (television, print, radio, and online) based on cross-sectional indicators such as viewership share and circulation. According to a NATO study, television and online outlets are the top consumed mediums for information in Albania and therefore likely more influential, while radio and print media are seldomly consumed.⁴ While we make no claims about the exact influence of each individual outlet, we can assume that outlets that reach higher numbers of consumers have greater potential to influence more citizens. Despite Rossiyskaya Gazeta being the only Russian state-owned media outlet present in Albania, it does not appear in the top five print outlets.

⁴ Svetoka, Sandra and Tihomira Doncheva. "Russia's Footprint in the Western Balkan Information Environment: Susceptibility to Russian Influence." NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. Published October 2021.

AidData used a weighted average of media consumption survey rankings from 2017 to 2021 to determine the top media outlets in Albania. This strategy offers a more long-term perspective of top media outlets, rather than a snapshot of the top media outlets right now. As such, the top outlets may not exactly reflect the current order of most consumed outlets but do show a solid picture of the media landscape over the past five years. Recent rankings are weighted more heavily to adjust for new changes.⁵

Table 2: Top Albanian media outlets ranked by overall consumption

Rank	Television	Print	Radio	Online
1	Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH)	Gazeta Panorama	Top Albania Radio	gjirafa.com
2	TV Klan	Gazeta Shqiptare	Club FM	panorama.com.al
3	Top Channel	Gazeta Shekulli	Radio Tirana 1	balkanweb.com
4	Vizion Plus	Koha Jone	ABC News Radio	syri.net
5	ABC News	Mapo	TV Klan Radio	abcnews.al

According to findings from an AidData survey of regional and local media experts in 2021, the majority of top Albanian outlets mirror the results of open-source data collection by AidData researchers. However, additional outlets excluded from this list but ranked highly by local experts include the television station News 24, print outlet Gazeta Shqip, and the online outlet Gazeta Express (gazetaexpress.com).

⁵ Television, Print and Radio Sources: We calculated television, radio and print rankings using multiple publicly available surveys and circulation data, including an AidData survey of country and regional experts conducted in summer 2021. Additional survey data came from: Media Ownership Monitor Albania (2017), Mediabuzz.org’s Albanian Media List (2020), Reporter.al’s Television Market analysis (2019), and the European Union’s “Sustainability of Professional Journalism in the Media Business Environment of the Western Balkans” Report (2020). Online Source: Alexa, April 2021.

Media Ownership

Table 3 lists the ownership information of top Albanian media outlets by medium (television, newspaper, radio, and online). Albanian media ownership on paper is fairly transparent, as registration of traditional media owners in the public National Business Center database is required by law. However, online outlets are not required to register their owners and enforcement of the laws is often uneven, leading to some gaps in effective legislation and hidden ownership.⁶ Further examples of ownership ties and relationships are discussed in the following section.

In order to highlight which outlets may be more susceptible to Russian influence, AidData staff have devised a four-point scale to indicate levels of Russian ownership. This scale is color-coded shades of red in the table below to indicate 1) Direct Russian ownership, 2) Known Russian ties, 3) Suspected Russian ties, and 4) No Russian ties. Additionally, Albanian state-owned media is color-coded blue. In Albania, one owner had suspected or known ties to the Russian government, and no outlets had direct Russian ownership. As such, this profile has one red color-code and two designations of state-owned media.

Table 3: Ownership of top Albanian media outlets by share

No Russian ties
 Suspected Russian ties
 Known Russian ties
 Direct Russian ownership
 Local state-owned media

Medium	Rank	Outlet	Owner, Company	Owner, Individuals	Owner (%)
Television	1	Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH)	Government of Albania		100
	2	TV Klan	Klan TV JSC	Aleksandër Frangaj	60
				Alba Gina	40
	3	Top Channel	Top Media Group	Vjollca Hoxha	20
				Sara Hoxha	20
				Redia Hoxha	20
				Lorela Hoxha	20
				Itan Hoxha	20
	4	Vizion Plus	Edil AI Group	Artan Dulaku	33.3
				Adrian Dulaku	33.3
			Genci Dulaku	33.3	
5	ABC News	Klan TV JSC	Aleksandër Frangaj	50	

⁶ "Albania 2019: Media Sustainability Index." International Research and Exchanges Board.

