Deutsche Welle Institution under Public Law, Bonn

Management report for the financial year from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025

1. Course of business and general conditions

1.1. Strategic Plan and objectives

As the media voice of the Federal Republic of Germany, Deutsche Welle (DW) broadcasts information around the world that allows people to form their own opinions. It produces program content in 32 languages, which is primarily aimed at users in prioritized target countries and is distributed using contemporary distribution channels. Through the projects it undertakes, DW Akademie operates as a European international media developer. Through its work, DW strengthens the human right to freedom of opinion and unhindered access to information. At the same time, it conveys an image of Germany internationally that is based on values. In this way DW presents Germany abroad as a European nation of culture and a democratic state under the rule of law with a free constitution. In this way it promotes understanding and dialogue between cultures and peoples.

Under Section 4b (1) of the Deutsche Welle Act [Deutsche-Welle-Gesetz—DWG], DW prepares a Strategic Plan four years at a time, in which it lays down its program objectives, priority projects and their weighting. The Strategic Plan and the continually updated versions of it are forwarded to the German Bundestag and the Federal Government. The Strategic Plan and updates to it are adopted by the Deutsche Welle Broadcasting Council with the consent of the Administrative Board, taking into account opinions from the German Bundestag, the Federal Government and interested members of the public.

In its Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, DW defined the following three overriding strategic goals:

1. Expanding its audience reach from 289 to 320 million weekly user contacts[1].
2. Increasing the relevance of its programming.
3. Promoting dialog.

To achieve these goals DW concentrated its efforts on the following three focus areas:

1. Increasing its regional competence and presence.
2. Producing on demand first.
3. Making efficient and sustainable use of its resources.

DW is also creating a diverse, digital corporate culture as a guide for work and collaboration.

[1] In updating the Strategic Plan 2025, the reach targets were adjusted from 400 to 320 million weekly user contacts owing to the current circumstances in DW's media environment (censorship, increased regression in target regions, considerable cost increases, fragmented and highly competitive digital media landscape). Since the collection metrics were updated in recent years, the term "user" will be used below.

1.2. Funding of Deutsche Welle

DW is funded by the annual federal grant from the budget of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and by grants for projects from the German Federal Government and other fund providers.

In 2025, the federal grant from the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) for operating expenses amounted to EUR 405.0 million (of which EUR 7.2 million was for rent Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA)) and EUR 20 million for investment expenses. To fund expenditures for old-age pensions of former employees of the Deutsche Welle Further Education Centre (DWFZ), DW received federal funds amounting to EUR 0.5 million, the same amount as in the previous year. In 2025, the total funds received from the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) therefore amounted to EUR 425.5 million.

The activities of the project-funded DW Akademie as part of media development are predominantly funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (drawdowns from BMZ by DW Akademie in 2025: EUR 24.6 million).

Other major project funding for DW and DW Akademie came from the German Foreign Ministry (AA) (drawdowns from AA in 2025: EUR 7.7 million, of which EUR 2.2 million in funds forwarded to dpa). In addition, there were funds from grants for projects from the European Union, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) GmbH and other fund providers.

The DW staffing plan for 2025 continued to comprise 1,568.1 positions, as in the previous year.

1.3. Conditions of German international broadcasting

In 2025 DW again faced particular challenges.

In recent years the global political situation has continued to polarize. Geopolitical conflicts came to a head around the world, authoritarian regimes gained influence and democratic structures came under pressure. Humanitarian crises, such as in Yemen, Somalia and Sudan, as well as droughts and floods resulting from climate change and growing food insecurity in many regions of the world, clearly show the increasing fragility of global structures. The number of armed conflicts reached a new level in 2025, particularly in the form of the continuing hostilities in Ukraine following the invasion by Russia and the further escalation of violence in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza, Lebanon and the tension between Israel and Iran. At the same time the political change of course made by the new US government led to instability and volatility. The withdrawal by the US government from the funding of international media - particularly the de facto closure of the American US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) - had far-reaching consequences for the global media landscape. The end of established Western actors such as Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) has created a vacuum, which authoritarian actors can use for disinformation. This means DW has a yet larger responsibility to provide independent, fact-based reporting - particularly in regions in which press freedom is coming under increasing pressure.[2]

2025 marked the most dramatic level of the freedom of opinion and of press freedom to date. The globally fragile security situation and growing authoritarianism, but also increasing economic pressures, resulted in more than half of the world's population now living in states in which independent reporting is hardly possible. The concentration of property, dependencies on donors and opaque and or non-existent public funding forced many media institutions to perform a difficult balancing act between editorial independence and economic survival. At the same time, censorship, digital surveillance and intimidation increased - a trend partly affecting democracies as well as authoritarian states, and which is causing press freedom to erode perceptibly around the globe.[3] In countries such as Russia, Iran and China opposition voices are systematically suppressed; but in democratic countries, too, such as the USA, institutions under the rule of law are also increasingly coming under pressure.

[2] https://corporate.dw.com/de/evaluationsbericht-2025-dw-steigert-relevanz-und-reichweite-und-st%C3%A4rkt-die-weltweite-informationsfreiheit/a-74332885.

[3] https://rsf.org/en/rsf-world-press-freedom-index-2025-economic-fragility-leading-threat-press-freedom.

Measures range from legal restrictions to economic pressure all the way to targeted intimidation of media creators and increasingly affect DW itself, which, for example, was blocked in 2025 in countries like Venezuela and Burkina Faso. These countries can be added to the existing list of countries that block DW programming, e.g. China, Iran, Russia and Belarus. Overall, the situation in 2025 as regards press freedom in a large proportion of the DW target countries was very poor—and deteriorated further, e.g. in conflict-torn countries in sub-Saharan Africa such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Ethiopia, in which governments instrumentalize the legislature, security apparatuses and the judiciary, or in Asian states such as China, Iran and Afghanistan, in which target groups still have hardly any access to independent reporting.

In light of this, the risks to the safety of DW's journalists remained high, ranging from attempts at intimidation and persecution by authoritarian regimes all the way to the danger of coming under fire in conflict zones. Urgent travel warnings are in place for all DW staff for countries in which their safety is not ensured, including Russia, Belarus, North Korea, Iran and China.[4] In April 2025, two journalists, Constantin Gabov and Sergei Karelin, who had worked for DW in the past, were sentenced in Russia to several years in prison for accusations of extremism.[5] In Germany, too, the safety of journalists is not always guaranteed.[6] These developments also therefore caused an increased use of resources by DW's safety management in 2025.

At the same time, DW faces more difficult conditions in making its programs accessible to its target groups and thus supporting the human right to the freedom of information. The advance of censorship and the fragmentation of the internet worldwide is increasing this challenge. Among other things, users in countries such as Russia and Iran, in which DW channels are blocked, can reach the DW website using virtual private networks (VPNs).[7] DW countered authoritarian digital isolation and attacks on press freedom by developing its offerings on fact checking and censorship avoidance, e.g. the new DW access app.[8]

This growing polarization is reflected in global media markets, which are also being shaped by the competition of political and social systems and an increasing amount of disinformation. In 2025 misinformation and disinformation were again one of the most serious risks to global stability and made a significant contribution to further social polarization.[9] Authoritarian regimes like China, Iran and Russia use extensive media offerings in many target countries as competitors of DW, and also covertly as proponents of propaganda and disinformation. As part of its hybrid warfare, Russia uses propaganda and disinformation via its state-controlled foreign media in many DW target countries, e.g. in the countries of south-east Europe, in which indications of Russian influence on key elections could be found in 2025.[10] All in all, public discourse was influenced by propaganda, hate speech and disinformation in nearly all the prioritized DW target regions. Owing to the extent of the disinformation disseminated, DW is investing in information verification and uncovering false reports to ensure it fulfils its mission. The sensitivity of the topics of conflict on social media also requires the increased

[4] https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Dringende-Reisewarnung--Sehr-hohes-Verhaftungsrisiko-f%C3%BCr-DW-Mitarbeitende-in-Russland.aspx.

[5] https://corporate.dw.com/de/verurteilung-von-ehemaligen-dw-journalisten-in-russland-wie-schwerkriminelle-behandelt/a-72171636.

[6] https://www.zdfheute.de/politik/deutschland/reporter-ohne-grenzen-angriffe-auf-journalisten-2025-deutschland-100.html

[7] https://protonvpn.com/blog/deutsche-welle-partnership.

[8] https://corporate.dw.com/de/dw-access-neue-app-gegen-globale-onlinezensur/a-74930335, https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/SitePages/DW-Access--Die-verl%C3%A4ssliche-Antwort-auf-weltweite-Zensur.aspx.

[9] https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2025/digest/ & https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_Press_Release_2025_GER.pdf.

[10] https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/commentaries/how-russias-hybrid-warfare-will-escalate-2026-and-what-europe-must-do, https://www.blue-europe.eu/analysis-en/full-reports/the-kremlins-shadow-strategy-and-tactics-of-russian-interference-in-the-baltic-states-elections/, https://polisphere.eu/politicker/warnungen-vor-russischer-einflussnahme-bei-wahl-in-moldau, https://www.boell.de/de/2025/09/23/ein-neuer-wendepunkt-fuer-die-republik-moldau, https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/02/russian-interference-coming-soon-to-an-election-near-you, https://perryworldhouse.upenn.edu/news-and-insight/russian-meddling-foreign-intervention-through-disinformation-in-elections-in-eastern-europe/, https://goodauthority.org/news/central-europe-saw-5-dramatic-elections-in-2025/.

use of resources to moderate the conversations that come about there, in order to allow dialogue to be constructive.

The change in media use in all the DW target areas caused by dynamic global digitalization is a further challenge. Particularly the prioritized DW target group between the ages of 14 and 40 is increasingly getting its information from digital, time-independent output channels. DW is responding to this development by transforming its programming. DW continues to focus its resources more strongly on creating and distributing on-demand programming.

