[DE] Media and digital policy in the planned coalition agreement between the CDU, CSU and SPD for the next federal government

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Dr. Jörg Ukrow
Institute of European Media Law (EMR), Saarbrücken/Brussels

At the beginning of April, the CDU, CSU and SPD parties signed a coalition agreement that will form the basis of their government in the forthcoming 21st legislative period of the German Bundestag. The coalition partners of the new federal government believe that independent and diverse media ensure free public debate. Within the dual media system, they favour both pluralistic public service broadcasting and fair regulatory and refinancing conditions for private media. They are reluctant to impose additional advertising restrictions and are examining the introduction of a levy for online platforms that use media content, with the proceeds benefiting the relevant media location. They want to create legal certainty with regard to non-profit status in order to ensure nationwide coverage by journalistic services. According to the agreement, competition law must be further developed at all levels and dovetailed with federal state media concentration law, including with a view to scrutinising mergers between media companies and providers of media-related infrastructure. Cooperation in public service broadcasting will become the rule following current federal state reforms. The new federal government therefore wants to create an exemption from competition law. Cooperation between private media companies will also be made easier, while terrestrial broadcasting will be protected as critical infrastructure.

The coalition agreement considers the targeted influencing of elections as well as disinformation and fake news, which are now commonplace, to be serious threats to democracy, its institutions and social cohesion. It states that the deliberate dissemination of false factual claims is not covered by freedom of expression. The media regulator, which is independent of the state, must therefore be able to take action to combat manipulation of information as well as hatred and agitation on the basis of clear legal guidelines, while safeguarding freedom of opinion. Systematically deployed manipulative dissemination techniques such as the mass and coordinated use of bots and fake accounts must be prohibited.

The new German government believes that the further development of European media law must respect the subsidiarity principle. The Member States' ability to protect cultural and media diversity must be preserved in all EU legislation. The new coalition supports the establishment of a European media platform with the involvement of ARTE.

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The protection of children and young people will also be strengthened thanks to improved interdisciplinary cooperation. Children and young people should be able to navigate the digital world safely. An expert commission will contribute to this by developing a strategy for the protection of children and young people in the digital world and supporting its implementation across different sectors and levels. Platform operators and providers will be held responsible for effective youth protection in the digital world, including through mandatory age verification procedures and safe default settings for children and young people on digital devices and services. According to the coalition agreement, a coherent legal framework between Europe, the federal government and the federal states in the area of youth protection in the media offers the opportunity to dismantle parallel structures and facilitate effective law enforcement. For this reason, the *Jugendschutzgesetz* (Youth Protection Act) will be designed coherently with the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the *Jugendmedienschutz-Staatsvertrag* (State Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media).

The coalition parties see digital policy as social policy. They want to strengthen digital skills in order to enable everyone to participate in society and make democracy more resilient to disinformation and manipulation. Democracy education, media and news skills will be strengthened in partnership with the federal states. According to the coalition agreement, confident, safe and critical use of digital tools and media makes society more resilient, democracy stronger and the economy more competitive. The new federal government therefore wants to launch a cross-age digital skills campaign to create innovative and sustainable offerings for all population groups. Measures will be taken to combat discrimination in the digital space and protect basic digital rights. People should be able to rely on a digitally sovereign state that is capable of taking action where required.

Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD 21. Legislaturperiode

https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag2025_bf.pdf

Coalition agreement between CDU, CSU and SPD, 21st legislative period

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