

EBU

OPERATING EUROVISION AND EURORADIO

VIEWPOINT
**MEDIA
FREEDOM
AND
PLURALISM**

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KEY MESSAGES

1. PSM ARE DRIVEN BY QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIVERSITY

It is the remit and role of PSM to contribute to both media pluralism and to a democratic society. This crucial contribution is enshrined in EU and Member State law. Sustainable and predictable funding backed by clear, appropriate legal frameworks that are effectively applied are necessary to protect the editorial independence of PSM from political influence, while at national level their role and activities are guided by sound governance principles and supervised by independently operated bodies.

The presence of PSM on the media market ensures the availability of high-quality, impartial and independent news and information, while making a valuable contribution to the media sector as a whole.

2. POINT OF REFERENCE IN A CONVERGING ENVIRONMENT

The digital revolution and accelerated media convergence have given rise to new factors impacting media freedom and pluralism. For PSM, it notably entails bringing the impartial point of reference that they have traditionally provided to the online world in order to meet citizens' evolving expectations.

From a wider perspective, the advent of the digital media environment means that technological factors need to be taken into account to ensure that citizens are free to consult content and express diverse views. An open internet, non-discriminatory search facilities, and appropriate allocation of spectrum resources are thus essential elements of media freedom and pluralism today.

3. SECURE MEDIA INDEPENDENCE, TRANSPARENT OWNERSHIP

The Protocol to the EU Treaty on the system of public broadcasting in the Member States clearly says that it is up to Member States to organize PSM and define their public service remit as they see fit. But while the opportunities and threats to media pluralism and freedom vary significantly across the EU, all lawmakers have a duty to protect and preserve these principles.

The EU can help Member States to preserve or strengthen media freedom and pluralism by monitoring media independence and media ownership, while taking the necessary steps to ensure that new EU legislation is consistent with the principles of media freedom and pluralism.



THE ISSUE

Informed citizenship and the fundamental right to freedom of expression and information can only be guaranteed in any democratic society through media freedom and pluralism supported by the availability of high-quality, independent and impartial news.

Media freedom implies editorial independence, the protection of journalists and the unrestricted public access to information sources. **Media pluralism** means that citizens have access to a range of sources, views and opinions and that no single media player has an overwhelming influence over the political agenda.

The written press, television, radio, social networks, blogs and other online media are all an integral part of a diverse, pluralistic and rich media environment.

Any threat to the independence and availability of these media, whether via governmental interference, the intimidation of journalists, a lack of transparency in ownership structures and concentration, overriding commercial interests, or deliberate attempts to block access to content, upsets the overall state of media freedom and pluralism in any European country. And yet each media sector and each European country faces distinct threats, challenges and opportunities.

What is the role of public service media (PSM) in this equation?

The crucial role of PSM in media freedom and pluralism in the EU Member States and, by extension, the construction of well informed public opinion, is clearly outlined in the EU Treaty Protocol on the system of public broadcasting in the Member States. It highlights that national public broadcasting is *“directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and the need to preserve media pluralism”*.

EBU Members – public broadcasters in and around Europe – play a leading role in supporting and strengthening media freedom and pluralism. Emphasizing the need to gain the trust of audiences every day, the EBU Core Values Declaration is driven by the principles of universality, pluralism, independence, diversity, and accountability towards the public. It underlines *“the importance of sharing and expressing a plurality of views and ideas”* and the existence of *“a public sphere in which all citizens can form their opinions and ideas.”*

The special quality of PSM as a bastion of media freedom and pluralism in Europe must be duly reflected in national media legislation and policy. Although the specific mission, structure and funding of national PSM should clearly remain a matter for national legislators, the EU can uphold media freedom and pluralism by keeping a watchful eye on media independence and media ownership. Media freedom and pluralism should also be taken into account whenever relevant in the drafting of new legislation and policies.

1. PSM ARE DRIVEN BY QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIVERSITY

PSM governance: the foundations of independence, plurality and accountability

The organization of PSM revolves around strict national rules and internal statutes aiming to ensure that they are independent, universal, pluralistic, diverse, accessible to all, representative of their audiences and accountable to the public. These values are vital to maintain a relationship of trust with their audiences.

The editorial independence of PSM must be scrupulously respected by governments, providing adequate and secure funding as well as independent reviews. These institutional guarantees enable PSM to provide high-quality programming that meets audience expectations.

Impartial and investigative journalism lie at the heart of the PSM remit

The PSM remit focuses in particular on informing citizens with impartial news, current affairs and coverage of representative political assemblies.

It is a responsibility that PSM fulfil by:

- investing in parts of the value chain underserved by the market, e.g. training, investigative journalism and newsgathering;
- challenging authority and testing prevailing assumptions;
- prioritizing programming excellence, thereby raising the quality bar for all media;
- dedicating airtime to serious, impartial and independent news and current affairs;
- contributing to a public sphere in which all citizens can form their own opinions and ideas – with recognized impact.

