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.

Wichtig - Offentliche Konsultation (auf deutsch) / Important - consultations publiques (en français)

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 (NB — your contribution will not be published, but the Commission may use it internally for statistical and analytical purposes).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

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

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   Dr. Džina Donauskaitė, Manager of Media4Change program at the National
   Institute for Social Integration, Lithuania
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Is your organisation included in the Transparency Register?

○ Yes

● No

If yes, please indicate your Register ID-number

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?

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It is important that the State sets rules of media market concentration by not
allowing the extreme liberalization. It should be done to protect information
pluralism and public interest against profit-seeking interests of private
businesses and/or corporations. The State should protect rights of the free
expression, secure right for journalists to collect and publish information,
implement open data policy about its own actions and set liberal rules for
limiting public information that could significantly harm vulnerable groups of
society, such as children. The self-regulatory bodies have to set rules of
journalism standards and ethics, and to involve public into discussion about
what kind of journalism is needed for the society. The self regulatory bodies
have to react to wrong-doings of media with public explanations and comments.
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6. Could you provide specific examples of problems deriving from the lack of independence of media regulatory authorities in EU Member States?

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In Lithuania the media concentration is relatively high, which results in
commercialization of news and decreasing pluralism. That's why Media4Change
program in Lithuania is supporting initiatives of alternative journalism.
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7. What competences would media regulatory authorities need in order to ensure a sufficient level of media freedom and pluralism?

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The core competence is to understand media's role in democratic societies and
what threats are caused to the media freedom, diversity and pluralism either
by the irrelevant State's or Market's influence. It is also important that the
authorities understand need of investigative journalism and allow
investigative journalism-friendly regulations.
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8. What should be the role of public service media for ensuring media pluralism?

> The public service media should set an example of highest standards in
> journalism.

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

> There should be progressive personnel selection process which would emphasize
> the need of diversity in newsrooms, not only by hiring people with diverse
> backgrounds, but also empowering them to make influence on editorial
> decisions. This is one of the issues that Media4Change is working on by
> providing consultation of how to make a more inclusive newsroom.

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 Lithuania, when the funding of public broadcaster was decided by the
> parliament, the ruling parties used to get more coverage than others.

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.

> In Lithuania as well as in Latvia and other countries, names of many owners of
> media organisations are not available to the public.

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

> Declarations of who owns media channels have to be publicly accessible and
> compulsory for every each of media channel.

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.

> Commercialisation of news, biases and lack of diversity and pluralism in media content. Reduced need for professionalism in journalism.

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.

> News channel, owned by company which also owns alcohol production chain, is advocating against law that forbids sales of alcohol in gas stations or any other regulations that harms alcohol production. Newspapers which get income as a result of public procurement procedures for publishing information about the authorities, are avoiding to report critically about those authorities in their texts.

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.

> Education, awareness raising campaigns, teaching journalism students to critically analyze what is going on and why in the media field. Preparing green papers for politicians.

C. Journalists and new media players

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

> There is less quality journalism.

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.

> There is limitations of free expression on the basis of conservative law which talks about 'propaganda of homosexuality'.

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

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Civic society organisations, including Media4Change campaigns, are raising
awareness of illiberal tendencies that are forced upon newsrooms.
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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.

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The house of a journalist, who did not agree to disclose the source of
information, was searched by police. Computer and other belongings were taken
from her workplace as well.
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20. Have you experienced, or are you aware of, problems linked to hate speech and threats directed towards individuals exercising journalistic activities?

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Comment sections in online media dailies are filled with hate speech,
including the hate speech towards journalists as well.
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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.

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Informational safety, such as privacy of journalists gets easily violated by
many actors.
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23. Please indicate any best practice for protecting journalists from threats against their safety and security.

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The awareness of how to use encrypted communications has to be increased among
journalists.
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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?

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By creating practice of leak sites and encrypted communications in newsrooms.
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26. Please indicate any best practice for protecting the confidentiality of journalistic sources/whistleblowers.

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

- ◉ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, please give specific examples.