				Alba Gina	50
Newspaper	1	Gazeta Panorama	Panorama Group LLC	Irfan Hysenbelliu	100
	2	Gazeta Shqiptare	Focus Group LLC	Bashkim Hysenbelliu	100
	3	Gazeta Shekulli	UNIPRESS LLC	Koço Kokëdhima	90
				Dionis Heqimi	5
				Sadik Llapashtica	5
4	Koha Jone	Koha Jone LLC	Nikoll Lesi	100	
5	Mapo	Mapo Media LLC	Arlind Alikaj	100	
Radio	1	Top Albania Radio	Top Albania JSC	Zhuljeta Lamaj	20
				Vjollca Hoxha	16
				Sara Hoxha	16
				Redia Hoxha	16
				Lorela Hoxha	16
				Itan Hoxha	16
	2	Club FM	Club Muzikor JSC	Arben Bylykbashi	74
				Olta Reka	26
	3	Radio Tirana 1	Government of Albania		100
	4	ABC News Radio	Klan TV JSC	Aleksandër Frangaj	50
Alba Gina				50	
5	TV Klan Radio	Klan TV JSC	Aleksandër Frangaj	60	
			Alba Gina	40	
Online	1	gjirafa.com	Gjirafa Inc.	Mergim Cahani	Majority
				Ercan Canhasi	Minority
				Diogjen Elshani	Minority
				Esther Dyson	Minority
				Ondrej Bartos	Minority
				Philip Staehelin	Minority
				Kosovo Innovation Center	Minority
	Rockaway Capital Investors	Minority			
	2	panorama.com.al	Panorama Group LLC	Irfan Hysenbelliu	100
	3	balkanweb.com	Focus Group LLC	Bashkim Hysenbelliu	100
4	syri.net	"Open Information Center" NGO	Clirim Peka	Unknown	
			Other	Unknown	
5	abcnews.al	Klan TV JSC	Aleksandër Frangaj	50	
			Alba Gina	50	

Results

Television

Television is the most popular news medium in Albania.⁷ While the most-watched television outlet is the state-run Radio Televizioni Shqiptar, the next four most-watched television channels are all privately owned. Many of these private owners have ties to political figures and own other top media outlets as well.⁸

The second most-viewed television station is TV Klan, a part of the Klan TV JSC conglomerate. Owned by Aleksandër Frangaj and his wife Alba Gina, Klan TV JSC owns top outlets in both Albania and Kosovo, including ABC News, Klan Kosova, TV Klan, Klan+, and TV Klan Radio. Frangaj was a former journalist and helped develop Koha Jone, one of the first independent newspaper outlets founded after the fall of communism. Now, as a media mogul, media watchdogs report that Frangaj is known for playing to the government's interests and is reportedly rewarded for showing incumbent political figures in a positive light, regardless of which party is in charge.⁹ Under Klan TV JSC, Frangaj and Gina also own ABC News, the fifth most-viewed television station in Albania, after purchasing it from Redi Sata in 2019.

The third most-viewed television station is Top Channel, owned by the Hoxha family, another key media family. Dritan Hoxha founded Top Media, which also includes the newspaper Gazeta Shqip, Top Albania Radio, and DigitAlb. Following his death in 2008, his wife Vjollca Hoxha and their four children received equal shares of ownership in Top Media Group. Like Frangaj, Dritan Hoxha was a controversial figure, famously getting into a legal battle over satellite broadcasting rights with Prime Minister Sali Berisha. Top Channel

⁷ "Albania Profile - Media." BBC. Published February 11, 2020.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17680734>

⁸ "Albania 2019: Media Sustainability Index." International Research and Exchanges Board.
<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2019-albania.pdf>

⁹ "Frangaj Family." Media Ownership Monitor Albania. Published March 15, 2018.
<https://albania.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/individual-owners/detail/owner/owner/show/frangaj-family/>

reportedly covered former Tirana Mayor and current Prime Minister Edi Rama in a positive light, in opposition to the Berisha government.¹⁰

The fourth most-viewed television station is Vizion Plus, owned by the Dulaku brothers. Like the Frangaj and Hoxha families, the three Dulaku brothers reportedly have ties to politicians, particularly Prime Minister Edi Rama and the Socialist Party of Albania.¹¹ The relationship developed as a result of the Dulaku's construction business, which required building permits from former Tirana Mayor Edi Rama's office. For favorable business contracts, now-Prime Minister Rama received positive reporting from the Dulaku's Vizion Plus.¹²

Aside from the government-run RTSH, four of the top five Albanian television stations are controlled by centralized media conglomerates with ties to current or former governments. These findings support the claim that concentration of media ownership in Albania is rather consolidated, with wealthy, politically connected elites controlling the vast majority of the Albanian media space.¹³