In 2011 Germany's Association of State Media Authorities found that, "daily airtime allocated to political journalism and controversial subjects by private broadcasters ranges from 4% to no programmes at all", whereas public nationwide television channel Das Erste "averaged a daily percentage of 18% of airtime allocated to political journalism and controversial subjects, while ZDF averaged 17%."



Reaching out to all audiences with diverse content

European PSM foster the expression of cultural diversity in Europe by producing or commissioning a high proportion of domestic programmes, reflecting the diversity of their audiences with special attention to minorities, and offering a balanced mix of factual programming, fiction, entertainment and news.

This specific attention to diversity and focus on reaching out to all audiences is a common feature for all PSM in Europe. This can be achieved by giving a distinctive and independent editorial remit to different outlets, or by establishing an internal organization modelled on the society PSM serve.

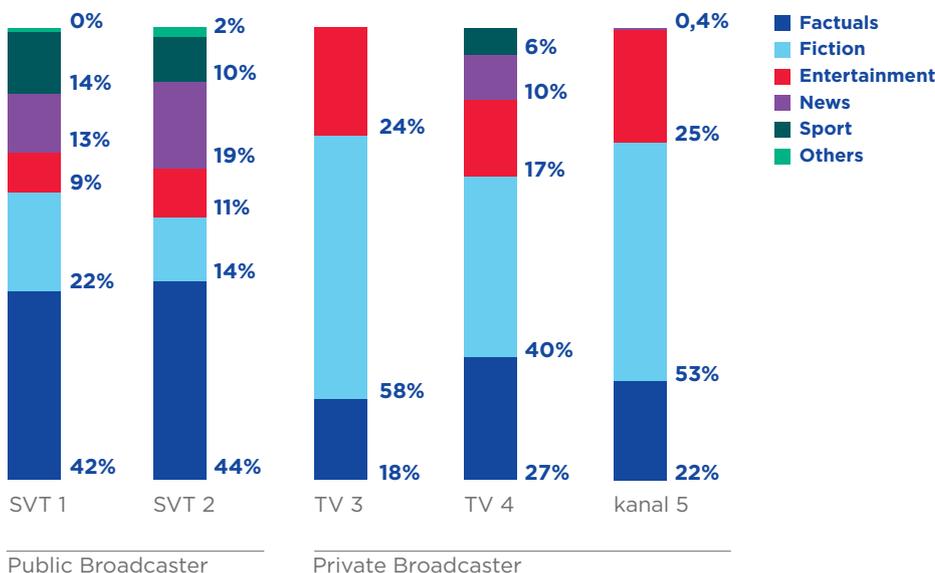
A positive role in a wider media market

PSM continue to offer services that have a positive impact on the economy by creating jobs, training media professionals, commissioning high-quality European content and developing technical standards, that then serve the whole media and creative sector.

As autonomous and independent organizations, PSM compete with purely commercial media in the production of high-quality content. Such editorial competition is by and large audience-driven rather than revenue-driven. The presence of PSM therefore encourages the commercial sector to invest in quality content without hindering them from doing so.

A study on the implementation of the provisions of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive on the promotion of European works in audiovisual media services of December 2011 found that European programmes are more prominent on leading channels and on public channels. The highest ranking public channels offer 85–95% of European works (EEN, ETV, France 2, France 3, ARD Das Erste, ZDF, Rai1, Ned1, Ned2, SVT1, BBC1), while even the lowest ranking public channels are still above the sample average.

SVT SWEDEN PRODUCES 90% OF ITS DIVERSE RANGE OF PROGRAMMES IN SWEDEN
PROGRAMMING BY GENRE IN SWEDEN: PUBLIC CHANNELS VS. PRIVATE BROADCASTERS (2009-2010)



A survey by WIT (World Information Tracking) running from January 2009 to September 2010 in the main European TV markets on the diversity of content offered by PSM showed that diversity is the speciality of PSM in Europe: 79% of shows on diversity are aired by PSM, while 95% of “diversity-themed” non-scripted shows and 71% of “diversity-themed” fictional shows originate from PSM.

FIGURE: PSM offer a more balanced programme mix with greater focus on news and underserved genres.

SOURCE: EBU Report: Public Service Media delivering on diversity (2010)

2. POINT OF REFERENCE IN A CONVERGING MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

PSM offer a point of reference in an ever more complex media environment

The digital revolution has hugely benefited the plurality of information sources, with blogs and social networks in particular adding an extra dimension to freedom of expression. But a larger number of sources and voices has not necessarily improved the quality of information, or its accuracy.

