



# PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

*The 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](http://www.coe.int/freedomofexpression)

### Underlining the role of PSM

The Council of Europe recognises the important role of public service media (PSM) in upholding the fundamental right to freedom of expression and information, in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

By virtue of their remit, public service media are an important public source of unbiased information and diverse political opinions.

They are particularly suited to foster pluralism and awareness of diverse opinions, notably by providing different groups in society with an opportunity to receive and impart information, to express themselves and to exchange ideas. They can contribute greatly to the promotion of social cohesion, cultural diversity and pluralist communication accessible to everyone.

### Identifying risks

In exercising their role, public service media face a number of challenges, such as securing the right level of independence from those holding economic and political power, securing appropriate funding, adapting to the digital age and maintaining high editorial standards in a competitive market.

In his latest report “**State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law**”, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe stresses that: “The year 2016 witnessed interference of governments in the appointment and dismissal procedures of members of public-service media boards.”

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 recalled that the independence of PSM from governments has to be ensured through law and practice. It further stated that 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.

An emerging trend of threats to the independence of public broadcasters is revealed by the **Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists** launched by the Council of Europe in April 2015. 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.

### Promoting standards

The Committee of Ministers **Recommendation on public service media governance** (2012) calls on member states to ensure that external governance arrangements for public service media guarantee the independence and sustainable

development of public service media. It also set up criteria relating to a proper and well-functioning internal governance system of these organisations. These criteria relate to the principles of independence, accountability, effective management, transparency and openness as well as responsiveness and responsibility.

Other normative documents adopted by the Committee of Ministers or the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe promote specific aspects relevant to public service media such as:

- ▶ Recommendation on media and the promotion of a culture of tolerance (1997);
- ▶ Recommendation on hate speech (1997);
- ▶ 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 co operation

**The International Conference on Public Service Media and Democracy**, co-organised by the Council of Europe, the European Broadcasting Union 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. It also looked at how broadcasters deal with hate speech and at ways to ensure long term independence and sustainability of PSM.

Participants called on member states to abstain from increasing 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 through 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 consolidating public broadcasting system in Ukraine, strengthening the institutional capacity of the public broadcaster’s Supervisory Board, enabling the production of higher-quality programming, developing a model of regional public broadcaster etc.

Launched in 2017, the Project “**Promoting Media Freedom and Pluralism in the Republic of Moldova**” focuses on ensuring the functioning of the public service broadcasters supervisory bodies, improving their editorial policies and the existing TV and radio programs and setting up a Training Centre at Teleradio-Moldova.