

Freedom of information: Investigations that changed the game

12 March 2026, Florence

This session highlighted how freedom of information can drive investigative journalism and public accountability across the Western Balkans. Using concrete FOI cases from 2024, the workshop showed how journalists obtained key documents on corruption, public spending, environmental harm, AI surveillance, and classified contracts, often after long battles with public institutions. The discussion also demonstrated that legal rights alone are not enough when institutions rely on silence, over-classification, or procedural obstruction. The main audience was journalists, researchers, and media professionals interested in practical investigation methods and access-to-information work. The methodology combined case studies, comparative analysis, and discussion of journalists' own experiences with FOI requests and appeals.

Speakers

Alexander Fanta, Follow the Money

Alexiane Lerouge, EBU

Amalie Thorlund Jepsen, DR Documentary, Danish Broadcasting Corporation.

Azra Milić, BIRN

Gianluca Liva, Radar Magazine

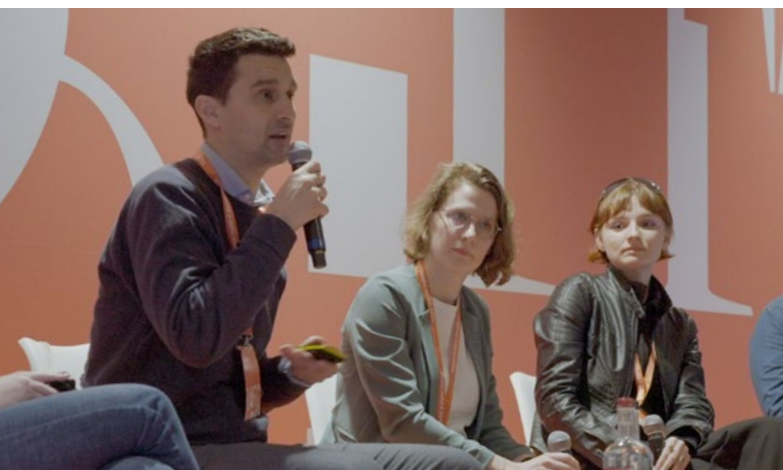
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- FOI remains one of the most effective tools for investigative journalism when institutions are willing to disclose information.
- Administrative silence, broad secrecy claims, and “ongoing investigation” arguments are recurring barriers across the region.
- Strategic litigation and appeals can force disclosure, but they often take months or years.
- The strongest stories often come from persistent follow-up, not just the initial request.
- Transparency issues around AI, environment, procurement, and public contracts are increasingly central to accountability reporting.

This session is especially useful as a practical example of how FOI-based investigations can lead to concrete public impact. Strong recurring terminology includes “administrative silence,” “public interest test,” “strategic litigation,” “classified information,” “transparency,” and “oversight bodies”.

The report also connects FOI to bigger structural issues such as media freedom, SLAPPs, and the changing information environment in the Western Balkans.

Read the report



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