New technological challenges are accompanying the advance of digitalization, particularly through the rapid progress in the area of artificial intelligence (AI). AI-supported broadcasting of content is changing the media landscape by leading to media use that is more tailored to individual needs. At the same time, competition is increasing from automatically generated content, the amount and availability of which is increasing. In all its target regions, DW is observing the strongly growing spread of fake image and video material and of synthetic voices and faces, which exacerbates disinformation – “deepfakes” generated using AI. On social media, bots using AI-generated comments insert themselves in discussions and foster hate, and spread targeted anti-Western narratives and conspiracies. DW programming is also much faked in order to instrumentalize the credibility of the DW brand and to spread disinformation. At the same time, individuals can produce professional-looking content at low technological and financial cost and thereby significantly increase the competition for attention – often with no standards of journalism or editorial responsibility. The increasing spread of AI-generated content will make it more difficult in future for users to distinguish between reliable information and manipulative content.

At the same time, as a supporting tool AI offers DW great potential to speed up and enhance the accomplishment of tasks. DW is therefore intensively testing and supporting the use of AI-based applications to increase efficiency in creating and disseminating its content as well as in its operating processes. As a public international broadcaster, DW combines the use of AI with clear ethical guidelines. Human beings must retain responsibility for content at all times; transparency, data protection, IT security and the avoidance of distortion in data and models are binding principles.

The use of AI is included in the overarching conditions that shape DW’s work and its strategic orientation in the tension between technological change, journalistic responsibility and commission to society. In a world in which information is becoming ever more unclear, shaped by disruption, instability and authoritarian developments, DW, as the media voice of Germany, stands up with reliable journalism for the values which Germany stands for in the world. It offers orientation as support for free information spaces, interprets developments and events, offers context and creates media competence in dealing with attempts at manipulation. Conveying independent reporting based on human rights, democracy, freedom, the rule of law and social equality in an international manner is the guide to action. This is not just a matter of reporting about problems and negative states of affairs. Rather, DW is investing in constructive journalism, with reports about people who are trying to find solutions to global challenges.

1.4. Use and development of DW services in 2025

Deutsche Welle has oriented the development of its offerings so that its programs contribute to the above goals, where increasing reach counts as having the same value as increasing the relevance of programming and strengthening dialog. To use resources in a targeted way, DW identifies prioritized target countries that hold great potential for fulfilling DW's mission. In November 2025 the prioritization of the previous year was updated: DW continues to consider 72 countries as prioritized target markets; Syria was upgraded to a priority A country.[11] Reporting focuses on target regions in which democracy and freedom are under pressure and in which conflicts make reliable and explanatory reporting more difficult. Furthermore, DW pays attention to populous countries with dynamic media markets that are highly important to Germany. For these markets, in 2025 DW produced programs in 32 languages for the output channels that are regionally relevant.

Digital platforms are becoming more important every year. In 2025 internet users were estimated by the ITU to be approx. 74 percent[12] of the world's population. To be able to reach the target groups as well as possible in future, DW is continuing to focus on "digital first" products. Social media, but also cooperation with over-the-top (OTT) platforms and other digital distributors as well as optimization of web-based content for the requirements of search engines, play an important role.

In many prioritized DW target markets, such as China, Russia and Iran, the availability of DW content is very restricted or almost entirely blocked. Since 2024 DW has been categorized in Belarus as an "extremist organization" and the use of DW content has been criminalized.[13] In 2025 the Russian public prosecutor's office categorized DW as an "undesirable organization", which criminalizes collaboration with DW by Russian colleagues.[14] In Venezuela distribution of the Spanish DW TV channel has been prohibited by the government since 2024; in Burkina Faso the DW website has been permanently blocked since 2025, following a brief block in 2024 due to critical reporting.[15] In 2025 the internet and social media were blocked multiple times by states around the world, above all in connection with political unrest. In Afghanistan the Taliban ordered shutdowns and social media to be blocked in addition across the country from September and October 2025. In Africa, too, restrictions related to elections remained a recurring pattern. In Cameroon internet access was massively disrupted during the presidency election in October 2025; in Tanzania the internet was restricted and turned off for periods during the elections in 2025.[16] In Iran the internet was blocked for periods in 2025 during the 12-day war with Israel.[17] At the start of May 2025, around 8,000 accounts (incl. BBC Urdu, The Wire) were temporarily blocked owing to escalating tension between India and Pakistan, without any formal information being given. In addition, social networks such as Facebook, which no longer wish to have news content on their platforms, are using their algorithms to restrict access to the target group.

[11] DW Strategic Plan 2022-25, p.13. Update to regional prioritisation (November 2025): https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Update-der-Regionenpriorisierung--Syrien-wird-zum-Prio-A-Land.aspx.

[12] https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Laender-Regionen/Internationales/Thema/wissenschaft-technologie-digitales/Internetnutzung.html.

[13] https://corporate.dw.com/de/belarus-stuft-dw-belarus-als-extremistische- organization-ein/a-68950847.

[14] https://corporate.dw.com/de/nach-einstufung-als-unerw%C3%BCnschte- organization-deutsche-welle-startet-russischen-tiktok-kanal/a-75246033.

[16] https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/asien/afghanistan-taliban-internet-100.html, https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/01/1166813.

[17] https://techcrunch.com/2025/06/18/internet-collapses-across-iran-say-web-monitoring-firms/.

Despite these immense challenges, in 2025 DW managed to increase its reach via video, audio and text content from 320 million in the previous year to 337 million weekly users, of which 276 million were video content, 51 million were audio, and 10 million were text content.[18]

To maintain and further strengthen the reach and relevance of DW, making progress in the regionalization of DW content and in expanding local capacities is crucial. DW trains its network of international correspondents by conducting training and networking events at its offices in Bonn, among other things. By opening another foreign office in Chennai and a co-working space with France Médias Monde (FMM) in Bucharest, and by further modernizing existing infrastructure and improving processes, in 2025 DW further expanded its international presence and strengthened regionalization.[19] DW and DW Akademie are represented in more than 20 countries.

A focus in the reporting year was the further development of tandem productions, in which editorial teams for specific topics come together with regional language partners. This is designed to allow more regional expertise in the overall program and help reach new user segments. In 2025 the focus was particularly on addressing young and female target groups in a more targeted way. To this end the new short video series was developed “Power hacks: stand tall, speak loud” for TikTok, which is aimed at girls and young women between 14 and 18 years in West Africa. It offers quickly understandable, attractively told “power hacks” on topics such as equal opportunities, education and cultural identity. Approachable youth reporters go through the content and expert knowledge elaborates on the viewpoints.

To better use the potential of its programming, DW is investing more in dialogue-based series that bring together different views. Examples from 2025 include two new new series from the moderator Jaafar Abdul Karim, “افتح قلبك” (“Open your heart”) und “خطوة بخطوة“”(“Step by step”), aimed at a young Arabic-speaking audience and addressing everyday social topics. “Open your heart” is an on-demand series, in which people with different views can speak openly with one another in a protected space. “Step by step” is a gamified format based on team interaction, in which participants from the Arabic world discuss social questions and look for answers.[20]

Regarding the various regions of the world, DW achieved its greatest reach in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 100 million weekly user contacts. In Latin America DW achieved 56 million users per week. Both regions remained stable compared to the previous year. DW achieved its greatest growth in Europe: at 47 million weekly users, it achieved around 15 million more than in 2024.

The English-language programming was again in 2025 the most used language, at 127 million weekly users, followed by Spanish, with 49 million users. Arabic was still the third most used language, with 33 million user contacts, despite a drop of 7 million weekly contacts. Hausa and Swahili remain stable, with 25 million and 23 million weekly users respectively.[21]

Considering the legally enshrined mission to promote the German language and DW’s conception of itself, the German-language service continued to be of particular importance. The entirely digital content was aimed at the target group of German speakers and learners of German outside the DACH region (Germany, Austria and Switzerland). In 2025, the DW Akademie continued to provide extensive programming for learners of German optimized for digital use.

[18] https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/dw-global-audience-2025/global-audience-2025, https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/dw-weekly-usage/by-type-of-content.

[19] https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Regionale-Pr%C3%A4senz-st%C3%A4rkt-die-internationale-Wirkung-der-DW.aspx.

[20] https://corporate.dw.com/de/jaafartalk-preisgekr%C3%B6nte-arabischsprachige-sendung-der-dw-startet-drei-neue-formate/a-71477447.

[21] https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/dw-global-audience-2025/global-audience-2025, https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/target-regions/overall, https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/dw-weekly-usage/by-language.

Journalistic content by target area: [22]

Global journalistic content in English and German: In the reporting year 2025, too, English remained the most used language, at 127 million weekly users. A large proportion of users were from Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the USA. Because the English-language content is used worldwide, DW faces the challenge of addressing a heterogeneous target group with various needs and habits with respect to information. There is a particular focus on India, Pakistan, Nigeria and the USA as prioritized target countries, in which DW can reach its target groups with its English-language offerings particularly well due to the wide spread. To do this, DW prepares an increasingly regionalized mix of offerings, that is primarily produced for digital use according to the changes in media use and then also broadcast over linear output channels. In terms of content, the focus was the profile subjects of civil liberties and human rights, democracy and the rule of law, world trade and social justice, protecting the environment, food and health education, technology and innovation, as well as culture and life in Germany and Europe. The stark polarization of the political situation in the USA and deterioration in the relationship with all its Western partners since Donald Trump took office for the second time, led in 2025 to more geopolitical security and defense topics coming into the foreground of DW's reporting and to an expert cluster for security and defense being set up.[23]

DW's German-language content is aimed at a comparatively small target group: The number of people who speak German as their mother tongue or as a second language is estimated at 130 million globally, most of whom are in Europe. Outside Europe, between 10 and 15 million people are estimated to speak German to varying degrees.[24] DW addresses its programming on learning German to a total of around 15 million German learners.[25] The German-language DW target group increasingly uses the programming at no fixed time, which DW has responded to by changing the mix of media. In order to reach the target group of German speakers and those learning German abroad more effectively, since the start of 2024 DW has been exclusively using digital output channels for its German-language content. The DW website and YouTube primarily include informative photogenic videos on current developments in Germany, Europe and the world.

