

## The legislation

Traditionally, this issue has been all about “media ownership” and particularly cross-media ownership. But now, under pressure from the unions representing journalists, the focus has expanded to incorporate also the “future of professional journalism”.

Members of the European Parliament have always, and will continue to put pressure on the European Commission “to do something” about media pluralism and legislation to promote editorial diversity. These calls from MEPs are usually driven by national perceptions of national media (the Berlusconi effect), but also sometimes by perceptions of “dominance” by large, multi-national groups in one or more countries. In the past few months, the spotlight has been on Hungary where the government has introduced new laws which undermine press freedom through government-controlled regulatory bodies and requirements for registration and supervision of journalists.

More generally, we have also seen parliamentarians express concerns also about the quality and range of news reporting, acknowledging that the severe challenges faced by traditional media in the face of both difficult economic times but also competition from new media, made available to consumers for free. More and more politicians have started to realise that often this “free” content is free-riding, parasitically on professionally produced content without either payment or acknowledgement. So calls for action now extend to asking what the Commission might do to safeguard the future of the media.

Because the European Union has no legal competence to legislate for “media pluralism”, Commissioner Reding during the last Barroso Commission took a consistent line – which was that pluralism is a matter for the Member States alone. Instead, Mrs Reding commissioned a major study into factors which contribute to pluralism beyond ownership levels, and produced not only a report but a set of indicators which could be applied by national Regulators to monitor and measure pluralism. However, during the Stakeholder workshop to look at the results, the Commission could not have been left in any doubt as to our high level of concern that the eventual impact of such a systematic monitoring tool could have on a free press.

Now Commissioner Reding in her new Fundamental Rights role under the Lisbon Treaty - which includes media pluralism, and the new Commissioner for Media and Information Society, Neelie Kroes, are looking at what the EU might do centrally.

## The Commission is considering two options:

1. To set up a multi-stakeholder group to examine the state of the media, future for professional journalism, possible measures including state aid or indirect aid, comprising representatives from unions, all media and internet companies.

2. A small, high level group to look at media pluralism. In particular, what action can be taken to monitor pluralism at national level (e.g. Hungary and beyond).

## What is at stake for the EPC?


Do we want to promote, support or reject either of these options?


- a) Has our position changed? Previously we have always said that any attempt by the EU to monitor, measure or worse regulate traditional media for pluralism, will damage our competitiveness.
- b) Or, is there a role for a stakeholder group? If so, how could we shape its terms of reference and membership? Do we support or oppose state aid. What indirect aid could we envisage? Pros and Cons? Could this group deal with better copyright management online, reduced VAT and freedom to advertise?

## LINKS

### [European Commission and Media Pluralism](#)

### [Commission funded Study on Indicators for Pluralism](#)

➤ [The Final Report](#)  describes the approach and method used to design these indicators and their integration into a risk-based framework. It contains no policy recommendation as such. Please note that chapter 8 summarises feedback from the stakeholder workshop and explains how the consultants included pertinent points in the final report. It contains the following annexes:

➤ [The User Guide](#) : explains how the Monitor can be applied in practice (how to install the MPM software, how to calculate indicator scores, how to interpret the resulting risk profiles, etc.).

➤ [The Media Pluralism Monitor](#) : an Excel file containing the indicators embedded in a risk-based scoring system;



For further information, contact:

Angela Mills Wade  
EPC Executive Director

Tel: +44 1865 310 732;  
[angela.mills@wade.uk.net](mailto:angela.mills@wade.uk.net)

or Heidi Lambert

Tel: +44 1245 476 265;  
[heidilambert@hlcltd.demon.co.uk](mailto:heidilambert@hlcltd.demon.co.uk)

Alternatively visit  
[www.epceurope.org](http://www.epceurope.org)