

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

N1HRV

FEBRUARY 22, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

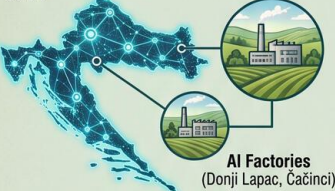
CROATIA'S AI PUSH & THE QUANTUM RACE: GLOBAL ORDER AT A CROSSROADS OF TECH SOVEREIGNTY & INSTITUTIONAL DECAY

A FRACTURING GLOBAL ORDER



TECH SOVEREIGNTY & EMERGING POWER

CROATIA'S NATIONAL AI STRATEGY 2032



Goal: Digital transformation by 2032.
'AI Factories' to revitalize rural regions.
Balancing EU regulation with agile tech-nationalism.

QUANTUM SUPREMACY & INFORMATION WARFARE



CHINA: Unveils 504-cubit quantum chip.
Signals lead in computational warfare capabilities. Threatens current encryption standards.

AI-DRIVEN INFORMATION CONTROL



GROKIPEDIA: Profit-driven, AI-curated alternative to Wikipedia.
A new phase in weaponizing information & monopolizing truth.

LEGACY INSTITUTIONAL DECAY & SOCIAL ROT

THE NORWAY-EPSTEIN COVER-UP



Resurfaced scandal implicates high-level diplomats & IPI.
Threatens European credibility & reveals elite impunity.

THE DIGITAL COLONIZATION OF YOUTH



Far-right groups recruit & radicalize teens on gaming platforms like Roblox.
Exploiting digital vulnerabilities.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY (A Counter-Trend)



Shift to bio-organic materials (straw, fungi) to meet carbon mandates. A desperate search for sustainable alternatives.

FUTURE OUTLOOK: RISKS & STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

KEY RISKS

- Regulatory Asphyxiation** (EU over-compliance stifles innovation).
- Quantum Decryption** (Global security collapse).
- Digital Radicalization** (Mass social unrest).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- Short Term:** Heightened diplomatic fallout.
- Medium Term:** EU regulatory clash over AI.
- Long Term:** Fragmented alliances force sovereign defense coalitions.

CONCLUSION

- Mid-sized states face a critical choice between rigid supranational compliance and agile, risky tech-nationalism in a breaking global order.

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CROATIA'S AGGRESSIVE AI
SOVEREIGNTY PUSH AND THE
QUANTUM COMPUTING ARMS RACE
HIGHLIGHT A DAY DEFINED BY THE
COLLISION OF EMERGING
TECHNOLOGY AND LEGACY
INSTITUTIONAL DECAY.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The global narrative on February 22, 2026, is dominated by a strategic pivot toward **technological sovereignty** and the radical redesign of critical infrastructure. Croatia is emerging as a focal point for internal EU debates, as leadership seeks to balance the "suffocating" regulatory environment of the European Union with an ambitious National Plan for Artificial Intelligence extending to 2032. This domestic drive for digital transformation, including the establishment of "AI Factories" in rural regions, represents a desperate attempt to secure economic relevance in a landscape increasingly defined by China's breakthrough in quantum computing and the growing influence of proprietary, AI-driven information silos like Grokipedia. The convergence of these trends suggests a fracturing global order where mid-

sized states must choose between rigid supranational compliance and agile, potentially risky, tech-nationalism.

Simultaneously, the "ghosts" of the early 2020s have resurfaced to destabilize European diplomatic credibility. The escalating investigation into the relationship between prominent Norwegian diplomats, the International Peace Institute (IPI), and **Jeffrey Epstein** has reached a critical mass, threatening the legacy of the Oslo Accords and implicating high-level state actors in a years-long cover-up. This scandal, paired with reports of far-right radicalization within gaming platforms like Roblox, paints a picture of a West struggling with internal moral and social rot even as it attempts to project strength against external rivals. The intersection of these scandals with the specter of a polarized U.S. foreign policy regarding NATO suggests that the traditional alliances of the 20th century are reaching a breaking point.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The Croatian National AI Strategy 2032

- The National Council for Digital Transformation is debating a comprehensive plan to integrate AI into public administration, healthcare, and infrastructure, aiming for completion by 2032 [digital transformation plan](#).
- Government officials are expressing open skepticism regarding EU over-regulation, citing the "failed" implementation of GDPR as a cautionary tale for the upcoming [AI Act enforcement](#).

- Plans for "AI Factories" in locations like Donji Lapac and Čačinci indicate a strategy of using high-tech investment to revitalize [neglected rural regions](#).