Sub-Saharan Africa: Over one billion people live in the DW target region below the Sahara, in 49 politically, economically, and culturally very heterogeneous countries.

In many Sub-Saharan African countries the trend towards increasingly authoritarian tendencies continued, which made access to independent information and political participation much more difficult. The condition of press freedom and freedom of expression deteriorated in many parts of the region. Many governments instrumentalized the legislature, security apparatuses and judiciary to further weaken independent media. Conflict-torn countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Ethiopia were particularly affected, but so were countries with fragile political structures, including Cameroon, Chad, Rwanda, Mozambique, South Sudan, Uganda, in which structural restrictions on press freedom and freedom of opinion were significantly tightened. In states in conflict like Mali,

[22] DW MAI Global Audience 2025, https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/dw-global-audience-2025/global-audience-2025, https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/target-regions/overall, https://mai.dw.com/document/1414#/dw-weekly-usage/by-language, DW Evaluationsbericht 2025 & DW Strategic Plan 2026-2029, https://corporate.dw.com/de/grundlagen/a-17650493.

[23] https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-Programming/SitePages/Das%20neue%20Experten-Team%20Sicherheit%20%26%20Verteidigung%20stellt%20sich%20vor.aspx.

[24] https://www.deutschland.de/de/topic/wissen/muttersprache-deutsch-in-42-laendern-der-welt.

[25] Federal Foreign Office (AA): German as a foreign language around the world. Data collection 2020, https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/resource/blob/2344738/b2a4e47fdb9e8e2739bab2565f8fe7c2/deutsch-als-fremdsprache-data.pdf.

Burkina Faso, Niger and Mozambique, the constant violence also destroyed basic social structures, which are the precondition for exercising rights to freedom. In many target countries in the region 2025 manifested grave restrictions on political and civil spaces. In DR Congo the escalating M23 offensive massively exacerbated the threatening situation for media and independent reporting.[26]

In June 2025 the government of Tanzania blocked access to X (formerly Twitter) across the country. Officially, the authorities justified the step by claiming to stop the spread of pornographic content and with an attack by hackers on state accounts in which false reports on the death of the president Samia Suluhu Hassan had been spread. However, human rights organizations and civil society groups considered the move to be part of increasing digital control ahead of the parliamentary and presidential elections to be held on 29 October 2025. In DR Congo the government prohibited the media from reporting on the activities of the former president, Jospeh Kabila or interviewing his party.[27] In Ethiopia, too, direct steps were taken against international media. In October 2025 the authorities suspended the accreditations of nine DW correspondents, meaning direct reporting from the country was temporarily not possible. DW Amharic-language programming continued to be produced from headquarters in Bonn.[28]

The African DW target areas are the region of the world with the highest growth in population overall. At the same time, almost half of all Africans are younger than 18. DW has prioritized 19 target countries in Sub-Saharan Africa for which it produces content in six languages: Amharic, English, French, Hausa, Swahili and Portuguese. In 2025 the region was again the target region with the most users, achieving a triple-digit million user figure for the first time, with 100 million weekly users (+1 million compared with the prior year). More than half of the 100 million weekly users are reached via video content. Although Africa continues to be one of the regions with low online use, digital reach grew perceptibly and showed particular potential in the young target group, particularly on Instagram and TikTok. After television and radio, TikTok developed into the third most important transmission channel for DW content. Audio offerings showed a drop in 2025 to around 45 million users, due to ending short-wave broadcasting in Hausa in October 2024. At the same time, the market increasing turned into a hybrid market: the traditional environment characterized by radio was supplemented by video-based formats, with growth on TikTok partly balancing out the drop in the audio segment.

The Arab world: According to Reporters Without Borders, the situation concerning press freedom and freedom of expression in the Arab world is the worst in the world; in almost half the countries it was classified as “very serious”, and not satisfactory in any country.[29] In many regions there were violence and arrests, with strict laws, criminal persecution and socio-cultural constraints considerably restricting free reporting. In Syria, the reconstruction and restoration of independent media structures continues to constitute a large challenge. The attack by Hamas on Israel in October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza continued to polarization and strengthen skepticism towards international media in the region.

In the 2025 reporting year, around 33 million users per week was achieved for DW’s Arabic-speaking programs. Use thereby rose again by 7 million weekly users after the losses in the previous year (-11 million). In connection with the war in the Middle East after the Hamas terror attack of 7 October

[26] https://rsf.org/en/world-press-freedom-index-2025-over-half-worlds-population-red-zones, https://www.pen-international.org/africa-overview-2025, https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/lifestyle/the-21-african-nations-struggling-most-with-freedom-in-2025/lwnzzre, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/2025-security-trends-graphics-sudan-sahel-nigeria-somalia-drones-china/.

[27] https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2025/06/week-free-expression-hungary-tanzania-drcongo-uk-israel-syria-honduras/

[28] https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/afrika/aethiopien-deutsche-welle-korrespondenten-100.html

[29] https://www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/Ranglisten/Rangliste_2025/RSF_Rangliste_der_Pressefreiheit_2025.pdf.

2023, DW has been accused since 2024 of pro-Israeli reporting, which led to loss of reach and partnerships. The termination or temporary suspension of cooperation with Arabic-language distributors as a result of investigation into allegations of antisemitism since the winter of 2021/22 is also still having an impact. A large part of these losses could be made good again in 2025 by gains in DW's own channels, particularly through growth on TikTok and Facebook. However, the partly negative attitude towards the DW brand remains the greatest challenge to programming in the region.

The focus of content for DW Arabic programming, which celebrated its 66th anniversary in 2025, was contents on democracy, freedom of expression, human rights, the fight against terror, exclusion, racism and antisemitism. With these topics, DW fulfilled its role as an independent source of information and offered the target group particular value because in nearly all Arabic target countries, reporting by national media is heavily restricted by state censorship, violence against the media and legal restrictions. Reporting in this region is complex owing to increasing conflicts and therefore requires particular focus on the presentation of different perspectives. To counter the high number of false reports as well, more resources are still required for the verification, interactivity and moderation of content.

This positive development in the number of users is the result of a further development of our journalistic programming, particularly on social media. Although traditional media such as TV and radio in countries like Syria, Sudan and Yemen continue to play an important role, social media are becoming ever more dominant as the primary source of information, particularly for the DW target group between 14-40 years of age. In 2025 the vodcast "Suria..Lawein?" ("Syria...where to?") was launched as a new Arabic-language multi-platform show, which allows people from Syria a space to exchange views and discuss while the country undergoes change.[30]

One of the most used shows in the reporting year 2025 is again "Jaafar Talk", a talk show that discusses regional taboo topics such as human rights abuses with guests from all the Arab countries, and the "Albasheer Show", a satire news show specially for the Iraqi market.

Asia: A third of the world's population currently lives in the priority Asian target countries. The size of these target groups by itself continues to make these markets very important to DW. At the same time, in many of these countries society is shaped by authoritarian political systems, strict control of the information space and massive restrictions on press freedom and freedom of expression. In 2025, the conditions for independent journalism were classified as "difficult" to "very severe" in nearly every DW target countries; in countries like China, Iran and Afghanistan, target countries still have hardly any access to independent reporting.[31] In 2025 numerous governments again tightened state control, censorship and surveillance practices considerably. In Iran, in particular, repression and digital restrictions continued to increase as part of the renewed escalation in the Middle East, while Afghanistan under the Taliban regime cordoned off the informational space. In terms of security, too, the situation remained tense: In South Asia the conflict between India and Pakistan reached the most dangerous escalation for years after a serious attack in Kashmir and following Indian rocket attacks. Alongside this, the security situation in the Indo-Pacific deteriorated—particularly from China's growing pressure in the region and growing tensions regarding Taiwan. At the same time, the accelerated implementation of AI in the region is leading to an even heavier flood of content and unclear information spaces. Another challenge arose from extensive cuts at Voice of America and Radio Free Asia. Starting from 2025, central Asian services will be ended; Radio Free Asia is even ending its

[30] https://corporate.dw.com/de/neues-format-von-dw-arabisch-syrische-stimmen-im-vordergrund/a-71968946.

[31] https://www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Downloads/Ranglisten/Rangliste_2025/RSF_Rangliste_der_Pressefreiheit_2025.pdf.

entire services. This further reduces independent information programming in a region which is already heavily censored, while Chinese state media used this development to occupy more shortwave frequencies.[32] Despite these challenging conditions, the demand for reliable, independently verifiable information is increasing perceptibly. DW produced programs for its target group in the region in the nine regional languages of Bengali, Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Hindi, Indonesian, Pashtu, Tamil and Urdu.

