

2016 Annual Colloquium on fundamental rights Public consultation* on "MEDIA PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY"

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

Media freedom and pluralism are essential safeguards of well-functioning democracies. Freedom of expression and media freedom and pluralism are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and they are at the core of the basic democratic values on which the European Union is founded.

The second Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights will take place on 17-18 November 2016. It will provide the stage for an open exchange on the many different aspects of media pluralism in a digital world, and the role of modern media in European democratic societies.

The colloquium should enable policymakers at EU and national level and relevant stakeholders — including NGOs, journalists, media representatives, companies, academics and international organisations — to identify concrete avenues for action to foster freedom of speech, media freedom and media pluralism as preconditions for democratic societies.

The Commission's objective with this public consultation is to gather broad feedback on current challenges and opportunities in order to feed into the colloquium's discussions. The questions asked are thus meant to encourage an open debate on media pluralism and democracy within the European Union — without, however, either prejudging any action by the European Union or affecting the remit of its competence.

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*Contributions received from this survey will be published on the European Commission's website. Do you agree to the publication of your contribution?

- Yes, my contribution may be published under my name (or the name of my organisation);
- Yes, my contribution may be published but should be kept anonymous (with no mention of the person/organisation);
- No, I do not want my contribution to be published. (NB — your contribution will not be published, but the Commission may use it internally for statistical and analytical purposes).

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A. Identifying information

1. In what capacity are you completing this questionnaire?

- Individual/private person
- Civil society organisation
- Business
- Academic/research institution
- Other (please specify)

2. If you are answering this consultation as a private citizen, please give your name.

-

3. If you are answering this consultation on behalf of an organisation, please specify your name and the name of the organisation you represent.

Martin Mycielski, Katarzyna Morton - Committee for the Defence of Democracy (Komitet Obrony Demokracji - KOD) More information: www.kod.ngo

Is your organisation included in the Transparency Register?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please indicate your Register ID-number

061873322569-09

If your organisation is not registered, we invite you to register [here](#). Please note that it is not compulsory to register to reply to this consultation. Responses from organisations that are not registered will be published as part of the individual contributions.

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4. If you are an individual/private person:

a) What is the country of your nationality?

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovak Republic
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- Other (please specify)

Other (please specify)

b) What is your age group?

- Under 18
- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- Over 71

B. Media freedom and pluralism

5. In the context of media freedom and pluralism, what should be the role of the State, if any, in the regulation of media? What should be the role of self-regulation?

-- Both are needed. It is crucial to strike a balance between them. The proportion and the balance point between state regulation and self-regulation may be different in different countries, depending on political culture, law tradition and legal system: media regulation has to be integrated in this country's systemic framework.

-- However, whatever the balance between state regulation and self-regulation is, it remains essential that the media laws meet the very basic, democratic requirements of freedom of expression and information and that freedom of media and pluralism are legally guaranteed and practically executable.

-- On one hand, the state has a particular political responsibility to protect these principles and values as reflected in Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

-- On the other, journalists, editors and other media professionals, federated in professional associations and organizations, also have a huge responsibility. They have to preserve the independence of media and protect it from government interference. The crucial task of self-regulation is to help them to make it possible. Journalists have respect journalistic ethical standards and be able to defend them. This is not only the best way to defend media freedom and pluralism but also to foster public trust in the media.

-- State regulation and self-regulation should also play complementary roles to tackle the new challenges which come with the digitization of media and information.

-- Media regulation should avoid undue political or economic interference into the media landscape and every-day journalists' work and be guided by clear and pre-established procedures and criteria, transparent vis-à-vis the civil society.

6. Could you provide specific examples of problems deriving from the lack of independence of media regulatory authorities in EU Member States?

-- In Poland, so-called "Small Media Bill" on "National Media" was passed by Parliament on 30 December 2015 at an accelerated pace and with no proper consultation with the journalistic sphere or any civil society organizations.

-- It led to a significant limitation of powers of the National Broadcasting Council (media regulatory body with powers specified directly in the Polish Constitution, with members democratically elected by Parliament and the President) and the establishment of de-facto government control over this council and all state owned media. Now it is the Minister of Treasury who appoints the heads and boards of public media directly, while in the past they were elected in a transparent, competitive selection process.

-- A similar situation occurred in Hungary when a new Media Authority was established in 2010.

7. What competences would media regulatory authorities need in order to ensure a sufficient level of media freedom and pluralism?

