Multi-stakeholder group on the future of media

EU Media Futures Forum

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

Free and diverse media are a prerequisite for sustainability of our European democracies. They contribute to an informed debate and allow people to form views and make informed choices. They also play a crucial role in for the richness of our cultural and linguistic diversity and for enhancing Europe's cultural heritage. This is why the media sector is not just like any other sector. At the same time, it makes an important contribution to the European economy and holds a significant potential for growth.

The media sector is undergoing significant changes, driven by the Internet, societal trends and economic uncertainties which impact on revenue, notably advertising for more traditional media. New players are entering the market. The provision of news is changing. Fairly new trends such as social media and citizen journalism alter the way news reach consumers. Moreover, digital technologies change the way the media industries approach their business strategies. All this in an environment where consumers want to access their content whenever, wherever, over whatever platform at anytime.

This process is further accentuated by the economic crisis which is having a major impact on the media industries. All these challenges may in the medium- to longer term result in a structural change for media business models.

The challenge for European media industries is to anticipate, adjust and modernise their organisations and ways of working, fully reaping the benefits of technological change such as digital distribution, so that they continue to be economically successful in a fast-changing world. The responsibility for policy-makers is to create and maintain the right framework, conditions and a well-functioning single market which enable European media to exploit new business models and emerge strongly from technological change and economic challenges. This is not only a socio-economic imperative but essential to ensure more diversified choices for consumers and plurality of voices in European democracies.

An informed debate at the EU level on the ways to achieve this objective is urgently needed.

2. Aim of the group and format

The Group's task will be to reflect on the impact of the digital revolution on European media industries, the resulting risks and opportunities for these industries for consumers/citizens, and the emerging new business models – against a background of economic uncertainty and reduced revenue for traditional (paper-based) media. The goal of this reflection is to assess which overall policy framework is most conducive to respond to these developments so as to foster pluralist media sector and quality journalism in the future. In doing so, the Group needs to make a clear distinction between necessary adjustments of the overall policy/regulatory

framework at EU and national levels on one hand and emerging market realities on the other hand.

The name EU Media Futures Forum implies that there might be a variety of future scenarios for the European media, given the differing combinations of circumstances across Member States and uncertainty about the future. The Group's work will involve much educated speculation and assessment of market trends. It differs therefore substantively from the high-level group on freedom and pluralism of the media which reflects on the normative concept of media freedoms and related values.[1]

The Group would consist of some 30 personalities in order to represent the range of views and tendencies across the EU, including 3 Members of the European Parliament to be nominated by EP President Jerzy Buzek and 3 representatives of the Council of Ministers, nominated by the responsible Ministers of the Member States of the Presidency trio (Poland, Denmark and Cyprus).

3. Topics for discussion

The debate on the futures of media industries in Europe should address issues such as:
1) What are the big trends in the media industry in Europe and globally?
2) What is the impact of these trends on business models, competition, pluralism and content creation in Europe?
3) What are the main opportunities and barriers in creating a digital media content market in Europe? What needs to be done to attain or overcome them?
4) How can the European media industries best benefit from the technological developments to enhance their competitiveness globally?
5) What are the conditions for sustainable business models that can deliver quality journalism?

4. Working methods and outcomes

The chairperson and members of the Group will be confirmed by Vice-President Kroes. They are selected on the basis of their knowledge, experience and proven track record in the media industries. However, any views expressed during the Group's discussions should be personal. The Group might draw on social media for input.

The European Commission will provide the secretariat of the Group. Where the group will consider it necessary, the Commission will make arrangements to bring in external technical expertise to support its work. The chairperson may choose to organise discussions through thematic subgroups or panels according to the different topics to be dealt with. The Commission will draw up an overview of the group's reflections for internal purposes. A (non-attributable) summary of key findings may be prepared for public information. The Group is invited to meet at least 3 times within a period of 12 months.

[1] http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/1173&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en