In the 2025 reporting year, Asia was the second-largest target region, at 58 million weekly users, and showed growth of 7 million compared to the previous year. Growth primarily resulted from higher user engagement and a slight growth in video content on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok as well as via online partners. The DW programming in Hindi, Indonesian, Tamil, Dari and Urdu grew particularly strongly. On Josh, on which DW offers content in Bengali since 2025, the weekly reach remained stable at 4 million. In TV in India the regionalized environmental series “Eco India” achieved high reach in English, Hindi, Tamil and Bengali. All the Asia departments further expanded their on-demand content by including regionalized series in 2025. Cross-country talk shows, such as “Aao Baat Karein” (India-Pakistan), “Amader Kotha Amra Boli” (India-Bangladesh) and “TsouTsou Talk” (China-Taiwan), made an important contribution to fostering social dialogue, which create space for dialogue in very polarized regions. Alongside this, DW reinforced resilience against disinformation with fact checking offerings in almost all languages. In the Afghan space, the weekly live talk-show “Aashti” remained a key series, which is broadcast jointly with local partners on TV and social media, and gives space for marginalized voices, particularly women. DW uses digital offerings for its Asian services and broadcasting platform-aligned broadcasting to reach its users with relevant regionalized content: Nearly all Asian services are active on Facebook and YouTube, while additional TikTok channels, including for Urdu, Indonesian and Bengali, address young target groups. Content in Chinese, Dari, Hindi, Indonesian, Pashto and Tamil is also broadcast on Instagram.

As part of regional diversification, in 2025 several editorial teams expanded their on-demand formats for young users – including the young debating series “Bae-sharm Isha” and “Tuli Tau” (“The knowing deaf”), a new inclusive social media series for deaf young people and young adults in Indonesia. Persian produced a further series of the show “Sex and the Body”, which tackles the topic of sexuality for a female target group. A fictional and entertaining video series on intercultural differences, “My Persian Love Story”, was also published.

Latin America: In the target countries prioritized by DW in Latin America, the freedom of the press continues to be under pressure, including from targeted attacks on media workers. In 2025 Mexico remained one of the most dangerous countries in the world, including for journalists.[33] The further increase in political polarization, flooding of social media with Russian propaganda and growing rejection of Israel and its allies require independent and careful reporting, as well as increased resources in moderating the channels on social media to counter hate comments.[34] Besides DW profile topics such as democracy, the rule of law and social inequality, as well as migration, the environment and science, the portrayal of the German and European perspectives of international events continues to be a focus of content.

[32] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-16/voice-of-america-radio-free-asia-us-funding-cut/105058080, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/29/radio-free-asia-shuts-down-as-us-funding-dries-up-00629210, https://nextshark.com/beijing-expands-voice-america-exit.

[33] https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/mexico, https://rsf.org/en/country/mexico.

[34] https://disa.org/mitigating-the-threat-of-russian-disinformation-campaigns-in-latin-america/.

Compared to the prior year, the use of DW content in the target region of Latin America remained stable overall, at 56 million weekly users. Growth on TikTok compensated for declines in TV reach caused by the blocking of the TV channel in Venezuela. On YouTube Latin America remains DW's most popular market: around a third of YouTube users come from Latin America (11 million weekly users), where DW is represented on the channels DW Español, DW Brasil, DW Pía Castro und DW Documental.

In line with its on-demand-first strategy, DW is consistently expanding its Spanish and Portuguese programming and optimizing them for digital platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. The goal is to meet changes in user behavior and make journalistic content platform-compliant and target group-oriented. Spanish series like "Fuerza latina", in which inspiring women from Latin America who campaign for social justice and equal rights are presented and "Eco@Latinoamérica", in which environmental topics are explored from a regional point of view, are examples of this approach. They are primarily developed for digital use and then re-used on television. Other shows like "La actualidad en análisis", "DW Geopolitica" and "DW Verifica" are exclusively for YouTube to increase reach in social networks and to meet the specific needs of users. For the target country of Brazil, DW produces the weekly series "Perspectiva", dedicated to detailed reporting and background reports, and the weekly "Entenda", a compact, dialogue-based analysis series, which explains current national and international news in an understandable way and interpreted for the local context. Following the popularity of podcasts in Brazil, the podcast "DW Revista" offers weekly analysis and background reports on current topics and reaches its audience on platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Podcasts and YouTube. Another weekly series is "Futurando", which takes a look at innovative, futuristic projects in science, the environment and technology.

Russia, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe: Press freedom has hardly existed in Russia and Belarus for years. In Russia and Belarus DW programming is systematically blocked. Critical statements about the regimes are prosecuted. Media professionals working for DW, and DW itself, have been declared foreign agents in Russia, which has led to a *de facto* prohibition on working.[35] In 2025 DW was categorized as an "undesirable organization" – thereby criminalizing all collaboration by Russian colleagues with DW. In response, DW introduced a Russian-language TikTok channel examining topics from a global perspective and explaining how Germany and Europe work to counter the one-sided propaganda in Russian state media with independent information. This TikTok channel is aimed at people in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Serbia and others, as well as other east European countries and the post-soviet area in which Russian-speaking minorities live.[36] The DW office for reporting on Russia was moved to Riga in 2022. In Belarus, DW has been designated an "extremist organization" by the interior ministry since 2024; all DW content is banned on all platforms.[37] Despite these conditions DW continues to pursue its goal of supporting the freedom of information in the region. For local presence and production DW also relies on the expanded studio in Kyiv, where the crossover between both languages allows multilingual production and close collaboration between the Ukrainian and Russian editorial teams, thus creating synergies for reporting for and about the entire region.

In terms of content, in 2025 the war in Ukraine as well as political and social developments were in the foreground, with a particular focus on rights to freedom and human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Reporting from the war zone in Ukraine comes at high risk to DW staff. Alongside the hostilities, the systemic conflict between Russia and Western states is intensifying, accompanied by

[35] https://corporate.dw.com/de/belarus-stuft-dw-belarus-als-extremistische- organization-ein/a-68950847.

[36] https://corporate.dw.com/de/nach-einstufung-als-unerw%C3%BCnschte- organization-deutsche-welle-startet-russischen-tiktok-kanal/a-75246033.

[37] https://corporate.dw.com/de/belarus-stuft-dw-belarus-als-extremistische- organization-ein/a-68950847.

heavier, widespread, disinformation campaigns partly supported by AI, particularly on social media, that also target Europe and Germany. To counter these narratives and to allow dialogue of different perspectives, video podcasts (vodcasts) were expanded. The weekly vodcast on current political and social topics “DW Novosti Show” featuring prominent guests, including from Ukraine, introduces the Ukrainian perspective to a Russian-speaking audience. Existing talk shows were successfully continued, including the Russian-language edition of “Swarka” dedicated to the current domestic and foreign policy challenges in Belarus, and “To the Point”, which tackles current political and social topics from an international perspective in two editions, one for Russia and one for Belarus.

The war is placing considerable pressure on the Ukrainian media landscape, but corruption, economic pressures and political influence also make journalistic work difficult. DW positions itself in the target region as an alternative to state-controlled reporting and relies on independent, fact-based and multi-perspective reporting, from current news to in-depth analysis all the way to background reports on political, social and economic developments, e.g. on the subject of the integration of Ukraine into the EU and innovative developments in society and the economy.

Despite the massive tightening of censorship and production conditions in Russia and the region since the start of the Russian invasion, use of DW programming in Eastern Europe and Central Asia only declined slightly in the reporting year. Overall, programming in 2025 reached 11 million weekly users – around 2 million fewer than in the previous year.

DW content continues to be mostly consumed as video in the region, both on television and on digital platforms such as TikTok by using censorship avoidance tools. The target group in Ukraine is also increasingly moving its news consumption from traditional TV channels to social media platforms, hence the focus on digital programming. Since March 2022 major social platforms and the DW website remain blocked in Russia. YouTube is still available, but has been restricted since the end of 2024, which led to significant losses in reach.[7] To still be able to secure the freedom of information, DW uses various alternative access routes, including VPN solutions in cooperation with Psiphon and Proton, the TorNetzwerk, proxy servers and the channel 24/7 DW Russian, which is part of the packet for the “Svoboda Satellite” satellite broadcast.

Europe: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the consequential systemic conflict between Russia and NATO continued to dominate political and social debate in the target region of Europe in 2025, particularly in the target countries that are geographically close to the war zone. At the same time, Russia’s hybrid warfare against the West intensified, with the sabotage of infrastructure and the spread of disinformation as well as influencing democratic elections.[38] After the parliamentary election in Moldova in September 2025, the government accused Russia of influencing the election campaign through disinformation and vote-buying.[39] Romania was particularly affected, where the presidential election had to be rerun in 2025 after the first round was annulled by the constitutional court owing to suspected Russian influence, including an illegal TikTok campaign in favor of the pro-Russian candidate Călin Georgescu.[40] There are also indications of Russian influence in the context of the presidential election in Poland in May 2025 and the parliamentary election in the Czech Republic in

[38] https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/commentaries/how-russias-hybrid-warfare-will-escalate-2026-and-what-europe-must-do, https://www.blue-europe.eu/analysis-en/full-reports/the-kremlins-shadow-strategy-and-tactics-of-russian-interference-in-the-baltic-states-elections/.

[39] https://polisphere.eu/politicker/warnungen-vor-russischer-einflussnahme-bei-wahl-in-moldau, https://www.boell.de/de/2025/09/23/ein-neuer-wendepunkt-fuer-die-republik-moldau.

[40] https://carnegieendowment.org/europe/strategic-europe/2025/02/russian-interference-coming-soon-to-an-election-near-you, https://perryworldhouse.upenn.edu/news-and-insight/russian-meddling-foreign-intervention-through-disinformation-in-elections-in-eastern-europe/.

October 2025.[41] In most countries, the political and social situation has deteriorated worryingly in recent years. Populist, right-wing conservative and nationalistic forces established themselves in 2025 in several countries, and form the government in Hungary and Serbia. Press freedom is under massive pressure, whether from strategic lawsuits in Croatia and Bulgaria, opaque state tenders for advertising in Hungary or attacks on journalists in Serbia. In this tense political climate of declining media plurality and the increasing spread of disinformation, the importance of DW is increasing. In particular in the elections in 2025 and the protests in Bulgaria in November and December 2025, DW contributed with independent, balanced and reliable reporting for more understanding of important EU topics.