Print

Print media ownership follows a similar pattern to television outlets, with high ownership concentration around political elites. For example, Albanian business mogul Irfan Hysenbelliu owns the top two most-read newspapers, Gazeta Panorama and Gazeta Shqiptare. The National Business Council reports that Bashkir Hysenbelliu, Irfan's cousin, owns Focus Group and therefore Gazeta Shqiptare; however, observers report that Irfan is the true owner of Focus Group in addition to his holdings over Panorama Group.¹⁴ Hysenbelliu is not publicly

¹⁰ Van Gerven Oei, Vincent. "Cellphone Comment Puts Spotlight Back on Rama's Villa." Exit News. Published October 1, 2019.

<https://exit.al/en/2019/01/10/cellphone-comment-puts-spotlight-back-on-ramas-villa/>

¹¹ "Dulaku Family." Media Ownership Monitor Albania. Published February 21, 2018.

<https://albania.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/individual-owners/detail/owner//dulaku-family/>

¹² "KKT Approves Clientelist Permit for Another Tirana Skyscraper." Exit News. Published December 14, 2017.

<https://exit.al/en/2017/12/14/kkt-approves-clientelist-permit-for-another-tirana-skyscraper/>

¹³ Mucollari, Stiv. "Erosion of Media Pluralism in Albania." Democratic Erosion: Suffolk University. Published April 20, 2019.

<https://www.democratic-erosion.com/2019/04/20/erosion-of-media-pluralism-in-albania-by-stiv-mucollari/>.

¹⁴ "Irfan Hysenbelliu." Media Ownership Monitor Albania. Published January 22, 2018.

<https://albania.mom-rsf.org/sq/pronesia/pronaret/detail/owner/owner/show/irfan-hysenbelliu/>.

tied to any Albanian government or party, but his dominant holdings in the media and other sectors give him a significant share of the Albanian media space.¹⁵

The third most-read print media outlet is Gazeta Shekulli, majority owned by Albanian businessman and politician Koço Kokëdhima with minority shares from businessmen Dionis Heqimi and Sadik Llapashtica. Kokëdhima, one of the wealthiest Albanian citizens, founded Shekulli in 1997 as a part of his business empire, and has owned the outlet since. Kokëdhima's background is inherently political, as he was elected to be First Secretary of the youth branch of the Albanian Labor Party from 1984 to 1991, and then elected to be a Member of Parliament under the Socialist Party of Albania in 2013.¹⁶ However, in 2016, Kokëdhima's electoral mandate was declared void by the Albanian government due to his businesses benefitting from state funds while he held a position in parliament.¹⁷ Following this denouncement, Kokëdhima's position has remained largely as an influential businessman since 2017. According to a few sources, Kokëdhima has a number of business ties to the Russian government, and some speculate that he operates in Moscow's interests in Albania.¹⁸ As for Heqimi and Llapashtica, the minority owners of Shekulli, both own shares of other businesses in the energy and trade sectors, but AidData staff found no clear ties between them and Albanian politicians or the Russian government.¹⁹ It is worth noting that despite Kokëdhima's suspected ties to the Russian government, the content of Gazeta Shekulli does not appear to outwardly promote pro-Russian sentiments.

¹⁵ Karaj, Vladimir. "Last TV Shows Critical of Albanian Govt are Cancelled." Balkan Insight. Published August 29, 2019. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/29/last-tv-shows-critical-of-the-government-are-closed-down-in-albania/>.

¹⁶ "Nga Flori Bruqi : Koço Kokëdhima, si u ngjit ish zyrtari i Rinisë së PPSH në piramidën e biznesit, pastrimi i parave me rusët." Agjencioni Floripress. Published September 14, 2017. <https://floripress.blogspot.com/2017/09/nga-flori-bruqi-koco-kokedhima-si-u.html>.

¹⁷ "Heqja e mandatit të Kokëdhimës, zbardhen prapaskenat e votimit." Gazeta Panorama. Published May 10, 2016. <http://www.panorama.com.al/heqja-e-mandatit-te-kokedhimes-zbardhen-prapaskenat-e-votimit/>.

¹⁸ "Adriatik Doci: Ilir Meta adhuresi i fshehtë i Koço Kokëdhimës, një koincidence me emrat e fëmijëve, flirti me rusët dhe një çarkore e SHBA." Shqiptarja.com. Published October 18, 2021. <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/ilir-meta-adhuresi-i-fshehte-i-koco-kokedhimes-nje-koincidence-me-emrat-e-femijeve-flirti-me-ruset-dhe-nje-qarkore-e-shba>.

