Parliamentary Assembly: Recommendation and Resolution on political influence over independent media and journalists

IRIS 2017-8:1/4

Emmanuel Vargas Penagos
Institute for Information Law (IViR), University of Amsterdam

On 29 June 2017, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a Recommendation and Resolution on political influence over independent media and journalists. Both instruments are intended to address different types of attacks that hinder the independence of journalists.

The Resolution recalls that there is no independence when journalists and their families are exposed to the dangers of physical, legal and economic attacks. Those attacks or threats may be perpetrated through the internet and social media and tend to cause self-censorship and hinder the public´s right to receive unbiased, critical information. This is supported by what is said in the Rapporteur's Report, where it is stated that, according to organisations like Reporters without Borders, there is a "deep and disturbing decline in media freedom". PACE denounces the existence of practices aimed at fuelling public distrust of the media; political forces use different strategies to silence criticism and dissent. In the same vein, cyber bullying, psychological violence and intimidation are subjects with special relevance in both of the PACE instruments. Moreover, PACE noted in this Resolution that the digital environment had brought about changes in the media business model. It was also noted that media that are dependent on public funding are vulnerable to political influence. Furthermore, the fact that political, economic and other social actors are having an increasingly important role on the internet and social media has diminished the role of journalism and independent media in public debate and in the flow of information.

The term "independence" of media outlets, according to the Rapporteur's Report, must be examined in financial, operational and editorial contexts; moreover, it is linked to pluralism. On the one hand, pluralism upholds independence as a way of weakening the effectiveness of pressures; on the other hand, independence is a necessary condition to impede pluralism from becoming merely formal.

The Resolution provides different recommendations regarding the engagement of the Council of Europe member States in safeguarding journalists' security and freedom, as well as media pluralism and independence. Those recommendations include the effective implementation of prior recommendations, including Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and the safety of

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

journalists and other media actors (see IRIS 2016-5/3) and Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)1 on public service media governance. Moreover, the Resolution gives specific recommendations regarding issues such as the appointment of public service media (PSM) managers and staff for which the intervention of public authorities is required; the funding of such media; and the design of support schemes for private and non-profit media.

Finally, public service media issues are also emphasised in PACE's Recommendation. This instrument elaborates on recommending the design of and support for targeted co-operation programmes aimed at promoting good practices in the governance of public service media.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Resolution 2179 (2017) on political influence over independent media and journalists, 29 June 2017

http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=23989&lang=en

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Recommendation 2111 (2017) on political influence over independent media and journalists, 29 June 2017

http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=23990&lang=en

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, Rapporteur Report, Political influence over independent media and journalists, 9 June 2017

http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=23670&lang=EN

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026