DW produces programming for a total of 13 European target countries in the languages: Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Greek, Croatian, Macedonian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian and Hungarian. In the reporting year 2025 Europe was the region with the strongest growth in weekly use, reaching 47 million weekly users, 15 million more than 2024.[42] This growth was particularly fostered by video content, with TV slots on partner channels with a wide reach in Poland and content on TikTok and Instagram increasing the visibility of the content. In the reporting year, a “Young Berlin Team” was also further expanded, which addresses younger target groups on social media and combines DW profile topics with current European debate in the target country languages.

Turkey: Since the website was blocked in Turkey in 2022, the editorial team has mostly been using digital broadcasting channels, particularly social media. Even though the block was lifted in 2025, press freedom in Turkey remains restricted. That’s why DW Turkish (DW Türkçe) offers programming on YouTube, dw.com and various social media platforms. The editorial team’s news flagship “DW Haber”, which airs every weekday, in particular shares a level of familiarity with established series in Turkey. In the reporting year 2025 DW Turkish grew compared with 2024 by 62% to a weekly use of 8 million, with increases on all social media except X (formerly Twitter), and especially strongly on TikTok. The “DW Haber” channel, launched on TikTok in January, also contributed to this, which particularly reaches the young target group in Turkey.

An important component of Turkish DW programming since 2019 is the collaboration project “+90” with the BBC and France Médias Monde.[43] As part of this strategic partnership for a young audience, content is produced for social media designed to stimulate press freedom with constructive messages. More than 50% of views on the +90 channel on YouTube are from users between 18 and 34. Since the launch of the first channels in April 2019, the +90 platform has grown to become one of the largest channels on YouTube in Turkey, accompanied by other channels on TikTok, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter).

Media development

DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle’s centre for international media development, journalistic education, training and knowledge impartation. It reinforces the human right to freedom of expression and enables people across the world to make their own decisions based on independent information, reliable facts and constructive dialog. As a directive of DW, DW Akademie strengthens independent media and functioning media systems and thus safeguards long-term development – with a total of 78 projects in 61 developing countries in 2025. The main funder is the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), of which DW Akademie is a strategic partner; other large funders are the EU and the German Foreign Ministry (AA).

[41] https://goodauthority.org/news/central-europe-saw-5-dramatic-elections-in-2025/.

[42] This refers to the entire region of Europe, including Turkey.

In 2025, DW Akademie focused its presence abroad on improving the functionality of its nine offices. Owing to the restrictions on media and civil society, registration of the office in Burkina Faso could not be extended. In Uganda, the office head was expelled from the country in December 2025; however, the office continues its operations. Overall, the consolidation of processes and responsibilities in its external structure was significantly improved, including many issues involving local staff.

In its most important business area, international media development, a regional focus was Ukraine and the MENA region. Work there is still overshadowed since the conflict in the Middle East in 2023. Security was also a topic in the Sahel region: DW Akademie moved most of the management of projects in the region to Ivory Coast and Senegal. During 2025 an initial probe was successfully conducted in Syria, which resulted in various projects being commissioned. Establishing a local presence is being evaluated.

In terms of content, the focus continues to be on combating disinformation, the safety of media workers, dialogue in the context of polarization as well as seeking refuge and migration (focusing on Africa and Asia). Central to the subject of safety is the Federal Government's Hannah-Arendt-Initiative, which supports journalists under threat, including from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan and Central America. Concerning refugees and migration, DW Akademie pursues the goal of bringing about constructive dialog, participation and reliable channels for communication and information for refugees and host communities. A strong focus was also on supporting innovation, including AI, and the impact of artificial intelligence on content, business models, legal conditions and social participation in the countries of the so-called Global South.

Educational programs, traineeships and master's course

With mobile and multimedia content now in more than 16 foreign languages, the Educational Programs department of DW Akademie is designed for the 15 million learners of German across the globe, as well as for German teachers.

For over 20 years DW Akademie has been also responsible for traineeships at DW. In 2025, too, a new class of 12 young people began their 18-month traineeship. During this time the trainees get to know DW as a whole, attend seminars and workshops on data journalism, factchecking, podcasting and live interviews, and do internships in the DW editorial teams in Germany and abroad. Unlike the projects in media development, traineeships and German learning content are financed through the federal grant to DW.

In collaboration with the University of Bonn and the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, the DW Akademie English-language master's course "International Media Studies" was continued in 2025. Since it was introduced in 2009, more than 313 students from 78 countries have graduated. The goal of the course is to give students a well-founded insight into the interplay between media, politics and development, in-depth knowledge of digital media and media production as well as wide-ranging skills in media management. In this way, with the knowledge they have acquired, they will be able to contribute to strengthening the development of the media and the freedom of expression in their home countries. In collaboration with Tours University, in 2025 DW Akademie also offered the master's course taught in French in international journalism: "Master francophone en journalisme international" that was introduced in 2024.

DW Kompakt Plus is a DW Akademie course aimed at experienced journalists from the DW program to impart expertise and new skills for digital, interactive media.

Other strategic projects and collaborations

The annual DW Global Media Forum (GMF) took place in 2025 in Bonn with the subject of “Breaking barriers, building bridges”, with more than 1,000 attendants from almost 100 countries and around 170 speakers, including many partners and stakeholders from the DW target regions. The focus was on the challenges currently facing international media: from the fight against disinformation and the use of AI to financial and political pressure. Other subjects were populism, income models for journalistic work and internet censorship, which is increasingly restricting the work of free media. The EU expansion commissioner Marta Kos gave the keynote speech at the event. The guest speakers included the Syrian information minister Hamza Almustafa and the British investigative journalist Carole Cadwalladr.

In another highlight to the program DW awarded its Freedom of Speech Award for 2025 for the eleventh time for outstanding work for human rights and freedom of expression. The award went to the Georgian journalist Tamar Kinzuraschwili, whose independent foundation for media development educates journalists on fact checking and spreads awareness of hate speech. The international DW media conference was financially supported by the Foreign Office (AA), the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Foundation for International dialogue of the Sparkasse in Bonn, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the city of Bonn.

In 2025 DW was again an international media partner of the Munich Security Conference, the global forum for debates on the most urgent international security issues. DW correspondents again reported on the conference in numerous DW languages, including English, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Turkish, Greek and Spanish. The reporting was handled on an individual basis for the various output channels and DW target areas. The DW program Conflict Zone broadcast live one of the most discussed debates on Ukraine, with the title “Peace through strength: a plan for Ukraine”.[44] Alongside the US Special Envoy for Ukraine and Russia, General Keith Kellogg, the foreign ministers of Ukraine, Poland and the United Kingdom and the defense minister of Lithuania took part in the discussion. The Arabic talk show “Massaiya” produced several programs at the event, including on the subject of security in the Middle East. Furthermore, two films from the “Mapped Out” series were shown, which explain current conflicts using maps and backgrounds.

In the 2025 reporting year, the long-term collaboration with the ARD network of German public broadcasters, ZDF and Deutschlandradio was continued and intensified, including in exchanging programs and in co-productions and in administration and IT. The synergies established within the (D)ein SAP project, in cooperation with ARD, related to IVZ as the central IT/SAP service provider and the harmonization of processes in the areas of finances, procurement, managerial accounting and business trips were continued. As part of the long-term cooperation in the area of archiving further potential for optimisation was identified, such as simplification of exchanging programs, which is already being implemented. To strengthen its international presence in a cost-efficient way, DW used the joint cooperation within ARD to move into the WDR Washington studio in 2025. Furthermore, the DW fact-checking team is part of the ARD fact-checking network established in 2025, which combines the editorial teams of Tagesschau, the ARD German public broadcasters and Deutschlandradio.

As part of EBU DW takes part in the “Eurovision News Spotlight”, a fact-checking network also established in 2025, initially including 18 European broadcasters. In the network, participating editorial teams exchange information about the monitoring of stories, collaborate on fact-checking initiatives, share resources and utilize joint training courses.

In 2025, DW continued the pan-European collaboration “ENTR - What’s next!” in a fifth round of funding. This is digital, multimedia and multi-language journalism aimed at young Europeans between 18 and 34 in ten languages: German, French, English, Portuguese, Polish, Dutch, Romanian,

[44] Reported among others by Berliner Morgenpost, Spiegel, Stern, Welt Live Blog, Tagesschau Live Blog, ZDF, and by international media such as Al Jazeera, Magyar Nemzet, Pravda EN, Lenta.RU.

