

Hearing Council of Europe

Public Service Broadcasters' Strategies in the Information Society

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- **Traditional understanding of participation**
 - Traditional concept of „active citizenship“, acting by means of elections and inclusion into a processes of creating public opinion
 - processes of creating public opinion is structured by intermedia organisations
 - Role of traditional media in the processes of creating public opinion
 - Enabling of self-observation of society
 - Enabling of self-observation of politics
- **Changes in the information society**
 - Decreasing role of the state, diversification
 - Decreasing role of intermedia organisations
 - Fragmentation of audiences and, therefore, of public communication
 - Integration into society as a whole gets difficult
 - Hurdles for active role in public communication are reduced
 - Political communication needs concept to cope with fragmented, dissociated and only temporarily valid knowledge

– **Change of the communicational landscape triggered by new media**

- Already significant role of the internet for public communication, in many European states over 50% of the citizens use the internet
- Audience reached by some services like portals and search engines already equals radio programs or television magazines
- Change of patterns of usage; some studies show that the public agenda narrows down by selective use of online media (research media) compared with traditional display media
- However, complementary usage of new and traditional media is most likely, television usage in Germany still increases
- Yet some functions of traditional media might be fulfilled by new services and changes of the roles of media might already been observed

- Research has to focus on different types of information and functions media services fulfill for users to assess the changes in usage (current news, service information, etc.)
- From regulatory or public policy point of views the different services and their characteristic matter, not the transmission platform (internet, “mobile”)

– New media and democratic participation

- At the advent of the internet myths of participation and the fulfillment of Bertold Brecht's radio theory (everybody being both sender and listener) seemed to be looming
- Now we can see that communication still is dominated by commercial service providers. The Council of Europe has held that ensuring diversity and combating concentration is still vital
- Professional journalism is still important for public communication and therefore for participation
- They still have the function to bridge fragmentation and ensure self-observation
- However, there are new "Information Brokers" like search engines
- Additionally more direct forms of communication, like weblogs: mixture of media criticism and grassroots journalism

– PSB remit and new media

- In ensuring professional journalism and adapting it to new services PSB have a vital role in the information society
- Additionally it is essential to use the specific features of new media services to ensure the remit can be fulfilled given a change in usage
- Examples might be the creation of platforms like chats or internet forums
- Enhancing media literacy regarding new media services which have potential to further participation as a genuine objective for PSB
- The PSB remit has to be seen as a dynamic one reacting to changes in the media landscape, not restricted to traditional types of media or to services which commercial providers do not offer
- Therefore, several European states have opened the scope of activities for PSB to internet based services

- Under EU-Law the question is asked whether it violates the state aid regulation, if Member States open the remit of PSB for internet services or so-called mobile services
- As a rule, it is up to the Member States to define the PSB remit
- The term “broadcasting” under the Amsterdam protocol has to be understood as dynamic not restricted to traditional broadcasting
- The EC may only assess whether there are “manifest errors” made by the Member States
- It does not matter whether there are similar commercial services
- The relevance of services for the democratic, social or cultural needs of societies are paramount; this has to be judged against the above mentioned changes of media usage

- It does not matter which platform of transmission is used
- For traditional types of media it goes without saying that new ways of transmission may be used by PSB
- For new media services it depends on its relevance or the democratic, social or cultural needs of societies; as mentioned before it falls within the competence of the Member States to judge that.
- Under Art. 10 EC the Member States have the freedom to choose the way of concretising the PSB's remit including to grant discretionary power to PSBs

- **PSBs' strategies to offer new services**
 - Offering new media services is not as such a task for PSBs
 - They have to observe their specific remit regarding new services as well
 - The remit in the first line does not effect if, but how new services should be offered by PSBs; granting new fair access to public communication should be paramount, PSBs could grant innovation and integration
 - The right to offer new services should go with the requirement to show the relevance of a service offer for the fulfillment of the remit
 - Having said that it is regrettable that – to take an example – German public broadcasters still have not published a digitalization plan

- **Democratic participation and new forms of community broadcasting**
 - PSB have to be highly professional regarding journalism in order to compete successfully with commercial services
 - Therefore there are limits to direct participation in traditional types of media
 - Alternative types of community broadcasting and community internet services might be useful, networks of such services could enhance the impact

- **PSB and the role of viewers and listeners**
 - Establishing news channels of feedback for viewers and listeners might as well further participation (EAVI)
 - Public accountably