¹⁹ "Unipress LLC." Media Ownership Monitor Albania. Published January 26, 2018. <https://albania.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/companies/detail/company/company/show/unipress-llc/>.

The fourth most-read print media outlet is Koha Jone. Founded by Nikollë Lesi, Koha Jone was one of the original independent media sources after the fall of communism. Koha Jone's ownership changed many times, as founder Nikollë Lesi entered politics and could not legally retain ownership over the newspaper. As a result, he sold the newspaper to former editor and current media mogul Aleksandër Frangaj. However, in 2013 Lesi repurchased Koha Jone following stints as the Chairman of the Christian Democratic League of Albania, a Member of Parliament, and Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Youth, Culture, Tourism and Sport. Lesi remains the owner today.²⁰

Arlind Alikaj bought Mapo, the fifth most-read newspaper in Albania, from Henri Cili in 2019. Alikaj is a relative unknown to the media space, and his name only appears on official documents for ownership of Mapo Media LLC. However, InfoPress and other outlets have speculated that the true owner of Mapo is Beqir Nuredini, the former Mayor of Rrogozhina.²¹ Nuredini is infamous in Albania for corrupt activities during his time as mayor.²² This trend highlights media concentration of top Albania outlets in the hands of political elites.

Radio

Many of the same names from top television and print outlets appear in top Albanian radio ownership. Frangaj and his wife own ABC News Radio and TV Klan Radio, the fourth and fifth most-consumed radio stations. The Hoxha family owns 80% of Top Albania Radio, with Zhuljeta Lamaj, the widow of assassinated business mogul Vajdin Lamaj, holding the remaining 20%.²³

²⁰ Zguri, Rrapo. "Relations between Media and Politics in Albania." Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Published 2017. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/14001.pdf>

²¹ "Henri Çili shet gazetën "Mapo", ja kush është pronari i ri me lidhje politike." InfoPress Albania. Published January 7, 2019. <http://infopressalbania.com/2019/01/07/henri-cili-shet-gazeten-mapo-ja-kush-eshte-pronari-i-ri-me-lidhje-politike/>

²² "Abuzimi me pronat në Spille/ Prokuroria dy vite burgim për ish-kryebashkiakun Nuredini." In-Front.org. Published March 23, 2021. <https://in-front.org/abuzimi-me-pronat-ne-spille-prokuroria-dy-vite-burgim-per-ish-kryebashkiaku-n-nuredini/>

²³ Vajdin Lamaj was assassinated in 2005 and held positions as the President of the Albanian Boxing Federation and the Vice President of Top Albania Radio. He also owned transport and restaurant businesses. <https://albania.mom-rsf.org/sq/pronesia/pronaret/detail/owner/owner/show/zhuljeta-lamaj/>

The two remaining radio stations are the second most-listened-to outlet, Club FM, and the third most-listened-to outlet, state-owned Radio Tirana 1. Club FM is predominantly a hit music radio station. Initially founded in 1999 by two Greek nationals and two Albanian nationals, only one founder, current Club FM CEO Arben Bylykbashi, remains. The two Greek nationals donated their shares, half to Bylykbashi and half to Olta Reka, a main host of the morning show “The Morning Club” on Club FM.²⁴ Bylykbashi bought out the other founder and now holds a 74% stake in the company, with Reka holding a 26% stake.

Radio ownership continues to show that political elites dominate the media ownership landscape in Albania. Former politicians and wealthy families with political connections own the vast majority of traditional media outlets.

Online

The Albanian government does not require the ownership of online media to be public, nor does it restrict the potential owners of online media outlets.²⁵ As a result, ownership of online media is opaque and true ownership is often hidden.

The top most-visited online media outlet is Gjirafa.com, a news aggregation site that pulls Albanian-language news from all over the internet. Founded by Mergim Cahani, Ercan Canhasi, and Diogjen Elshani, Gjirafa resembles a Western-style start-up, and has received significant investments from Western venture capital firms, including from American investor Esther Dyson, Czech investor Ondrej Bartos, American entrepreneur Philip Staehelin, Czech firm Rockaway Capital, and the incubator Kosovo Innovation Center. Due to the desire to attract investment and the regulations of other businesses attached to Gjirafa, ownership of this news aggregation platform was clearer than other online outlets.

