

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.

IMPORTANT NOTICE ON THE PUBLICATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

*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 (NB — your contribution will not be published, but the Commission may use it internally for statistical and analytical purposes).

For further information, please consult the privacy statement [click below]

[Privacy statement. 2016ac public consultation.pdf](#)

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.

Onno Falkena, EBLT (Europeesk Buro foar Lytse Talen)

Is your organisation included in the Transparency Register?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please indicate your Register ID-number

499457322247-35

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.

Citizens have a right to expect that European institutions' interaction with citizens associations, NGOs, businesses, trade unions, think tanks, etc. is transparent, complies with the law and respects ethical principles, while avoiding undue pressure, and any illegitimate or privileged access to information or to decision-makers. The Transparency Register exists to provide citizens with direct and single access to information about who is engaged in activities aiming at influencing the EU decision-making process, which interests are being pursued and what level of resources are invested in these activities. Please help us to improve transparency by registering.

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?

For professional broadcast content, especially in minority languages, a reasonable amount of public funding is necessary. Minorities should also be able to have a say about their own media.

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

In the Netherlands all regional broadcasters are completely independent organisations until 2017. In 2017 the Dutch government wants to merge all broadcasters into one centralised organisation. Simultaneously there is an important redundancy. This clearly harms the independence and pluriformity of the those regional broadcasters.

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

They should operate at a certain distance of the government. The acting minister should not be able to appoint functionaries of his or her own political party or express opinions about specific programmes.

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

If the media work in an area where, apart from the state language, another language is being spoken, it is important that this (minority) community is also adequately served in its own language.

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

There should be an element of representation of the community they serve.

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 the case of the Netherlands it has been detrimental that the responsibility for the regional broadcasters was moved from the provinces to the national government in 2014. The current government policy has a huge impact on those broadcasters. It goes without saying that due to less resources and forced reorganisation it will be more difficult to cover the news like they were used to. The reorganisation also makes them less free to develop their own programming.

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.

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.

Most areas in the Netherlands are being served by one paper only, which sometimes means that one view is published.

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.

The province of Fryslân nowadays produces its own news programme, which basically is not news but propaganda. I mention this as an example of authorities trying to produce their own videos. Should government resources be spend this way, while public broadcasters are suffering from redundancies?

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.

C. Journalists and new media players

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

There are less journalists now than PR people. The journalists left are quite busy, often combining radio and camerawork and editing, which means that there is less time and attention for journalism itself.

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.

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

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.

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

Yes, this sometimes happens. I even went to the police to report it, and they called the man who published it...

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.

Threats may lead that journalists are less enclined to produce a certain story. Journalists are only human as well.

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.

It is good and usefull if the police takes these things seriously and is prepared to take some action.

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.

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

Journalists should be allowed to protect their sources, preferably by law.

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

By law.

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

- Yes
 No

If yes, please give specific examples.

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?

Lack of resources (time, money) is absolutely a factor in the reality of the current redundancies.

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.

30. Please indicate any best practice facilitating investigative journalism

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?

Make it more difficult to publish hate speech anonymously.

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.

Make it obligatory to register yourself, because reactions are published.

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

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

It is important that all tendencies and parties have access to the media.

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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 type="radio"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media, including online providers	<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"/>
Dedicated learning systems using e.g. radio, TV, mobile phones and the internet (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Civil society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" 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.

Encourage children/adolescents to make their own newspaper or tv news. This absolutely will teach them a few things.

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)?

Good journalism!

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)?

There are several possibilities: give the public the opportunity to react to the news, or organise public debates about important issues with politicians and NGO's. Journalism is no longer oneway-traffic.

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.

Twitter can be positive, if used for publishing, receiving and communication.

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

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.

If opinions are only communicated by social media - without the filter of a professional - this is a risk.

Contact

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