

[CH] Short- and long-term assistance for journalism

IRIS 2020-7:1/11

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The Swiss Government (*Bundesrat*) has launched a package of short- and long-term measures to support the media industry. On 20 May 2020, it decided to provide a total of CHF 57.5 million in immediate emergency aid for various types of media. The Bundesrat was acting under the authority of the Swiss Parliament, which is concerned about the future of the media and the formation of public opinion (for example, with motions entitled “Independent and effective media are the backbone of our democracy”). The coronavirus pandemic has aggravated the longstanding problems faced by printed and electronic mass media in Switzerland because it has resulted in a dramatic fall in advertising revenue.

As well as one-off payments to private radio and television broadcasters, who are receiving an additional CHF 30 million in licence fee revenue under the *Verordnung über Übergangsmassnahmen zugunsten der elektronischen Medien im Zusammenhang mit dem Coronavirus* (Ordinance on interim measures to support electronic media in relation to the coronavirus), the *Bundesrat* is giving up to CHF 10 million to the Keystone-SDA news agency. In return, the agency will reduce the amount it charges electronic media providers. One-off emergency assistance is also available for the press under the government’s *Verordnung zu Übergangsmaßnahmen zugunsten der Printmedien* (Ordinance on interim measures to support printed media), which provides additional indirect support for subscription-based daily and weekly newspapers. The state is spending CHF 12.5 million to subsidise production costs.

In the longer term, the *Bundesrat* wants to support professional journalism through a series of different legislative amendments. On 29 April 2020, it submitted a package of media support measures to the Swiss Parliament which not only strengthens the existing support for radio, television and the press, but also, for the first time, offers financial support to certain online media that offer paid journalistic content to the public (for instance, through digital subscriptions, individual downloads or voluntary contributions). However, free services will not receive any support.

In August 2019, the *Bundesrat* had abandoned a more comprehensive body of new legislation when it dropped its plans for a *Bundesgesetz über elektronische Medien* (Electronic Media Act – BGeM) after a less than enthusiastic response from the relevant stakeholders. Instead, the government announced a package of

rapidly implementable one-off measures (see IRIS 2019-09:1/7).

**Medienmitteilung der Schweizer Regierung (Bundesrat) vom 20.05.2020:
"Coronavirus: Befristete Soforthilfe zugunsten der Medien"**

<https://www.bakom.admin.ch/bakom/de/home/das-bakom/medieninformationen/medienmitteilungen.msg-id-79184.html>

Swiss government press release of 20 May 2020: "Coronavirus: short-term assistance for the media"

**Medienmitteilung der Schweizer Regierung (Bundesrat) vom 29.04.2020:
«Bundesrat verabschiedet Massnahmenpaket zugunsten der Medien»
[deutschsprachig]**

<https://www.bakom.admin.ch/bakom/de/home/das-bakom/medieninformationen/medienmitteilungen.msg-id-78941.html>

Swiss government press release of 29 April 2020: "Government adopts package of measures for the media"

Botschaft des Bundesrates zum Massnahmenpaket zugunsten der Medien vom 29.04.2020

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/federal-gazette/2020/4485.pdf>

Federal government communication on the package of measures for the media, 29 April 2020

Manuel Puppis/Etienne Bürdel, Ländervergleich Onlinemedienförderung - Bericht zuhanden des Bundesamts für Kommunikation, Dezember 2019

<https://www.newsd.admin.ch/newsd/message/attachments/61118.pdf>

Manuel Puppis/Etienne Bürdel, International comparison of support for online media - Report for the Federal Communication Office, December 2019