Slovak, Bulgarian and Hungarian. Its content focuses on topics such as education and training, work and study, migration, justice, and democracy and peace in Europe. All content is exclusively distributed on the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube. DW acts as the consortium leader for the other nine partner broadcasters, including the umbrella organization of French international broadcasting, France Médias Monde (FMM) and other public and private media in Europe as well as for the Genshagen Foundation. This media project is co-funded by the European Commission and the French Ministère de la Culture. *ENTR* reaches an average of 9 million monthly views on all platforms.[45]

The InfoMigrants collaboration has been conducted since 2017, together with France Médias Monde and the Italian news agency Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (ANSA). The project is co-funded by the European Commission and offers information and background on the topics of migration and seeking refuge for users in countries from Africa, Asia and the Near and Middle East in six languages on websites and social media. InfoMigrants provides news and reports of personal experiences of refugees and migrants via digital output channels in Arabic, Bengali, Dari, English, French and Pashto. The content is distributed on its own website and on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), Telegram and Viber. In the 2025 reporting year, the project reached almost 14 million views per month across all platforms.[46]

DW has maintained an important partnership with Internationale Beethovenfeste Bonn gGmbH for more than 25 years. As a shareholder and media partner, DW supports the Beethovenfest particularly with regard to how it is perceived internationally. The annual classical music festival in Bonn, which in 2025 bore the motto “Alles ultra” recorded more than 30,000 visitors in August and September 2025, with more than 100 concerts and other events.[47] As usual, DW covered the festival with detailed reporting online and on TV. The “DW Classical Music” channel reached the 500,000-subscriber mark in July 2025 for the first time and in 2025 achieved a total of over 48 million views, 38% more than in 2024.[48] In 2025 the campus project, a cooperation between DW and Beethovenfest focused on Nigeria. Young musicians for the National Youth Orchestra of Germany met the Afrobeat band BANTU from Lagos, supported of the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM).[49]

Bonn Institute gGmbH, Bonn, together with DW, organized the DW Bonn Institute Constructive Journalism Fellowship for the third time in 2025. Eleven staff from various departments were trained as experts in constructive journalism. In November the Bonn Institute also put on a local workshop for managers on the subject of constructive leadership with attendants from DW and ARD. The Bonn Institute also put on the third “b° future festival” in October 2025, at which DW was represented by many speakers. The four shareholders of Bonn Institute are Deutsche Welle, RTL Deutschland, Rheinische Post Mediengruppe and the Constructive Institute at Aarhus University in Denmark. The Bonn Institute focuses on the consulting and networking of media organizations with regard to the constructive development of journalism.

[45] Engaged Views Jan 2025-Dez 2025, source: MAI 2026.

[46] Engaged views Jan 2025-Dec 2025, source: MAI 2026.

[47] https://corporate.dw.com/de/beethovenfest-bonn-2025-alles-ultra-deutsche-welle-begleitet-das-festival-als-medienpartnerin-und-streamt-live/a-73796191, https://www.bonn.de/bonn-erleben/beethoven/beethovenfest.php.

[48] https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-Programming/SitePages/500.000-Abonnenten-f%C3%BCr-YouTube-DW-Classical-Music---eine-Erfolgsgeschichte-aus-der-Nische.aspx & Engaged Views Jan 2025-Dez 2025, Quelle: MAI 2026.

[49] https://www.musikrat.de/en/about-us/veranstaltungen/veranstaltung/campus-2025-beethovenfest-bonn-bonn, https://www.dw.com/de/afrobeat-meets-beethoven-das-campus-projekt-2025/a-74278907.

The Goethe Institute is one of the long-term partner institutions whose transnational operations overlap with the work of DW. The collaboration takes place both in business policy and in the areas of reporting on culture, media development and content for learning German. The joint projects include an EU project with DW Akademie to support public sector media in the western Balkans, a documentary on sustainable architecture in Africa, the annual awarding of the Goethe Medal and a trilateral cooperation with the Humboldt Forum with the subject “Ownership and Heritage”.

1.5. New Work, diversity, sustainability

In its Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025, DW has laid out a diverse, digital corporate culture as a guideline for action. The goal of this initiative is to promote a change in internal culture to equip the organization for the challenges of the digital transition.

Under the term New Work DW combines initiatives and projects that strengthen digital, mobile and collaborative work. The goal of digital leadership – cross-editorial collaboration across hierarchical levels, being responsible for one’s own work and creating innovation-friendly conditions and a constructive feedback culture – remains the guide to action.

The interventions of the New Work team in 2025 supported teams and staff with the continual improvement of working efficiency, exchanging knowledge and activating expertise in 24 workshops and team coaching measures, 16 consultations on working methods and more than 30 dialog and information offerings. Furthermore, the employee satisfaction survey was a particular focus. Quantitative collection was followed by establishing a qualitative dialogue format: In round table meetings employees and managers came together for an organized, open dialogue to classify the results together and to develop practical approaches for improvement. The format strengthened transparency, trust and mutual understanding and established a new quality of communication between management and staff.

Globally people from more than 140 countries work for DW. With its targeted DEI management (diversity, equity, inclusion), DW is strengthening an inclusive corporate culture as a pluralistic and democratic media entity and setting the conditions to make the best use of the potential of its diversity at DW. DW is pursuing a strategy that removes structural barriers and strongly reflects the diversity of target groups’ views in DW media products to make them fit for the future. The measures include a variety of discussion courses, as well as diversity training courses for management and staff. DEI fosters a change in perspective, strengthens skills and affiliation with DW with needs-based projects, impartation of knowledge and multi-perspective dialogue spaces, thus supporting DW in fulfilling its social and media mission credibly in a way that is fit for the future, drives innovation forward and ensures its competitiveness. The focus group on racism laid the foundation in 2024 and 2025 for further professionalization in dealing internally with the subject of experiencing racism. The initiative is designed to ensure that DW remains an inviting and fair environment to work in, in which all staff feel appreciated and respected regardless of their nationality and ethnic background. Other training courses and information events serve to make staff aware of issues and create spaces for dialogue as part of the DEI Circle and together with the Antisemitism, Jewish Life, Israel and the Palestinian Territories team. Focus topics were the Middle East conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism. In its programming DW implemented its goal to improve digital accessibility in 2025; 90% of audiovisual content was subtitled. Furthermore, in November 2025 DW held the EBU Access Service Community Meeting in Bonn with the title “Accessibility & AI – Opportunities and Challenges in the Digital Age”, with more than 100 attendants.

DW included the subject of sustainability in its Strategic Plan for 2022-25 and in its goals. DW utilizes the resources available to it in an efficient and sustainable way in order to be one of the most sustainable media organizations in Germany by 2025. With its climate strategy DW is also planning to achieve net zero emissions by 2045 at the latest.

DW reports on progress with implementing measures to protect the climate and social sustainability and on awards for its commitment in its Sustainability Report, which until now has been compiled twice a year in accordance with the reporting standard of the German Sustainability Code (DNK). As a result DW achieved its basic goal for 2025 and is one of the most sustainable media organizations in Germany. One industry benchmark[50] showed that DW had built up an extensive sustainability management system, including a strategy, responsibilities, processes, goals and indicators within a few years. It has a complete climate balance and an ambitious climate protection goal, and practical reduction measures and its own sustainability budget are being actively promoted to achieve this. In its current climate balance for 2024 it was also possible to achieve the set reduction of overall greenhouse gas emissions by 39 percent (to 8,324 tonnes). But owing to the normalization of travel after the dip during the pandemic, the planned reduction in CO_2 could not be achieved in 2025 in the area of business trips. Alongside ecological sustainability, DW also actively fosters diversity and inclusion, with ambitious targets in social and economic sustainability.

1.6. AI, IT and cybersecurity

Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the key drivers of digital transformation, which offers transformational opportunities for nearly all areas of work and life.

To meet the increasing opportunities and challenges from the increasing use of AI, in 2024 DW set up a new interdepartmental AI team. This team examines key opportunities for the use of AI, such as the automating of editorial processes, personalizing of content and strengthening of IT security. As a public media organization, DW uses artificial intelligence according to established ethical and legal guidelines and in line with its mission, which ensures that the journalistic duty of care is met and that the creation of content remains under human control. In this way its journalistic responsibility and high-quality standards are always ensured. DW focuses on “weak AI”, which fulfils specific tasks more efficiently and effectively, for example by automating or aiding with creative processes. The use of weak AI allows DW to accelerate processes, improve the quality of content and at the same time maintain editorial control and ethical standards without restriction. To do this, DW has defined seven key areas of deployment, in which AI can add value to work: research, content creation, broadcasting of content, dialogue and feedback, analysis and archiving, administration and planning, and IT systems.

In the reporting year 2025, the strengthening of the AI team allowed the AI enablement of staff and managers to be advanced. DW-wide AI coordinators act as pilots through the augmented training and knowledge resources. The AI training program includes training courses for staff and managers and, starting from January 2026, a compulsory web-based training (WBT) course for all employees. As a key aid to orientation for editorial teams, DW offers highly practical AI guidelines, which govern the use of generative AI in journalistic and corporate programming.[51]

[50] DW Sustainability Management Benchmark Analyse based on public sustainability reports and websites of comparable media organizations and companies (dpa, Arte, Axel Springer, ARD, ZDF, Pro7Sat1, Bertelsmann, Telekom).

[51] [51] https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-ai-at-dw/SitePages/AI-at-DW-start.aspx#trainings-schulungsangebote-f%C3%BCr-mehr-ki-kompetenz, https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-People/SitePages/Trainings-und-Skills-zu-KI.aspx .

DW is continually investing in the expansion of its IT infrastructure to comply with its high legal, data protection, IT security and sovereignty standards by using its own servers and locally hosted models. To ensure the reliability of reporting, DW uses AI-supported tools and platforms like Truly Media, which help to verify content and counter disinformation. At the same time, DW is constantly developing in-house tools like PlainX and Findthatspot.io, which make editorial work easier. PlainX supports transcription, translation, voice-overs and subtitling, while Findthatspot.io is used for localization.[52] In administration, too, the increase in efficiency from the use of AI is being examined, including in the legal department for the AI supported analysis and checking of draft agreements.

DW Akademie looks at the subject of AI from the viewpoint of freedom of expression and information. Together with partner organizations, it has launched programs in all the regions of the world that address the entire spectrum of challenges associated with AI. These include building skills for the responsible use of AI in journalism as part of an AI fellowship program in Kenya, supporting media competence in the “Digital Resilience and dialogue” program in Cambodia and the analysis of the question of how media business models change under the influence of AI, within the DW Freedom think tank.

The challenges in the areas of information security and cybersecurity are constantly increasing. The DW IT and cybersecurity department counters these risks in a systematic and organized way. Setting up operational IT security provides active protection from threats posed by hackers and cyberattacks. In cooperation with ARD, DW operates modern IT security systems and security monitoring systems, so attacks on IT systems can be discovered and averted more quickly (detection and response systems). The information security management system (ISMS), set-up of which has begun, systematically identifies risks to information security and IT security and minimizes them using appropriate technical and organizational measures. The duties of IT and cybersecurity also include carrying out communication and online training to make DW staff aware of risks and IT security and to train them.