Citizens are fully aware of this, and they multi-source information. While turning to online newspapers and blogs for opinion and their editorial approach, they also give a prominent place to PSM-made content. This is because citizens know that they can turn to PSM as a point of reference for multi-sourcing: PSM offer guidance by providing a baseline of impartial online content. In turn, the online availability of PSM strengthens citizens' trust in online media as a whole.

Non-discriminatory access to content on all platforms

Convergent media devices such as smartphones or connected television sets, as well as new consumption patterns driven by the internet, imply that transmission and distribution technologies have a decisive influence on access to and choice of online information.

The open internet and broadcaster access to radio spectrum, which ensure that citizens have access to all available online and broadcast media, are therefore crucial to media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment. Likewise, search facilities must enable citizens to access the media of their choice in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. PSM must be able to universally

deliver diverse content to all citizens, on all platforms.

Increasing online gatekeeper power needs a counter-balance

News aggregators, search engines, social networks, and app stores play a key role in enabling users to access an increasing range of news sources in the online world.

But when large and vertically integrated media conglomerates, platform operators and internet intermediaries are in a position to quickly establish market positions that allow them to control access to platforms as a gatekeeper, they can intentionally or involuntarily limit accessibility to content and cross-promote their services, distorting the process of public opinion forming.

The other resources available to counter such concentration include the presence of autonomous, independent PSM ensuring a healthy diversity of voices and avoiding media driven solely by commercial interests.



"9. The development of new information and communication technologies gives public service media an unrivalled opportunity to fulfil their remit in new and more effective ways, allowing them to offer better-targeted and more interactive content and services. It also allows public service media to enter into a meaningful dialogue with their audiences, engaging them as stakeholders, participants and co-creators, rather than as simply passive recipients. This is particularly relevant to services aimed at youth, whose use of internet-delivered, mobile and participatory media is significant. Successful adaptation and adoption of new platforms assist public service media in fulfilling additional purposes within their public service remit."

Declaration by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on Public Service Media Governance

Adopted on 15 February 2012 at the 1134th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies

3. SECURE MEDIA INDEPENDENCE, TRANSPARENT OWNERSHIP

Monitoring media pluralism to safeguard independence

Europe generally enjoys a free and diverse media sector, but this is all too often taken for granted. If the independence of PSM comes under threat – notably through governmental interference – media freedom and pluralism are at stake. When required, the EBU provides legal and technical assistance to improve the situation for PSM in Europe. The recent Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and the EBU on enabling the democratic role of PSM in EU enlargement countries illustrates the importance of the PSM role in freedom of expression and media pluralism.

But more can still be done, and the EU can notably offer valuable assistance to Member States by monitoring media freedom and pluralism with indicators that take account of the specificity of each national media environment.

Media ownership transparency can further strengthen pluralism

At national and at EU level, competition law applied in the commercial sector can reduce the effects of media concentration to some extent. But this only applies to mergers and takeovers and it does not guarantee media pluralism.

In general, media ownership is becoming more concentrated, complex and at times more opaque. This situation points towards the need to enhance the transparency of media ownership, in which the EU could play a key role in establishing a media ownership observatory.

Convergent media broadens impact of EU policies

The importance of information society issues, such as net neutrality, on media freedom and pluralism highlights that a number of policies dealt with at EU level can have a significant impact on the state of media freedom and pluralism in Europe.

Similarly, the recent Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and the EBU on enabling the democratic role of PSM in EU enlargement countries illustrates that EU enlargement policies can positively impact freedom of expression and democracy.

The European Commission should accordingly include a media freedom and pluralism check in its impact assessments for new legislation whenever appropriate.



ABOUT THE EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION (EBU)

The EBU is the world's foremost alliance of public service media organizations, with Members in 56 countries in Europe and beyond.

The EBU's mission is to defend the interests of public service media and to promote their indispensable contribution to modern society. It is the point of reference for industry knowledge and expertise.

The EBU operates EUROVISION, the media industry's premier distributor and producer of top quality live sport and news, as well as entertainment, culture and music content.

The EUROVISION satellite and fibre network is the largest and most reliable in the world directly plugged in to public service media everywhere.

www.ebu.ch and **www.eurovision.com**

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EMPOWERING SOCIETY: A DECLARATION ON THE CORE VALUES OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA **Universality – Independence – Excellence – Diversity – Accountability – Innovation**

This is what we are. This is what we promise.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to standards and recommendations developed by the Council of Europe¹, PSM should:

- act as a reference point for all members of the public, offering universal access;
- be a factor of social cohesion and integration of all individuals, groups and communities;
- be a source of impartial and independent information and comment, and of innovative and varied content that complies with high ethical and quality standards;
- be a forum for pluralistic public discussion and a means of promoting broader democratic participation of individuals;

and

- be an active contributor to audiovisual creation and production and greater appreciation and dissemination of the diversity of national and European cultural heritage.

¹ Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states On the Remit of Public Service Media in the Information Society, 31 January 2007

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