Quantum Supremacy and Information Warfare

- China has unveiled a 504-cubit quantum chip, surpassing the 500-cubit threshold and signaling a significant lead in [computational warfare capabilities](#).
- The launch of "Grokopedia" as a profit-driven, AI-curated alternative to Wikipedia marks a new phase in the weaponization of information and the [monopolization of truth](#).

Resurgence of the Epstein-Norwegian Scandal

- New evidence from DOJ files reveals a deeper-than-admitted connection between Terje Rød-Larsen and Jeffrey Epstein, leading to claims of a [massive diplomatic cover-up](#).
- The involvement of the Norwegian Crown Princess in these circles has moved from a social scandal to a [national security concern](#) regarding elite compromise.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Tech Sovereignty & AI

- Croatia is attempting to build a "centralized sovereign infrastructure" for data to prevent the fragmentation of public services [across different ministries](#).
- Oxford researchers have demonstrated the first instance of "distributed quantum computing," which could allow for scalable [networked quantum processors](#).

Climate & Extreme Weather

- Venice has operationalized a "Smart Control Room" to manage the catastrophic effects of mass tourism and [rising sea levels](#).
- German researchers are investigating "peatland restoration" as a critical carbon sink, as dry bogs are currently [releasing massive CO2](#).

Global Health & Biosecurity

- Institute for Molecular Virology in Germany is tracking avian influenza mutations that could potentially [jump species barriers](#) to humans.
- Research into "organoids"—miniature organs grown from stem cells—is being positioned as the future of [precision drug testing](#) to prevent future pandemics.

Information Warfare & Disinformation

- Extremist groups are utilizing the Roblox platform to recruit and radicalize young teenagers through [simulated terror attacks](#).
- State-sponsored "fact-checking" initiatives are being framed as a "fictional ministry of news" to [combat systemic bias](#) in digital media.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Architecture of Sustainability

A major theme today is the shift from "steel and concrete" to bio-organic construction materials. The DW Science Show highlights a significant German effort to utilize straw as a load-bearing material, estimating that 7

million tons of unused straw could build [140,000 houses annually](#). This is paired with "mushroom leather" clothing and lab-grown fish, suggesting a broader movement toward a circular economy driven by resource scarcity and **carbon mandates**.

Elite Impunity and Institutional Erosion

The Norwegian Epstein scandal serves as a proxy for a broader narrative of institutional decay. The transcripts detail a "huge cover-up" involving diplomats like Rod-Larsen and the mismanagement of the International Peace Institute [over several decades](#). This theme of elite corruption is echoed in the U.S., where the Trump administration's stance on NATO and Ukraine is framed as a betrayal of [human and democratic values](#).

The Digital Colonization of Youth

There is a recurring concern regarding the "invisible" influences on the younger generation. From the high cost of living in Lisbon and Prague driving youth into suburban isolation [and precarious work](#), to the exploitation of digital vulnerabilities by extremist recruiters in gaming worlds, the transcripts suggest a generational rift. This is further exacerbated by the introduction of AI-driven "religious guidance" apps, which represent a new frontier in the [automation of belief systems](#).

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Croatia: The Bureaucratic Friction

- Internal debates reveal a significant lack of specialized personnel to implement the digital transformation, with officials admitting that "finding people to work there" is a [major hurdle](#).
- Public sentiment is being managed through the promise of "virtual assistants" to simplify the [citizen-state relationship](#).

Norway: Diplomatic Fallout

- The government is under fire for continuing to employ Mona Juul as a diplomat despite her husband's [ties to Epstein](#), indicating a crisis of accountability in the foreign ministry.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

EU vs. The Tech Giants

The European operating environment is characterized as a "regulatory fortress" that is actively driving firms to leave for [more liberal jurisdictions](#). Croatian leadership explicitly frames this as a conflict between European "burocracy" and the need for "innovative space." Meanwhile, the U.S. is portrayed as a source of **unpredictability**, with the upcoming 2026 midterms seen as a referendum on the country's [commitment to the West](#).

China: The Strategic Competitor

China is framed as a highly competent actor that is successfully leveraging Olympic legacies to build a multi-billion dollar winter

sports industry while simultaneously achieving [technological breakthroughs](#) in quantum computing.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The global economic outlook is defined by high-tech specialization and a desperate search for sustainable alternatives to traditional manufacturing. Youth unemployment in Portugal remains a critical risk at 20%, even as the tourism sector [continues to grow](#). Market sentiment appears focused on "green" infrastructure and the monetization of AI-curated data.