-- The competences of the Polish National Broadcasting Council, enshrined in the country's constitution and in the dedicated law, seem to ensure in theory a sufficient level of media freedom and pluralism: this regulatory authority is equipped with strong prerogatives (as they are specified directly in the Polish Constitution) such as indirect control of the state-owned media and supervision of their compliance with the law and issuance of radio and television broadcast licenses. However, the Council should also be independent and politically neutral. This is impossible because its members are in practice appointed by the political parties.

-- Whatever the regulatory authority's competences are, it has to be freed from political pressure. If this condition isn't met, the authority can use its powers to exert unjustified political and economic pressure over private broadcasters with potential risk to freedom of expression and pluralism. It has recently happened in Hungary where the Media Council, dependent of the government, used its broadcast licensing power to bring some private broadcaster to their knees and to silence the Klubrádió (a talk and news radio station). Similar methods were used in Poland in the early 2000s.

-- Please see the KOD position towards the ongoing "National Media" reform in Poland here: <http://www.kod.ngo/kods-position-new-media-bills/>

8. What should be the role of public service media for ensuring media pluralism?

- The specific civil mission fulfilled by pluralistic public service broadcasting places a particular political responsibility on the authorities to protect public media as an element of the democratic foundations of the state.
- Public service media contribute to pluralism in a diversified media environment because it makes broader the access of the audience to information sources, views and opinions
- The information provided by public media should not be influenced by one ideology; one outlook on the world; representing just the interests of one political party and one influential group.
- The rules governing public media should uphold their impartiality regardless of who is currently in power.
- The promotion and materialisation of media pluralism principle through genuine public media should both serve freedom of expression and societal cohesion. Public media should be a space for a public debate guided by the principles of openness, fairness and mutual respect of all the participants.
- Public service broadcasting should be a standard-setter and an obvious reference in terms of impartiality, objectivity and quality of information for all the media whatever their technology, ownership and target are.
- Public service mission implies legal and professional obligation of public broadcaster to ensure equal access of the citizens to information (geographical coverage), to provide them with minimum amounts of programming from various genres, and to ensure they have access to the socially important content which is not broadcast by commercial media (quality information on specific topics which don't attract a huge audience or quality, intellectually demanding entertainment).
- Public service media has a role to play in media literacy, it should be assisting the citizens in making sense of the challenges and dilemma of the modern world.

9. How should public service media be organised so that they can best ensure the public service mandate?

- Public media should be regulated by an external public authority independent of the government and politicians
- Their organization should be based on legal guaranties of external independence and autonomy in terms of staff policy and program setting, liberty of operating without political or administrative interference from government and private interest groups
- Internal independence of editorial staff in terms of selecting, collecting, editing, issuing information should be guaranteed.
- Stable, sustainable and independent sources of funding which does not imply any editorial dependence nor from political neither economic power should be assured. E.g. they can be financed by direct contributions from viewers.

10. Have you experienced or are you aware of obstacles to media freedom or pluralism deriving from the lack of independence of public service media in EU Member States?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give specific examples.

-- In Poland, one effect of the "National Media" legislation (1st act in December 2015, 2nd in July 2016) was the loss of jobs in public radio and television by dozens of people (including the most prominent reporters and news anchors) while declared supporters of the ruling party were appointed to managerial positions. Some journalists have been fired, some others dismissed from their positions in state broadcasting to preserve their independence and to protest against the authoritarian drift.

-- The TVP1 flagship evening news program, "Wiadomosci" mutated into a propagandist machine. This situation not only threatens freedom of expression and media pluralism, it also negatively impacts the credibility of the public broadcaster. The state-run TVP1 channel for the first time ever placed third in terms of audience, after two commercial channels, and its audience continues to decline.

-- The replacement of the term "public" by "national" in relation to media, in the recently amended Media law, is not only a lexical, but also an ideologically symbolic change. It is an expression of the theory created by the current authorities, according to which, the government that is democratically elected is the sole advocate of the will of the entire nation. "National Media", and no longer "Public Media", in Poland has become a way of implementing this theory into practice which is damageable for pluralism of opinion since the "Public Media" have been transformed into a tool of government propaganda.

-- Instead of contributing to the societal cohesion and fair public debate, Polish public media, since the new nationalist forces took the power, deepen and perpetuate social and ideological divisions in the Polish society. This trend goes in fact against the freedom of expression and reinforces the already strong polarisation of the Polish media landscape. The people watching private TV (TVN, Polsat) have an utterly different perception of the reality than the audience of the public TV channels. This division is lethal for the Polish social capital (as defined by James Coleman and Robert Putnam) and democracy.