This department is also responsible for the necessary technical assistance related to internet freedom, that is, technical and organizational measures for evading internet censorship, so DW content is accessible in censored information spaces. In December 2025 DW published, together with DW Access, a newly developed app, which addresses the various challenges arising from internet censorship (technical censorship, offline function for weak internet or temporary shutdowns).[53] A smart proxy system was also developed, which makes the distribution of DW content more resilient to censorship.

[52] https://confluence.ard.de/spaces/INFOPLAINX/pages/498332592/User-Info+plain+X.; https://www.findthatspot.io/.

[53] https://corporate.dw.com/de/dw-access-neue-app-gegen-globale-onlinezensur/a-74930335, https://deutschewelle.sharepoint.com/SitePages/DW-Access--Die-verl%C3%A4ssliche-Antwort-auf-weltweite-Zensur.aspx.

2. Financial position, cash flows and financial performance

2.1. Financial position

In the reporting year, the organization's total assets decreased compared with the previous year by EUR 31.5 million or 3.8% to EUR 806.4 million.

Balance sheet **assets** are mainly shaped by the values from reinsurance policies reported under other loans and by the claim for settlement with the German Federal Government, which in total equate to 88.6% (prior year: 86.2%) of total assets.

The values arising from the reinsurance policies are to secure proportionately pension obligations; they increased compared with the previous year by EUR 20.4 million to EUR 212.4 million. This significant increase resulted from the subsequent financing of the decrease in the interest rate of the VTV pension scheme to 1.75% (prior year: 2.25%) and increases in the benefit rates. Overall assets with a carrying amount of EUR 243.3 million (prior year: EUR 225.1 million) are reported.

The claim for settlement against the Federal Government for pension, early retirement and other benefit obligations not covered by reinsurance policies decreased year on year by EUR 28.1 million to EUR 502.4 million. The change was due to an increase in asset values from reinsurance policies, which were EUR 20.4 million higher, and pension and benefit obligations, which were EUR 7.6 million lower, as at the balance sheet date.

Current assets decreased compared to the previous year by EUR 15.9 million to EUR 48.7 million and mainly include bank balances amounting to EUR 41.4 million (prior year: EUR 48.8 million). Of bank balances, EUR 24.9 million (prior year: EUR 25.0 million) is attributable to DW Akademie. A receivable due from BKM amounting to EUR 1.4 million (prior year: EUR 9.4 million) is reported under other assets.

Prepaid expenses amounting to EUR 11.1 million (prior year: EUR 17.5 million) were mainly formed for prepaid services related to entity pensions, IT maintenance, repair costs and purchased services as well as for broadcasting and satellite costs.

Equity and liabilities are mainly shaped by long-term provisions for pension and benefit obligations, which equate to 88.6% (prior year: 86.2%) of total assets.

The institution's capital (equity) decreased by the net loss for the financial year 2025 of EUR 20.2 million (prior year: EUR 1.9 million). The equity ratio at the end of the financial year was 4.8% (prior year: 7.1%), with total assets slightly lower than the previous year. The institution's equity allows DW to still be able to act at short notice in the event of future uncertainties. Particular reasons for these include DW's funding from federal funds and project funding as well as business risks identified in the risk analysis 2025/26 (see Section 3. Risk report). Because financing is ensured by the state, the liquidity Deutsche Welle requires is guaranteed at all times, irrespective of the equity the institution reports.

Provisions, at EUR 733.9 million, are EUR 8.5 million below the previous year's figure. They are formed for long-term pension and benefit obligations and for other staff obligations in particular.

The reduction in liabilities, by EUR 2.8 million to EUR 33.5 million, is due to the change in other liabilities adjusted to the reporting date. In the financial year 2025 the payment run for wage tax liabilities of employed staff was brought forward to the end of December 2025.

2.2. Financial performance

The income from federal subsidies presented in the profit plan, of EUR 458.6 million (prior year: EUR 445.6 million) predominantly refers to subsidies from the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM). Total subsidies from the BKM for the operating budget and investments for the budgeting year 2025 as well as funds to finance the old-age pensions of former DWFZ employees amount to EUR 425.5 million (prior year: EUR 410.5 million). Besides this, subsidies from grants for projects from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) amounting to EUR 24.7 million (prior year: EUR 23.1 million), almost entirely for DW Akademie, and project funding from the Federal Foreign Office (AA) for DW and DW Akademie amounting to EUR 7.7 million (prior year: EUR 11.1 million) are presented under this item. Added to this are subsidies from other funders, amounting to EUR 0.7 million (prior year: EUR 0.9 million).

Other operating income amounts to EUR 39.5 million (prior year: EUR 30.0 million) and is mainly composed of the change in the reinsurance capital by EUR 20.5 million (prior year: EUR 14.0 million) and the other project grants amounting to EUR 12.7 million (prior year: EUR 10.2 million).

At EUR 210.5 million, personnel expenses are EUR 15.5 million higher than the previous year's figure. This increase is reflected in wage and salary expenses and expenses for social security and expenses for support and is mostly caused by the collectively agreed pay increase as of 1 June 2025 by 4.71% and from one-off payments under the collective agreement to employed staff in March 2025.

Post-employment expenses amount to EUR 40.0 million (prior year: EUR 38.5 million). This increase is mainly caused by the reduction in the VTV pension scheme interest rate to 1.75% (previously 2.25%) and the financing of the increase in benefit rates of 4.71%.

The trend and measurement of pension provisions moved in the opposite direction. For the financial year 2025, the change in pension provisions resulted in a reduction of expenses that was EUR 3,6 million higher than in the previous year, amounting to EUR 16.5 million (prior year: EUR 12.9 million). The reason for this is the effect of the interest rate change, amounting to EUR 8.3 million (prior year: EUR 4.5 million) and from other additions/claims from pension obligations amounting to EUR 8.2 million (prior year: EUR 8.4 million).

Expenses for programming increased compared with the previous year by EUR 9.7 million or 6.1% to EUR 168.8 million. This development is particularly caused by the pay expenses from the adjustment of 4.71% to collective bargaining as of 1 June 2025 and by one-off payments to freelancers in March 2025. Furthermore, the increased use of freelancers subject to social security contributions had the effect of increasing expenses.

Other operating expenses in the financial year 2025 amount to EUR 114.7 million (prior year: EUR 97.4 million) and, as in the previous year, are mainly for maintenance, management and repair expenses, various purchased services, and lease and rental expenses. Furthermore, the change in the claim for settlement against the Federal Government, amounting to EUR 28.1 million, represents an expense as in the previous year, and so is presented under other operating expenses (prior year: EUR 17.3 million).

Depreciation of tangible assets and amortization of intangible assets in 2025 amounts to EUR 13.8 million and are thus slightly below the depreciation and amortization for the previous year (EUR 14.9 million).

Interest expenses of EUR 11.7 million (prior year: EUR 11.9 million) are mainly attributable to the reported interest portion from the compounding in the measurement of pension provisions and long-term provisions for personnel in this item.

Deutsche Welle closed 2025 with a net loss for the financial year of EUR 20.2 million (prior year: net loss of EUR 1.9 million).

2.3. Cash flows

The revenue and expenditure account to be compiled at the same time as the financial statements according to the budgetary system of the Federal Government is based on government accounting methods and, in contrast to the accounts given above compiled on commercial principles, exclusively follows payment transactions.

The revenue and expenditure account shows a decrease in cash funds of EUR 15.4 million to a total of EUR 43.0 million. The proportionate cash funds of DW Akademie amount to EUR 24.9 million (prior year: EUR 25.0 million). The proportionate cash funds of DW from bank balances and cash-in-hand amounts to EUR 16.7 million (prior year: EUR 24.0 million). Furthermore, Federal Government grants from the budgetary year 2025 not yet drawn down as at the balance sheet date, amounting to EUR 1.4 million (prior year: EUR 9.4 million) are assigned to DW cash funds. These funds were used up in the first quarter of 2026, particularly to settle payment and project obligations entered into in the 2025 financial year.

3. Risk report

Deutsche Welle analyses its risks regularly as part of its internal early risk detection system. According to DW policy, risk management is restricted to the taking of monetary risks and takes place with the active involvement of all the executives who report to management.

The following risk presentation and assessment is based on gross consideration (risk assessment before consideration of risk mitigation measures taken). Individual risks with an expected mid-range level of damage of EUR >2 million and a probability of occurrence of >25% are explained in more detail. These risks are differentiated in the DW risk report into **severe, considerable and significant risks**, depending on the extent of damage and probability of occurrence. No reporting is given here on risks that met these criteria in previous years but that no longer do so according to the updated risk assessment 2025/26.

As a result of the risk inventory 2025/26 the following severe risks (amount of damage > EUR 10 million) were identified:

The risk **“cyberattacks on DW IT infrastructure”** and the hindrances to production and loss of data that would result from them continues to be assessed as a severe risk, taking into consideration the total potential for damage and a gross probability of occurrence of 75% to 100%. The high probability of occurrence was derived from the increasingly frequent, successful attacks on public authorities and institutions, including attacks using encryption trojans. Successful attacks today cause significantly more damage – all the way to complete shut-down of the organization’s infrastructure. The probability of occurrence and amount of damage are reduced by a variety of technical and organizational measures, such as an intrusion prevention system, firewalls and virus filters on servers and PCs, setting up secure areas for server systems, as well as training and awareness-raising measures for all DW staff.