However, for the remaining top online media sites, ownership either falls into the same familiar names or is difficult to track down. Irfan Hysenbelliu owns both Panorama.com.al and Balkanweb.com, the second and third most-visited online

²⁴ “Club Muzikor JSC.” Media Ownership Monitor Albania. Published February 8, 2018. <https://albania.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/companies/detail/company/company/show/club-muzikor-jsc/>

²⁵ “Albania 2019: Media Sustainability Index.” International Research and Exchanges Board.

outlets, as subsidiaries of his Panorama Group and Focus Group. Aleksandër Frangaj and his wife own Abcnews.al, fifth most-visited online outlet, under Klan TV JSC. The fourth most-visited outlet, Syri.net, is highly opaque. Officially, journalist Clirim Peka and a board of unnamed journalists own Syri.net; however, most reports attribute the ownership of Syri.net to former Prime Minister and current Member of Parliament Sali Berisha's son, Shkelzen Berisha.²⁶ Both Sali and Shkelzen Berisha have been labeled as corrupt by the US State Department, and they are barred from entering the US.²⁷ As a result, it is not surprising that the former Prime Minister's son reportedly controls a top consumed outlet with hidden ownership.

The lighter restrictions on online media in Albania allow for powerful political elites like Berisha to control top media outlets without legal consequences. Online media has similar issues to traditional media, namely media ownership concentration around political elites. However, when coupled with an additional layer of opacity that traditional media does not have, Albanian online media outlets provide a potential channel for undetected influence.

Conclusion

In this brief, we have presented an overview of the domestic media ownership of top outlets and the presence of Russian state-owned media in Albania. The collected data highlight two trends in Albanian media. First, media ownership is highly concentrated around those with ties to political elites. Second, Russia and other external actors appear to have relatively few active channels to influence the Albanian media space.

²⁶ "Balla akuza: Të hapen hetimet për Gërdecin, Shkelzen Berisha i përfshirë në krim shtetëror." Java News. Published September 17, 2020. <https://javanews.al/balla-akuza-te-hapen-hetimet-per-gerdecin-shkelzen-berisha-i-perfshire-ne-krim-shteteror/>; "Portali i Financuar nga Familja Berisha-Meta Replikon me Blushin ne jemi nje Fondacion Intelektualesh qe Smarrim para nga Asnje Politikan." Gazeta Tema. Published March 26, 2020.

<https://www.gazetatema.net/2020/03/26/portali-i-financuar-nga-familja-berisha-meta-replikon-me-blushin-ne-jemi-nje-fondacion-intelektualesh-qe-smarrim-para-nga-asnje-politikan/>

²⁷ "Public Designation of Albanian Sali Berisha Due to Involvement in Significant Corruption." U.S. Department of State. Published May 19, 2021.

<https://www.state.gov/public-designation-of-albanian-sali-berisha-due-to-involvement-in-significant-corruption/>

Albanian media ownership is centered around a few politically connected families. Out of the top five media outlets for each medium, the Frangaj family owns five outlets, the Hysenbelliu family owns four outlets, and the Hoxha family owns two outlets. In fact, Albanian media monitoring site Telemetrix suggests that nearly 59% of the total audience share of television, radio, and print media is owned by the Frangaj, Dulaku, Hoxha, and Hysenbelliu families.²⁸ Most of the remaining outlets are also owned by political elites, including former politicians Koço Kokëdhima, Nikollë Lesi, and Beqir Nuredini, and the son of former Prime Minister and current MP Sali Berisha. Ultimately, only two outlets are owned by journalists or individuals without political ties: the hit music station Club FM and news aggregator start-up Gjirafa.com. This political consolidation of media outlets provides potential channels for internal and external actors to influence the public.

While this major potential channel of influence exists in Albania, there is little indication of other channels for Russian influence in Albania. Only one Russian state-owned outlet, an office for Rossiyskaya Gazeta, exists in Albania. For media owners, only Koço Kokëdhima, Albanian businessman and owner of Gazeta Shekulli, has ties to Russian oligarchs and the Russian government, though this has not appeared to result in pro-Russian content in Gazeta Shekulli. The Albanian government also actively opposes Russia on the Kosovo-Serbia conflict, leading to potential public mistrust of the Russian government. As a result, Russia appears to hold little direct influence in the Albanian media space. In sum, despite some opportunities through media concentration by political elites, the Russian government has few channels to influence the Albanian public through media ownership.

²⁸ Mucollari, Stiv. "Erosion of Media Pluralism in Albania." Published April 20, 2019.