- **Green Construction:** German estimates suggest straw-based building could disrupt the concrete industry, given that 40% of CO2 comes from [current materials](#).
- **Tourism Economy:** Venice entry fees (5 Euro) and the growth of the Chinese winter tourism market (\$140 billion) show a shift toward [experience-based revenue](#).
- **Energy Costs:** New concrete-based batteries from MIT represent a potential breakthrough in [low-cost residential storage](#).

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

Personnel shifts today are centered on the fallout of long-standing scandals and the appointment of new "digital czars" to manage emerging technologies.

- **Terje Rød-Larsen:** His resignation from the IPI and the ongoing police investigation into his Epstein ties represent a major [fall from grace](#).

- **Nick Reiner:** The son of Hollywood legend Rob Reiner has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder, a [catastrophic reputational event](#) for a prominent American family.
- **Croatian "AI Chief":** A debate is currently raging over whether to appoint a single head of AI or utilize a [distributed agency model](#).

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The broadcast exhibits a strong bias toward **innovation and science** (Euromax, DW Science), using these segments to project a future-oriented, optimistic tone. However, this is undercut by the "Lead Story" prominence of the Epstein investigation and the youth radicalization report, creating a sense of underlying social dread. The Croatian segments are heavily nationalistic, focusing on "sovereignty" and the "revitalization" of Lapac. Notably, there is a conspicuous lack of coverage regarding the **actual ground situation in Ukraine**, focusing instead on the political debates surrounding the war in Washington and Brussels.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

World leaders are categorized largely by their relationship to the "technological frontier" or "moral accountability."

COUNTRIES

- **Croatia:** Framed as a small but **agile digital disruptor** attempting to escape EU bureaucratic "deadlocks" [for the future](#).
- **China:** Portrayed as a **disciplined, high-performance** actor that is "booming" in both sports and [advanced technology](#).

- **Norway:** Framed as a nation whose **diplomatic elite is compromised** by historical ties to criminal networks [and financial loans](#).

LEADERS

- **Donald Trump:** Portrayed as a **chaotic and transactional** leader who is "betraying" traditional Western [alliances and values](#).
- **Elon Musk:** Characterized as a **disruptive and potentially biased** media mogul whose "Groklopedia" threatens [neutral information sharing](#).
- **Terje Rød-Larsen:** Framed as a **corrupt and evasive** figure who utilized "conspiracy theory" rhetoric to mask [criminal associations](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The battlefield for public perception is shifting from traditional news to AI-curated platforms and gaming environments. The launch of "Groklopedia" is a clear narrative seeding effort by XAI to **monetize and control** the flow of information [historically managed by volunteers](#). Simultaneously, the report on the "fictional ministry of news" for students suggests that states are now **pre-emptively inoculating** their populations against fake news through [simulated environments](#).

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **The End of Wiki-Neutrality:** The success of profit-driven AI encyclopedias will likely lead to the "ghettoization" of information, where different political blocs utilize [distinct, AI-generated truths](#).

- **Croatian Rural Revitalization:** If the AI Factories in Donji Lapac succeed, it will provide a new blueprint for [technologically-driven rural development](#) across the EU.
- **Biomaterial Mainstreaming:** Within five years, straw-based "carbon reservoir" housing will move from experimental labs to [commercial real estate staples](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Expect heightened police activity in Norway regarding the Epstein files and a possible diplomatic reshuffle in the [Middle East envoy office](#). Croatia will likely see a surge in domestic debate over the "AI Factory" locations.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): The EU will likely issue a formal response to Croatia's AI Plan, possibly triggering a regulatory [clash over data privacy](#). China will begin integrating its 500-cubit quantum chips into [military-industrial supply chains](#).

Long Term (1-5 Years): The fragmentation of NATO alliances, driven by U.S. domestic polarization, will force EU member states into [sovereign defense tech coalitions](#).

RISK ASSESSMENT

- **Regulatory Asphyxiation:** EU AI Act over-compliance could cripple small economies. Triggers: Aggressive Brussels mandates. Likelihood: High. Impact: Stifled innovation. Mitigations: National [sovereign infrastructure buffers](#).