“**Geopolitical risks”** has been continued as a further severe risk. The continuing uncertainties of the international political landscape are creating risks to Deutsche Welle with respect to the planning and implementation of its strategic tasks. Geopolitical risks are reflected in changes in the security situation in the various regions and changes in the regulations applying to foreign broadcasters, NGOs, journalists, and in supply chains and procurement. The assessment of the probability of occurrence is 75% to 100% and is based, among other things, on the recognizable increase in censorship, restrictions or blocks to accessing platforms and to the partly arbitrary handling of AI risks by platform operators. Added to this is the competition between media enterprises and technological change. The severe risk of the consequences of war arising from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which was listed individually in previous years, has been included under the overall risk of “geopolitical risks”.

The **trend of the federal grant** continues to be recorded as a severe financial risk owing to the almost exclusive funding by the Federal Government. The risk of a reduction in the amounts of project grants from various funders can also be considered in this connection. Due to the short-term

nature of the fund commitments made by the Federal Government, the response time for unexpected reductions in funding is correspondingly short. The assessment of the probability of occurrence was increased again in the risk inventory for 2025/26 to 50%-75% (prior year: below 25%). In the previous year, the early announcement by the Federal Government of a structural increase in the federal grant led to the probability of occurrence being reduced. This assessment had to be revised for the risk inventory 2025/26. Reliable and long-term secured financing remains a major factor to the success and stability of DW as the German international broadcaster.

Considerable risks (amount of damage > EUR 5 million to EUR 10 million) arise from **events of *force majeure*, particularly from terror, war, crises, the deployment of project staff and journalists to crisis zones as well as natural disasters**, which Deutsche Welle has no way to influence. The probability of occurrence of this risk has been estimated at 50%-75%, taking into account current political and social events. In recent years, events have occurred, including the developments in Afghanistan and the outbreak of war in Ukraine, that particularly justified the need to immediately evacuate DW employees and local staff. By setting up a crisis team, DW was able to rapidly respond to these events with targeted measures, without a lot of paperwork and in a spirit of solidarity. Deutsche Welle has given a blanket commitment to its employees for deployments to war or crisis zones to give them safety and security in the case of accidents or illnesses (incl. continuing to pay salaries) that could arise from these deployments.

In the 2025/26 risk inventory, the evaluation of significant risks (EUR 2 million to EUR 5 million) was assessed as follows:

In production/broadcasting, there are **risks arising from cost increases** through dependencies on manufacturers or suppliers or from infringements of copyright law. Dependency on software manufacturers has increased in recent years due to a constriction in the market in some areas of application. The danger also remains of infringing copyrights inadvertently owing to the ever more extensive and complicated licenses. This risk is to be mitigated by collaborating in procurement with other broadcasters and centralizing license management, amongst other things.

4. Report on expected developments

In the final budget review meeting of the Budget Committee of the German *Bundestag* held in November 2025, funding for DW for 2026 was reduced by EUR 10.1 million compared with the previous year and a resolution passed by the *Bundestag* for EUR 415.4 million within the budget of the Commissioner for Culture and Media (BKM) in the Federal Budget Act 2026 [Bundeshaushaltsgesetz 2026]. In June 2026 additional personnel funds, amounting to EUR 10.8 million, were granted by the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF) for the 2026 financial year as a proportionate settlement for the moderate collective agreement which had a volume of around EUR 20 million. This covers 54% of the collective agreement costs for 2026, with the federal grant declining at the same time. Together with the personnel funds, the Federal Government's funding for 2026 thereby matches the previous year's level.

Apart from the federal grant, DW also receives earmarked project funding. This is often only granted during the year (DW budget 2026: EUR 4.1 million; DW Akademie budget 2026: EUR 27.0 million).

This gives DW a total for 2026 of EUR 446.5 million (prior year: EUR 458.6 million) in funding from the Federal Government, not including DW Akademie: EUR 419.5 million (prior year: EUR 431.6 million). Added to this for 2026 are the proportionate personnel funds for DW amounting to EUR 10.8 million. The increase to the collective agreement costs of DW Akademie have to be funded from project assistance itself. It is expected for the 2026 financial statements that DW will again report positive equity.

The Federal Government draft bill of the Federal Budget Act 2027 includes a grant for DW from the Commissioner for Culture and Media (BKM) amounting to EUR 408.6 million. Compared with the medium-term financial planning for the Federal Government, the Federal Government is budgeting to reduce the federal grant by EUR 16.9 million as part of a reduction of Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding. The Commissioner for Culture and Media (BKM) and the Federal Ministry of Finance have raised the prospect of personnel funds for 2027, too.

Due to increasing cost burdens for staff and pay (especially for collective agreements), as well as foreseeable increases in quantities and prices for operating agreements, particularly for IT licenses, expenses at DW continue to be under pressure. At the same time, sinking structural federal grants and only partial settlement of collective agreement costs have resulted in DW already having set up a new short-term savings packet for the years 2026/27, of around EUR 21 million, in order to reduce costs structurally, shortly after the one in 2024 (savings packet of EUR 20 million).

Structural cuts are being made strategically across the board. Developing, and above all implementing, this requires preparation time, meaning that in 2026 short-term action will be taken directly (particularly in postponing liquidity and measures related to investments and project delays) and structural savings will be made in 2026/27 at the earliest. These measures involve significant restrictions in the use of innovative future technologies like artificial intelligence, a decline in employment and a noticeable restriction in the content offerings of DW – despite the agreement to strengthen DW in the coalition agreement of the ruling parties.

At the same time there is a global systemic conflict between democracies and autocracies. Germany and Europe are on the search for strategic partnerships. With its independent reporting and journalistic offerings DW is already established in 32 languages (as of 07/2026) in the crucial target regions. Its content is relevant to regional contexts and reaches people on the same level and in their native language. The closure of USAID and the discontinuance of USAGM mean the responsibility of DW and DW Akademie as global media developers has continued to grow significantly.

The mission, mission statement and Strategic Plan for 2026-29 form the main framework for DW strategic actions in 2026.[54] According to its vision DW will be the leading voice of freedom in Europe by 2030. As a creditable and innovative media brand, it inspires its regional target groups with programming in dialogue from various perspectives. DW Akademie is the leading organization for media development internationally.

[54] DW Strategic Plan 2026-2029: https://corporate.dw.com/de/grundlagen/a-17650493.

The mission statement for future direction “Freedom. Innovation. Dialog.” is both a strategic compass and a commitment to independent journalism with impact. In light of an increasingly fragmented and repressive media landscape, growing disinformation and an increasing proportion of AI generated content, DW is consistently focusing its work on increasing the relevance of its programming, expanding its reach and strengthening dialogue with target groups around the globe. The goal is to contribute credible, high-quality and compatible information effectively and to offer direction, particularly in the DW target regions, where democracy and freedom are under pressure. To implement these objectives DW consistently bases its activities on the priority projects in the Strategic Plan 2026-2029.

In light of the increasing pressure on liberal principles, growing disinformation and a fragmented media landscape, DW is positioning itself as a “freedom brand” – an independent, credible and freedom-based source of information. The goal is to strengthen international market awareness, trust and connection and to establish DW as a global reference point for quality journalism.

In view of the global distortion and manipulation of social discourse, growing polarization and competition from automated contents, DW is investing in prominent, multi-perspective journalism at a high level of quality. Topical and regional focus, strict portfolio management and targeted expansion, and connection with existing DW expertise make the organization’s diversity and innovation useful in developing relevant, original content that has a recognizable value, which clearly distinguishes itself from AI generated media. A key element of this journalistic commitment is explanatory, investigative programming that looks for solutions and the systematic development of verification and fact-checking structures to combat disinformation.

In light of the restricted media freedom in many regions, increasing platform dependency and changes to global distribution methods, ensuring that DW can be found and is visible is of key importance to DW. DW is therefore strengthening its international presence. In future it will also be investing in the production of digital and cross-media programming and consistently developing digital and AI-supported distribution channels. To ensure visibility in an ecosystem increasingly shaped by AI, DW is expanding strategic partnerships with global platforms, AI services, digital media and European and German public, as well as private, media enterprises. At the same time internet filtering and blocks are continuing to increase in many priority target regions. DW is therefore focusing on allowing its target groups to gain secure access to independent information in spite of censorship and is investing in a targeted way to censorship avoidance measures like the DW Access app.

The advance of digitalization and increasing use of AI in media products require the targeted further development of processes, structures and skills. DW is therefore pressing forward with its digital and AI transformation in a systematic and responsible way in order to ensure efficiency, quality and organizational adaptability for the long-term. Due to the increasing jeopardizing of digital infrastructures, the expansion of IT, cyber and information security is being continued. In 2026 DW is reinforcing its protection mechanisms to secure business processes and safeguard the integrity of journalistic content. Digital and AI related competences are being strengthened with structured measures concerning qualifications, staff development and change management.

In terms of structure, in 2026 DW Akademie is retaining its focus on the consolidation required due to the shrinking projects budget. Another focus will be on internal restructuring, with the goal of making the organization and work processes simpler and more efficient. In terms of content, a main focus will be on the subjects of disinformation and combating it, ensuring the safety of media creators, especially in eastern Europe and Latin America, and on AI and its often disruptive effects on the media landscape.

Sufficient funding for DW is the basis to match the increased requirements and the relevance of Germany's international broadcaster in an environment of geopolitical rivalries in a multi-polar world order.

DW is making an important contribution by combating disinformation and declining press freedom around the world. In the regions that are strategically critical to Germany and Europe, if offers people a reliable source of information and effectively reflects German and European points of view. In view of the challenging geopolitical situation, it remains one of DW's primary goals, together with the Federal Government, to ensure future funding. This is the only way DW can fulfil its statutory mission as Germany's international broadcaster.

Bonn, 24 August 2026

Deutsche Welle Institution under public law

Barbara Massing

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