-- The lack of independence of public service media in Poland is particularly striking in the new editorial line of Poland's state-run broadcaster, run by the government party henchmen. The recent visit of Barack Obama in Poland gives an amazing example of manipulation and censorship practised by "Wiadomosci". US president's critical remarks about the state of Polish democracy was turned into praise, his declaration was manipulated through deliberately wrong translation, partially omitted and put in a different context. (See here how the Washington Post reports on the issue https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/09/obama-slammed-polish-democracy-on-friday-heres-how-polish-tv-proved-him-right/?postshare=3341468069782169&tid=ss_tw#comments)

After 26 years of democracy and media freedom, Polish state-run TV returned to the soviet-style information.

11. Are you aware of any problems with regard to media freedom and pluralism stemming from the lack of transparency of media ownership or the lack of rules on media ownership in EU Member States?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give specific examples.

-- Italy provides a clear example of a country in which media owners are indirectly affected by government policy and media ownership system impacts on media independence. Silvio Berlusconi, when he was Italy's prime minister, had his Mediaset private broadcaster as well as a grip on the Rai public broadcaster.

-- In Poland, the biggest scandal widely referred to as "Rywingate" happened in 2002-2003. Mr Lew Rywin, a film producer acting, according to his say, on behalf of "a group of power" (including the then Prime Minister), solicited an immense bribe in order to amend a draft broadcasting legislation in a way advantageous for Agora, the owner of the biggest Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza. It would have allowed Agora to enter the television market. The newspaper's editor in chief revealed this corruption attempt to the public only six months after it occurred because in the meantime Gazeta's reporters were investigating who initiated this corruption attempt.

12. Please indicate any best practice on how to ensure an appropriate level of transparency and plurality of ownership in this area.

13. What is the impact of media concentration on media pluralism and free speech in your Member State? Please give specific examples and best practices on how to deal with potential challenges brought by media concentration.

-- In Poland strictly speaking media concentration is not an issue despite the fact that the Polish legislation only refers to the problem through a vague provision on the ban on abuse of dominant position in the broadcasting sector. The debate on media concentration was in fact abandoned in Poland after the so-called Rywingate corruption scandal (see answer 11.)

-- However, the media concentration problem has recently been brought forward again by the current government within the context of its media "repolonisation" plans. The leader of the ruling party, Jaroslaw Kaczyński set out the objectives: "We have to undertake the repolonisation of the media. We have to be brave and not allow ourselves to be terrorized, either here or eventually in the European Union" (quoted after Politico). The ruling party criticises the number of the Polish media owned by foreign companies. The radio RMF FM, leader on the Polish market in terms of audience, is owned by RMF group in which the German Bauer Verlagsgruppe is the main stakeholder. The TVN S.A. group, owner of the commercial television network TVN, is controlled by the American media company Scripps Networks Interactive. The largest Polish tabloid Fakt and Newsweek Polska (Polish edition of American Newsweek) belong to the Swiss-German joint venture Ringier Axel Springer. The local newspapers market is dominated by Polska Press Group, owned by German Verlagsgruppe Passau. Actually, the foreign ownership of a number of Polish media doesn't illustrate media concentration, it rather should be seen within the context of a more general political problem the nationalist government has with international capital and in relation to the ruling party attempt to control not only public but also private media. A similar attempt of a country's government to control private media also took place in Hungary some years ago.

14. Are you aware of any problems related to government or privately financed one-sided media reporting in the EU?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give specific examples.

-- State financed public media in Poland, in particular the 1st TV channel and its main news program "Wiadomosci" became completely partial since the new media law was passed.

-- In general, the political polarization of media in Poland is very strong and even stronger than ever since the current government took power but this situation mirrors rather willingness of some journalists or media managers to play the political game than impact of media ownership on the newspapers, radios or TV station's editorial strategy.

-- The approach of the current governmental majority in Poland towards the idea of impartial media reporting in the public media is accurately mirrored in these two declarations occurred after the adoption of the new Media law in December 2015: "I hope that, at last, the media narration which we disagree with, will cease to exist" said Beata Mazurek, prominent MP from the ruling party PiS. Jacek Kurski – a long-standing PiS member appointed as the new chair of TVP (public television) promised a "fast recovery" of public media on taking the role.

15. Please indicate any best practice to address challenges related to government or privately financed one-sided media reporting while respecting freedom of speech and media pluralism.

