



PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

Council of Europe recognises the important role of public service media in upholding the fundamental right of freedom of expression, enabling people to seek and receive information, and promoting the values of democracy, diversity and social cohesion.

It promotes the principle of sound governance as a decisive factor for public service media to deliver its vital contribution in the modern media environment.

Brief overview of the latest
Council of Europe guidelines and
activities to support
public service media

Thematic
Focus

Information
Society

www.coe.int/freedomofexpression

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Underlining the role of PSM

“Public-service media and local media can make a crucial contribution to fostering public debate, political pluralism and awareness of diverse opinions.

Member states should ensure that existing public-service media organisations occupy a visible place in the new media landscape and play an active role in promoting social cohesion and integrating all communities, social groups and generations.”

Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Report “State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law”, 19 May 2017.

Identifying risks

In exercising their role, Public Service Media face a number of challenges, such as lack of funding, political interference, the need to modernise for a digital age, the need to protect free speech, while preventing hate speech, the need to ensure democratic accountability, while defending editorial independence etc. The Council of Europe has set up a number of instruments and initiatives to address these challenges.

Launched in April 2015, the **Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists** collects and disseminates information on the most serious concerns about media freedom and safety of journalists in Council of Europe member states, in collaboration with a number of partner organisations. It currently shows an emerging trend of threats to the independence of public broadcasters or of their regulatory bodies. A growing number of alerts concern political interference in the editorial line of public broadcasters, insufficient safeguards in the legislation against political bias, or the lack of appropriate funding to guarantee the independence of the public broadcasters.

In January 2017 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe examined a **Report on attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe**. Noting that the situation of public service broadcasting is difficult in several member States, the Assembly recalls that the independence of such broadcasters from governments has to be ensured through law and practice. It further states: “Governments and parliaments must not interfere in the daily management and editorial work of such broadcasters, which should establish in-house codes of conduct for journalistic work and editorial independence from political sides. Senior management positions should be refused to people with clear party political affiliations.”

Promoting standards

The Committee of Ministers **Recommendation on public service media governance** (2012) introduces the principles of independence, accountability, effective management, transparency and openness as well as responsiveness and responsibility. These criteria are designed so as to operate at every level within public media organisations.

Other normative documents promote specific aspects relevant to public service media such as:

- ▶ Recommendation on guarantee of the independence of public service broadcasting (1996);
- ▶ Recommendation on media and the promotion of a culture of tolerance (1997);
- ▶ Recommendation on hate speech (2000);
- ▶ Recommendation on the independence and functions of regulatory authorities for the broadcasting sector (2000);
- ▶ Recommendation on public service broadcasting (2004);
- ▶ Recommendation on the remit of public service media in the information society (2007);
- ▶ Recommendation on media pluralism and diversity of media content (2007)
- ▶ Resolution on indicators for media in democracy (2008);
- ▶ Recommendation on the funding of public service broadcasting (2009).

Enhancing cooperation

The International Conference on Public Service Media and Democracy, co-organised by the Council of Europe, the European Broadcasting Association and the Czech Parliament in Prague in November 2016, discussed the role of parliaments in protecting the media, PSM governance and its impact on society, how broadcasters deal with hate speech and the long term independence and sustainability of PSM in the region.

Participants called on member states to abstain from political interference with the independence of public-service media and to ensure their sustainable funding to allow them to fulfil their mission.

Building capacity in member states

Over the past decade, the Council of Europe **Cooperation Programme** has been implemented in over 20 projects in member states and partner countries promoting media freedom, including independence and efficiency of public service media.

For example, the project “**Strengthening Freedom of the Media and Establishing a Public Broadcasting System in Ukraine**” is aimed at consolidation of a public broadcaster in Ukraine, enabling the production of higher-quality programming, strengthening institutional capacity of the public broadcaster’s Supervisory Board, developing a model of regional public broadcaster etc.

The Project “**Promoting Media Freedom and Pluralism in the Republic of Moldova**” focuses on ensuring the functioning of public service broadcaster’s supervisory bodies, improving the editorial policies and the existing TV and radio programs of the public broadcasters and setting up and ensuring the functioning of the Training Centre at Teleradio-Moldova.