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Journalists self-censor themselves if they suspect that their journalism can
harm interests of media owners. Not necessarily because they are employed by a
certain media house, but also because criticism can threaten their
possibilities to be employed by other media house in the future.
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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?

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Lack of resources is a huge problem for investigative journalists, that is why
Media4Change program in Lithuania every year raises funds for investigative
journalists. Another thing is that investigative journalism in Lithuania is
challenged even by the internal code of ethics of country's journalists,
which, for example, does not allow to collect information undercover.
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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.

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Over the last 3 years, many investigative stories in Lithuania where published
as a result of Media4Change funding. As investigative journalism became
trendy, one major commercial player established department of investigative
journalists, which was followed by investigative journalism initiative of a
competing online media channel.
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30. Please indicate any best practice facilitating investigative journalism

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Every year Media4Change is organising Investigative Journalism competition and
fundraising money for journalists' investigative initiatives.
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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?

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Media4Change program in Lithuania together with partners from Latvia and Great
Britain prepared and published two methodologies – one for online and print
journalists of how to recognize and react to hate speech and and another – for
civic society organisations which communicate with media in order to challenge
messages of hatred in the public sphere. Training sessions for journalists
were organised on the basis of these methods.
NGO Institute for Social Integration also implemented No Hate Speech 'Love
Panda' Campaign: http://www.myliupanda.lt/en/ which was very successful among
young people in those social media channels that they use.
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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.

> NGO Institute for Social Integration implemented No Hate Speech 'Love Panda'
> Campaign: http://www.myliupanda.lt/en/ . Products of campaign (viral videos,
> memes and other visuals etc) were widely shared by young people in social
> media channels that they use. Youth also participated actively in various
> competitions, a giant Panda suit was stitched and a person wearing this suit
> participated in various youth festivals public gatherings giving hugs and
> spreading messages of peace, tolerance and acceptance. A giant Panda also made
> surprise visits to libraries, parliament, president palace, schools. During
> the campaign, competitions were organised too. Young people were asked to
> create short sentences carrying messages of tolerance and joy. Those sentences
> were later used in campaign communication.

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

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

> For a citizen it is important to be more informed so that he/she can make
> relevant decisions and choices. Nevertheless, other factors are also very
> important. Not all opinions are equal as it takes significant effort into
> building some while not others. Part of opinions are supported by facts and
> research, while others are based on suspicion and prejudice. Therefore, media
> pluralism as such is not a single factor in making society more informed.
> Quality standards of journalism and education in general have to addressed and
> taken into serious consideration.

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	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Friends	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
School	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
Public authorities	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Media, including online providers	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
Dedicated learning systems using e.g. radio, TV, mobile phones and the internet (please specify)	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
Civil society	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Other - please specify

[ ]

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

> Media4Change program in Lithuania is implementing a 3 years-long Critical
> Thinking, Media and Information Literacy initiative. The aim of this project
> is to empower young Lithuanian opinion makers - emerging youth community
> leaders and entry-level journalists - with critical thinking, media and
> information literacy tools, which subsequently will contribute to the
> strengthening of Lithuanian civic society, especially in the regions mostly
> populated by ethnic minorities. During the project these objectives are being
> achieved:
> 1. Methodologies of critical and informational literacy teaching developed.
> The plan is to foster application of them in the informal education sector of
> the youth in Lithuania.
> 2. Critical thinking, media and information literacy skills of young opinion
> makers will be developed.
> 3. Young opinion makers will be empowered (by teaching them how to use
> peer-to-peer education concept) to apply their new skills among their school
> friends and communities.
> 4. The public campaign is being implemented which aim is to encourage critical
> thinking, media and information literacy and thus stimulate the motivational
> learning environment.

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)?

> In Lithuania, first and foremost, it is important to de-demonise self
> organisation activities in the first place, as many protests in the public
> sphere and even among acting politicians are being associated with destructive
> elements that threaten to ruin the state. This is a huge problem. Young
> activists, members of trade unions, school teachers, protesting against low
> wages, are being accused of working in Russia's interests, being unpatriotic,
> acting against the Lithuanian state.

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.

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.

Contact

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