-- In response to social needs and the government's takeover of public media in Poland, KOD has launched its own media. On 4 June 2016 the www.koduj24.pl website was launched with a mission is to inform of the situation in Poland from a citizens' perspective.

C. Journalists and new media players

16. What is the impact of media convergence and changing financing patterns on quality journalism?

-- Media convergence introduced new media culture and put the journalists before new professional challenges, both in terms of their relation with the audience (larger, more diversified, more superficial in their expectation, more technology and entertainment and less content oriented) and in terms of technology requirements (converged media are in fact converged technologies). Journalist has to be more reactive, more polyvalent and more "up-to-date" in terms of technology skills which is not necessarily bad but it erodes the quality of journalism in the traditional sense.

-- Media convergence very often implies convergence and concentration of capital. In market driven media corporations (converging different kinds of media) the profit expectations and resource allocation may outweigh the expectations towards the quality journalism. This business model inevitably impacts journalism style.

17. Have you ever experienced, or are you aware of, any limitation imposed on journalistic activities by state measures?

Yes

No

If yes, please give specific examples and further information, including justifications given by authorities and the position taken by journalists.

-- Even the European Convention of Human rights lists reasons why the general right to freedom of expression and of information can be restricted. National regulations include similar restrictions: security and defence reasons, commercial interest, intellectual property protection, reporting of court proceedings, use of hate speech, religious sensitivities, libel and libel defamation.

-- In some countries, in particular under some governments, these legal restrictions are politically misinterpreted or abused to the detriment of freedom of expression.

In 2010, Hungarian authorities introduced a restrictive and ambiguous provision in the new media legislation on « the obligation to provide balanced coverage of the Hungarian and European events from all media” which left to the authority alone the right to decide about proper and improper content. Censorship can have many different faces

The same Hungarian legislation introduced the requirement to register all media, including press, internet sites and non-private blogs with the new National Media and Communication Authority (NMHH). This provision would restrict Hungarian and non-Hungarian providers alike on the right of freedom of information.

In Poland, according to The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the number of defamation suits brought annually by government officials and public figures against news media and one another has increased over the last decade.

-- Poland also have restrictive regulation protecting religious sensitivities at price of free expression. Article 256 and 257 of the Polish Criminal Code criminalise individuals who intentionally offend religious feelings. Moreover, the Radio and TV Broadcasting Act states that programmes or other broadcasts must “respect the religious beliefs of the public and respect especially the Christian system of values”. Several artists have been charged with violating the criminal code for their public criticism of Christianity over the recent years.

-- A new Police act (called “surveillance law”) which came into effect on 22 June 2016, gives Poland’s intelligence agency (ABW) the right to “order the blocking or demand that the electronic open source service administrator block access to information data”. It means in practice the right to shut down online media outlets.

18. Please indicate any best practice that reconciles security concerns, media freedom and free speech in a way acceptable in a democratic society.

-- In general terms, political culture and respect of democratic values help to find a good balance between security concerns and media freedom. The role of civil society is crucial in the efforts to set a right point of balance. The law alone is not enough.

19. Have you experienced, or are you aware of, limitations related to privacy and data protection imposed on journalistic activities?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please give specific examples and further information.

-- A new surveillance law was approved in Poland in February 2016. Several Polish and international media and journalists associations protested against these new surveillance measures called by Amnesty International "a major blow to human rights." These provisions expand government access to digital data and loosen restrictions on police spying. Together with the new media law reforms, these measures threaten media freedom.

20. Have you experienced, or are you aware of, problems linked to hate speech and threats directed towards individuals exercising journalistic activities?

21. Are you aware of cases where fear of hate speech or threats, as described above, has led to a reluctance to report on certain issues or has had a generally chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of speech?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please give specific examples and further information.

22. Have you experienced, or are you aware of, problems concerning journalists' safety and security in the EU?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please give specific examples.

23. Please indicate any best practice for protecting journalists from threats against their safety and security.

24. Have you ever experienced or are you aware of pressures put by State measures on journalistic sources (including where these sources are whistleblowers)?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please give specific examples.

-- Recently, two whistle-blowers who revealed the LuxLeaks scandal have been sentenced to suspended prison and fined by a court in Luxembourg. This ruling demonstrates that Luxembourg's law does not protect whistle-blowers.

