



# (Last) call for quality journalism

## International Conference

Ljubljana, 28-29 November 2019



Organised by the Council of Europe in partnership with the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia

### KEY MESSAGES

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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF CULTURE



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**journalism**

## KEY MESSAGES

### News / media production and distribution

**News and media** organisations are facing major threats to their economic and political independence. In some countries they are dominated by powerful political or private commercial interests. Across Europe and globally, the media industry finds itself in a crisis, competing with online platforms on an unequal basis. Few innovative business models can sustain themselves.

One alternative method of media financing is via subscriptions. However, convincing the public to pay for content requires a cultural shift, which is a slow process with no imminent results. That is why advertising remains key to funding investments in journalism.

**Public service media** generally enjoy public trust and should retain their significance and relevance in the digital era by prioritising accurate and reliable news production. They should enhance their efforts to better represent the diversity of society and engage young audiences through innovative formats, since young people increasingly rely on social media and aggregators for their news.

**Online platforms** accumulated unprecedented levels of wealth by monetising third-party content, user data and attention in a largely unregulated environment. They excel at capturing users' attention and engagement, also by exploiting human bias, rewarding clickbait, and even incentivising disinformation.

Platforms should recognise their societal responsibilities including a dedicated contribution to the preservation of journalism. Platforms' voluntary commitments, which so far have not produced meaningful results, should be complemented by targeted regulation aimed at ensuring equitable and transparent market conditions.

### News / media consumption

**Users** need to be encouraged to regularly engage in activities that allow them to access, use and critically evaluate media. Existing media and information literacy programmes should be strengthened through research and evaluation of what works, public funding and collaboration. Likewise, digital communities themselves can help advance media literacy and build digital competences of the younger audience, also by engaging popular personalities, YouTubers and "influencers."

## Media regulation and self-regulation

**Media regulatory authorities** should enjoy institutional independence and functional autonomy, as an essential condition for creating a favourable environment for quality journalism. They should also have enough funding available to enable them to carry out their role effectively.

Moreover, both effective regulatory and self-regulatory systems can enhance public accountability and trust in the media by providing oversight, complaint mechanisms and continuous feedback to the media outlets concerned.

**Self-regulatory bodies** are underfunded. The media industry is often either unable or unwilling to finance press or media councils, so complementary means of funding including through public fund schemes are required.

## National and international frameworks and policies

**States**, while keeping an arm's length relationship with the media, should acknowledge that journalism is a public good. They are thus responsible for laying down the structural conditions for its development and enabling an environment where journalism is possible.

States should enhance their efforts to understand the ever-changing media environment. Adopting an evidence-based approach, they should review and possibly revise their relevant frameworks, including those governing competition, tax and labour provisions, digital privacy and elections, to make them fit for the challenges of the digital age.

States are furthermore encouraged to introduce appropriate incentive-based measures, including by providing funds to news organisations for research and innovation to enable them to compete with online platforms on a more equal basis.

States should support media literacy initiatives for different groups and various audiences to promote the skills and knowledge to recognise and value quality journalism and its benefits.

State advertising is a powerful tool used by politicians to financially support media and have them report favourably about them, but also to impose censorship and to capture critical and independent professional media. Public funds invested in media through state advertising should pursue the goal of facilitating and protecting media pluralism. In addition, States should regularly publish data on beneficiaries of state advertising.

**International organisations**, and the Council of Europe in particular, should continue to promote the rule of law and an environment favourable to journalism, firstly through the development of standards to provide guidance to all relevant stakeholders - ranging from states, regulators and self-regulators, educators and, of course, the media industry as well as online platforms that play a major role in the distribution of news and media content.

**The Council of Europe** specifically should furthermore help individual States by implementing programmes that enhance the dialogue between all national stakeholders and make everyone aware of their roles and responsibilities.

The internet has brought the world to our fingertips, information and knowledge but a click away. The abundance of sources, however, does not guarantee a richer, more diverse information diet. In the flood of sensationalist and manipulative messages **we need quality journalism more than ever.**

We need its commitment to accuracy and reliability to help us navigate the public debate and make informed choices. We need its pursuit of the public interest and accountability to hold powers to account. We need it to restore public confidence and trust in the media. Yet quality journalism has been hard hit by the economic changes in the media sector. How do we ensure sustainability of quality news and how do we highlight its benefits to the media-fatigued public? What responsibilities should be borne by individual media stakeholders including online platforms, by educators, regulators and self-regulators, by the civil society and academia?



National Gallery, Slovenia

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