

European Commission: Independent Study on Indicators for Media Pluralism in the Member States

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In October 2009, the second stage in the European Commission's three-step plan for the advancement of the debate on media pluralism within the European Union was concluded. The objective of the study, a collaborative project between three separate academic institutes and a number of subcontractors in the capacity of "country correspondents", was the development of a monitoring tool (labeled 'Media Pluralism Monitor' or MPM) for identifying and assessing potential risks to media pluralism in the EU Member States by means of a set of indicators. These cover a variety of pertinent considerations over three basic fields: legal, economic and socio-cultural.

The MPM has adopted a broad notion of media pluralism, covering political, cultural, geographical, structural and content-related dimensions. It recognises that media of all types - public service, community and commercial, as well as broadcasting, print and new media - contribute toward media pluralism and that a broad variety of media types and channels/titles is necessary so as to ensure pluralism. At the same time, different policies and regulatory approaches are appropriate for different types of media. These distinctions should be reflected in the risk indicators. The indicators themselves, in all of the three basic fields of research, span a broad range of possibilities. These can be grouped into five main risk domains: (1) the risk domain 'pluralism of media ownership and control'; (2) the risk domain 'pluralism of media types and genres'; (3) the risk domain 'political pluralism in the media'; (4) the risk domain 'cultural pluralism in the media'; (5) the risk domain 'geographical pluralism in the media'; The risk outcome should be considered as a whole, without either elevated or lowered importance being attached to any particular domain, which could skew the assessment of the reported risks.

So as to ensure applicability, accuracy, sustainability and scalability, the proposed MPM was tested for proof of concept by means of four validation strategies. These were: (1) an internal review by individual team members; (2) a peer review of the methodology and implementing processes; (3) a meta-modelling exercise in a selection of third countries (the United States, Australia and Switzerland); (4) an external review by means of a public consultation, including a workshop.

Potential users of the MPM would include not only regulators or ministries, but also NGOs, parliamentary committees, academic scholars, civil society organisations, media companies, etc. Implementation could also result from the combined efforts of multiple stakeholders. The assessment is best carried out by a credible entity in a transparent manner and in consultation with stakeholders.

The first step in the Commission's approach for protecting media pluralism consisted of a Staff Working Paper published 16 January 2007 (see IRIS 2007-3: 8). The final step will be a Commission Communication on indicators for media pluralism in the Member States, to be followed by a broad public consultation. This step is projected to take place during 2010. Follow-up consultations or a second study could be warranted so as to systematically apply the media pluralism indicators to all EU Member States in order to measure the health of Europe's media pluralism. The European Parliament and the Council are being regularly updated as to progress throughout the whole process.

K.U.Leuven - ICRI, Jönköping International Business School (MMTC), Central European University (CMCS), Ernst & Young Consultancy Belgium, "Independent Study on Indicators for Media Pluralism in the Member States", Final Report, Leuven, July 2009

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media_taskforce/doc/pluralism/study/final_report_09.pdf