-- In March 2014, in Poland, the Internal Security Agency (ABW) raided the Wprost magazine editorial offices. The Agency's officers attempted to seize the editor-in-chief's laptop and other materials and asked him to reveal sources and hand over evidence in the so called « tape-affair ».

-- In February 2016, officers from the Polish Central Bureau of Investigation (CBŚP) raided office of the Fakty i Mity (Facts and Myths -an anticlerical weekly ». The editor-in-chief was detained and four other members of the editorial staff were questioned.

25. How would pressures on journalistic sources be best addressed?

-- Freedom of information laws alone, despite their essential role, cannot protect journalistic sources from pressure. The laws must be accompanied by political culture of democracy. This goes together with media literacy.

-- At international level, a whistle-blower protocol should be included in the European Convention of Human Rights.

-- At the EU level, the Commission should follow the recommendation adopted by the European Parliament to propose new, specific legislation on protection for whistle-blowers

26. Please indicate any best practice for protecting the confidentiality of journalistic sources/whistleblowers.

-- The EU should adopt a legislation in order to protect the role of whistle-blowers and investigative journalists' sources as voiced by some MEPs and a number of NGOs.

27. Have you experienced, or are you aware of, censorship (including self-censorship) in the EU?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please give specific examples.

-- In Hungary, the Media Act introduced in 2010 reinforced the government control over the public broadcaster which resulted in self-censorship of the journalists who wanted to keep the job. Its provision on "balanced coverage from all media" allowed in practice for the censorship over the media. The Hungarian Media Law (partially blocked by the European Commission) was a clear attempt by state authorities to dominate the media market.

-- In Poland, since the government took total political control over the public broadcasters seven months ago, at least 163 people have either been fired or quit state broadcasting under political pressure. Self-censorship is often the prize to pay if the journalists want to keep their job.

-- In Poland, the risk of defamation of public officials and of offence of religious beliefs suits (both legally considered as criminal offenses and punishable by fines and imprisonment) can encourage self-censorship, particularly among smaller outlets or local TV stations that could be forced out of business by large fines.

28. Have you experienced, or are you aware of, any obstacles to investigative journalism, which may include legal provisions in force or a lack of resources?

-- Yes. See point 19

29. Do you consider that the level and intensity of investigative journalism, the number of journalists engaged in such activity, the resources available, the space in print and the time available in audiovisual media for the publication of results of investigations has changed over time?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give specific examples.

Journalistic investigation was always an inherent part of the job. What has changed over time is probably the fact that more attention is paid nowadays to abuse of power than in the past, and less to crime. Corruption and financial scandals are and has always been the main subject for investigative journalism.

30. Please indicate any best practice facilitating investigative journalism

-- In the US Freedom of Information laws allow each citizen to examine all sorts of public records. Transparency of public services and government bodies facilitates the task of the investigative journalist.

-- Whatever the level of transparency guaranteed by this kind of law is, democratic states and European or international institutions have (or should have) clear rules on how people can ask to see official information and what remedies are available if information is refused.

-- Legal mechanisms which ensure freedom of information and freedom of expression have to go together to facilitate investigative journalism. Access to information, protection of journalistic sources, and journalists' right to reveal the finding of their investigation should be protected.

-- Whistle-blowers, who are one of main sources of investigative journalism and help them uncover information that would otherwise be swept under the rug, should receive protection when they reveal behaviour that goes against the public interest and not only when they reveal illegal activities. Limited protection of whistle-blowers exists in the UK (a public interest disclosure act, passed in 1998), in Belgium, in Romania and Slovenia (but whistle-blower laws in these countries protect only government employees).

D. Hate speech online

31. What would be the most efficient ways to tackle the trivialisation of discrimination and violence that arises through the spreading of hatred, racism and xenophobia, in particular online?

-- According to a study conducted in 2014 in Poland (http://www.ngofund.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Mowa-nienawisci-w-Polsce-streszczenie.eng_.pdf), nearly two-thirds of young Poles had come into contact with hate speech online, with roughly the same amount encountering verbal hate speech from their peers or on the street. Young people often do not even recognize hate speech for what it is, they think this is a normal, usual manner of speaking.

-- This trend mirrors the growing brutalization of language used in public sphere. Politician, journalists and other people who have the privilege and the responsibility to speak to the general public should pay highest attention to the language they use.

-- Civil society organizations should launch information campaign targeting not only their members and general public but also public figures. These campaigns should be financially supported by the governments, some European funding can be considered but only as an additional source of money.

-- Social media administrator should not give impression to the people that everything is allowed.

