[CH] Swiss Media Commission favours structural change for media support

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In a position paper published on 10 January 2023 with the title "*Zukunft der Schweizer Medienförderung - Impulse für eine technologieneutrale Unterstützung privater journalistischer Angebote*" (The future of Swiss media support – impulses for technology-neutral support of private journalistic offerings), the *Eidgenössische Medienkommission* (Swiss Media Commission – EMEK) called for the restructuring of media support in Switzerland. In view of the radical changes to media production, distribution and usage in the digital era, media support could no longer be based on the current technology- and genre-oriented system. The EMEK therefore proposed a technology-neutral support system that dealt with all media services equally, whatever form they took.

The Media Commission's proposal was based on the fact that, as a result of digitisation, adequate funding of journalism in Switzerland could not be fully guaranteed, while the reduction in journalistic work and diversity over the last 25 years had been empirically documented. However, without journalistic media, direct democracy could not function in a federal, multilingual country such as Switzerland. The current system of support for private media, including newspaper distribution subsidies and the allocation of radio and television licence fee revenue to private broadcasters, was unsuitable because it was linked to specific technologies, media genres and distribution channels. In order to future-proof media support, the EMEK therefore proposed a content-oriented system and three different types of funding measures.

Firstly, it recommended general measures designed to strengthen the industry as a whole. These included support for the initial training and further training of media professionals, subsidiary financial support for self-regulation by the *Presserat* (Press Council), support for a news agency in the three national languages (German, French and Italian) providing basic assistance subject to certain conditions (e.g. funded by the industry, guarantee of editorial independence, etc.), support for media research and measurement for the capture of essential data, long-term support for the infrastructure of journalistic services and the creation of funds for investigative research and reporting on topics of public interest. The EMEK also called for tax concessions, but since these were fiscal instruments, they were not covered by the position paper.

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Secondly, the Media Commission proposed a number of practical measures to support the running of private and, in particular, regional journalistic services that were linked to a change in the support system. It advocated a technology-neutral support model that would benefit all private journalistic offerings (text, audio and video) aimed at the general public (i.e. not specialist publications) through a single support system, giving supported media the freedom to distribute their content through any channel of their choice. The fact that different costs were associated with different distribution channels could be countered, for example, by paying a standard minimum proportion of the operating costs. The EMEK also suggested various possible ways of defining eligibility conditions, which might be linked to four criteria, for example: input (e.g. minimum level of investment in editorial work), output (e.g. minimum quota of in-house productions), outcome (e.g. minimum reach) and impact (e.g. minimum number of views).

Finally, the EMEK also called for support for projects run by private media providers, including start-up funding for local media startups and innovation funding.

However, it also stressed the continued importance of public service broadcasting and the need to continue providing adequate financial resources to the SRG SSR services.

In the EMEK's opinion, the proposed changes also offered an opportunity to pass the responsibility for distributing funds to a politically independent body such as a foundation, an independent media regulator or an advisory council. This was necessary in order to keep the media support system away from government control and, more generally, to prevent political interference with editorial decisions.

Positionspapier der EMEK

https://www.emek.admin.ch/inhalte/D_Papier_10.1.2023_FINAL.pdf

EMEK position paper

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