



The News Media Coalition is an international not for profit organisation which uniquely works to safeguard the news sector from arbitrary controls or restrictions on newsgathering, news distribution, copyright ownership and content use. NMC Members are major publishing houses, national and news international agencies – all of them major news brands whose news material drops onto your smart-phones, news websites and, in the printed form, onto your doorsteps

This session on media freedom in sport is a vital one as it gives an opportunity to consider the role and value of the news media ~~role~~ in sport. These matters are very topical, very relevant to stakeholders, policy makers and society. One only has to look at the headlines over the last few days, in the context of world tennis, but throughout the sports calendar and across the cycles of staging of mega events and media rights, to see the contribution the Press make to sport transparency, dialogue about sport and also to change in society.

These functions draw from the historical place the news media has enjoyed in society but also the impact of evolution in the information world and the level of support from political leaders and processes in support of the news media sector and media freedom.

The Council of Europe itself states:

*Free, independent and pluralistic media based on freedom of information and expression is a core element of any functioning democracy. Freedom of the media is in fact essential for the protection of all other human rights. Instances of discrimination, corruption or misuse of power many times have come to light because of the work of investigative journalists*

Our organisation seeks to work with sport organisers to ensure professional journalism is safeguarded and allowed to flourish. In contrast to other not for profit industry organisations, we work at the practical day-to-day level to ensure that supportive public policy and standards on media freedom play out positively for sports journalists, photographers and video journalists operating in and outside of sports venues. This means being able to fulfil their role to witness, to record and recall what they see, to applaud good performance, to criticise where there is wrongdoing, to share their insights, to promote dialogue and thereby bring about necessary social change.

As a result of challenges to professional journalism, the News Media Coalition Media has produced its own Media Freedom Charter, which states: *The News Media must have the fullest possible opportunities for newsgatherers to witness events – including any designated press or media opportunities - to create their own content to inform the public. Public policymakers are encouraged to support this.*

The important starting point for the formulation of our charter was the Kazan Action Plan (signed in 2017 by UNESCO sports minister) which underlined the importance of media freedom.

It states (Article 17): Underlining that, in order for national sport authorities, government and non-governmental authorities effectively to address the full spectrum of sport integrity policy areas, synergies amongst these areas must be developed in terms of prevention education and awareness-raising, legislation, protection of whistle-blowers **and media freedom**, information exchange and investigation, as well as related human, technical and financial capacities;

So far as the Council of Europe is concerned, we note that the sports ministers agreed a resolution which referenced the importance of media freedom. This is good – but there are two concerns. The resolution invites ‘Council of Europe member states to defend media freedom in the field of sport and hosting of major sports events.’

However it states that this is to be ‘within the boundaries of sports competitions organisers’ property rights’ and we are concerned that reports on the subjects of news, sport organisations themselves, would be subject to the commercial properties said to belong to that sport. Secondly the media freedom mentioned is to be ‘in accordance with the principles of proportionality’. What is that proportionality in a media freedom context and who would determine it?

Worryingly media freedom has not made it into the draft European Sports Charter in any form.

From a practical standpoint, media freedom needs to be measured against the daily challenge for professional sports writers, photographers and video journalists to operate freely.

That reality poses the following questions:

- Can the newsgatherer see what they need to see?
- Can they record it in the way which is relevant to news consumers?
- Can they share their information through the news distribution networks?
- Can they engage with the fan community including via social media? Is this important to the NMC?
- Do they fear that a fair and critical reports are going result in punitive action against them such as exclusion?
- Are they going to be subject to abuse of online because of their reports?
- Are they able to develop their skills as newsgathering technologies evolve?
- And can news companies monetise their own content?

In the case of Naomi Osaka, who has decided to boycott press conferences at the French Tennis Open, it is worth noting that in her own statement she acknowledged all the ‘cool’ tennis

journalists and 'the tennis press which has always been kind to me.' In making a tough personal decision, she has acknowledged the value of the news media – as many others do.

Andrew Moger, Chief Executive of the News Media Coalition