-- Educational program should be included in the school curricula

-- To some extent criminal law may be useful to combat hate speech.

32. How can a better informed use of modern media, including new digital media ('media literacy') contribute to promote tolerance? Please indicate any best practice.

E. Role of free and pluralistic media in a democratic society

33. How do developments in media freedom and pluralism impact democracy? Please explain.

-- The democratization of media in Central and Eastern European countries after the collapse of authoritarian communist regime was an essential part of the democratization of their political systems because freedom of ideas and thoughts is a hallmark of a well-functioning democratic society. Every time the democracy steps back, the media freedom follows this movement and vice-versa. Everyone can observe nowadays this phenomenon in Hungary or in Poland.

-- Freedom of speech is key for democratic scrutiny, citizens 'mindful and conscious participation in the elections, public debate and social cohesion. It is a representative democracy guarantor. Freedom of speech is only possible if media remain independent and pluralistic.

34. Who do you think is the most suited to help increase media literacy? Please rank and explain why.

	The most important - 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	The least important - 8
Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public authorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media, including online providers	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dedicated learning systems using e.g. radio, TV, mobile phones and the internet (please specify)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Civil society	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other - please specify

35. Please give specific good examples or best practices for increasing media literacy.

-- Portals like "Les Décodeurs RTBF" or Le Monde's service ""Décodeurs" - not only they rebut intentionally false or inaccurate information invented story but also they put the facts back in their context. Decontextualized information in the media, especially the digital ones, is one of the main sources of public misperception.

-- Public institution and NGOs' rebuttal services setting the facts straight and reacting on misleading media reporting (European Commission's representation in London <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/ECintheUK/> and European Parliament information Office <http://www.europarl.org.uk/en/media/euromyths.html> have good and reactive fact-checking services)

-- Media literacy skills should be included in school compulsory curricula. Such educational programs exist in Canada and Australia but more has to be done in Europe. These programs should not be limited to "digital literacy".

36. What would be concrete ways for free and pluralistic media to enhance good governance and transparency and thus foster citizens' democratic engagement (e.g. self-organisation for political purposes, participation in unions, NGOs, political parties, participation in elections)?

37. What are best practices of free and pluralistic media contributing to foster an informed political debate on issues that are important for democratic societies (e.g. in terms of the nature of the content or in terms of format or platforms proposed)?

38. Which measures would you consider useful to improve access to political information across borders? Please indicate any best practice.

39. Do you consider that social media/platforms, as increasingly used by candidates, political parties and citizens in electoral campaigns play a positive role in encouraging democratic engagement?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give specific aspects and best practices that you would recommend.

In fact, the answer is YES and NO.

-- YES. Social media make it easy for the users' to express their views and opinions, to publish and disseminate these opinions. This is with no doubt contributes to citizens' participation in public debates and political campaigns. Social media also are an easy and efficient tool for the politicians of reaching broader and targeted audience and of forming public opinions, often at a lower cost than through traditional media.

If no, please give specific aspects and examples of negative impacts, and possible alternatives to address them.

-- High activity in the social media (Twitter, Facebook) shouldn't be confused with a real citizen's engagement and with democratic participation. There is in fact little evidence that the greater use of social media affect people's likelihood of voting or participating in the campaign. Moreover, since the facility offered by the social media partially comes from anonymity, it does not necessarily imply responsibility for what and how is said. Information bulimia, reinforced by the social media, doesn't lead to informed citizenship, it rather results in decontextualized information which contributes to the generalized misperception of the reality.

-- It is easier to spread populist discourse, hatred and propaganda for war on social media and platforms than through traditional media. This for sure encourages people's engagement but not the democratic one. States and media professionals should properly address this problem according to international standards and to journalistic professional ethics.

-- Social media/platforms definitely encourage people engagement: the shift to the digital era offers to any media user the opportunity to become content producer himself. The content produced by a dilettante (media user) competes with the one produced by the professional (journalist). On one hand this Wikipedisation of the media environment contributes to diversity, pluralism and freedom of information because it improves access to different programme formats and sources of information and encourages the people engagement. But on the other it also erodes citizens' concept of truth, trust in public (including political) message and the credibility of the available information and this is not good for democracy.

40. Do you consider that there are specific risks or problems regarding the role of platforms and social media — in relation to pluralism of the journalistic press or more generally — as regards the quality of the democratic debate and the level of engagement?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please give specific examples and best practices that you would recommend to address these risks or problems.

-- See answers 39 and 16

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