- **Zoonotic Pandemic 2.0:** Avian flu mutation in uncontrolled livestock. Triggers: Species jump in industrial farms. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Global lockdowns. Mitigations: Investment in [organoid drug testing](#).
- **Quantum Decryption:** China's 504-cubit chip threatens current encryption standards. Triggers: Successful field deployment of quantum attacks. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Collapse of global financial and [military data security](#). Mitigations: Accelerated PQC (Post-Quantum Cryptography) adoption.
- **Digital Radicalization:** Exploitation of youth in gaming platforms leading to lone-wolf attacks. Triggers: High-profile "Roblox-coordinated" incident. Likelihood: High. Impact: Massive social unrest. Mitigations: Advanced fact-checking [education for minors](#).
- **Venetian Infrastructure Collapse:** Tourism and tides overwhelming the "Smart Room." Triggers: Extreme weather event in late 2026. Likelihood: Moderate. Impact: Irreparable loss of [cultural heritage sites](#). Mitigations: Sustainable [tourism cap enforcement](#).

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts fail to address the **energy requirements** for China's quantum chip deployment or the Croatian AI factories.
- There is no mention of the **Russian perspective** on the panslavist history mentioned in the Križanić segment [or its modern implications](#).
- The coverage of "lab-grown fish" ignores the **potential economic collapse** of traditional fishing communities in Calabria [and other Mediterranean regions](#).

- The U.S. coverage is focused on elite politics and neglects the **macroeconomic impact** of AI on the American labor market.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The "Sovereign" Illusion:** Croatia's push for an independent AI plan might actually be a coordinated EU pilot program to test **managed deregulation** without risking a broader union-wide backlash.
- **The Quantum Bluff:** China's 504-cubit chip may be computationally impressive but functionally unstable in non-laboratory settings, serving as a **strategic distraction** from their traditional silicon supply chain vulnerabilities.
- **Black Swan Event:** An AI-generated "religious guidance" bot could trigger a **mass cult movement** that destabilizes a major European city, forcing a radical ban on all AI-human interactions in the religious sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- Prioritize the creation of "Human Potential" hubs to address the specialized labor shortage [in digital sectors](#).
- Formalize biosecurity protocols for zoonotic monitoring, focusing on [domestic feline transmission](#).
- Review diplomatic vetting processes in light of the [Norwegian cover-up findings](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- Investigate supply chain pivots toward straw-based and [organic construction materials](#).
- Diversify digital information sourcing to mitigate the risk of [AI-biased corporate encyclopedias](#).
- Explore investment opportunities in [concrete-based energy storage](#) as a hedge against rising lithium costs.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The primary legislative activity discussed involves the **Croatian National Plan for AI 2032**, which is currently undergoing a period of public comment and inter-ministerial refinement. Additionally, the **EU AI Act** and **GDPR relaxations** are being debated as critical benchmarks for national law.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:** Croatian AI Strategy 2032 (Proposed); A draft proposal for centralized interoperability between the [Justice and Digital Transformation ministries](#).
- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:** The 3rd session of the National Council for Digital Transformation; Press briefing by the IPI on [Terje Rød-Larsen's resignation](#).

KEY STORIES

- **Croatian AI Sovereignty Debate:** A high-level discussion on the 2032 AI plan, focusing on infrastructure in rural areas like Donji Lapac and the struggle to balance [EU regulation with innovation](#).

- **China Quantum Breakthrough:** Reporting on China's new 504-cubit quantum chip and its implications for [computational supremacy](#).
- **The Epstein-Norwegian Cover-up:** An investigative report on the long-term diplomatic cover-up involving Terje Rød-Larsen, [Jeffrey Epstein](#), and the IPI.
- **Straw Construction in Germany:** A science segment on using straw bales to build 140,000 houses per year, [reducing CO2 emissions by 40%](#).
- **Digital Radicalization on Roblox:** Analysis of far-right extremist groups using gaming platforms to recruit [twelve-year-olds](#).
- **Venice Smart Room:** The city of Venice utilizing a high-tech data hub to manage the [impact of mass tourism](#).
- **Mushroom Leather and Lab Fish:** Euromax reports on Ana Sangosania's mushroom clothing and the development of [lab-grown fish fillets](#).
- **Sarajevo 1984 Nostalgia:** A cultural look back at the 40th anniversary of the Sarajevo Olympics and the [legacy of the games](#).
- **MIT Concrete Batteries:** Research into doping cement with carbon black to create [energy-storing building blocks](#).
- **Nick Reiner Murder Charge:** The son of Rob Reiner is charged with a [double homicide in Hollywood](#).
- **AI Religious Guidance:** The development of "AI Jesus" in Lucerne and virtual rabbis for [religious study](#).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend

analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news

coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

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