



Media Report

Media Reporting

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2016

Indicator

Media Reporting

Question

To what extent do media provide substantive in-depth information on decision-making by the government?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = A clear majority of mass media brands focus on high-quality information content analyzing government decisions.
- 8-6 = About one-half of the mass media brands focus on high-quality information content analyzing government decisions. The rest produces a mix of infotainment and quality information content.
- 5-3 = A clear minority of mass media brands focuses on high-quality information content analyzing government decisions. Several mass media brands produce superficial infotainment content only.
- 2-1 = All mass media brands are dominated by superficial infotainment content.

Finland

Score 9

By providing a continuous flow of information and background analysis, the main print media, TV and radio stations in Finland offer substantive in-depth information on government decisions. This provision takes different forms, such as inserts in regular news programs, special features, debates between proponents of conflicting views, debates between representatives of the government and opposition parties, regular broadcasts of government hearings in parliament, and so on. Empirical information about program volume is not available, but subtracting for “infotainment programs,” between five and seven hours a week of television and radio programming is dedicated to governmental issues. Daily newspaper circulation numbers remain reasonably high, with newspapers often providing high-quality political reporting.

Ireland

Score 9

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) aims to ensure that “the democratic values enshrined in the constitution, especially those relating to rightful liberty of expression, are upheld,” and that broadcasting services are “open and pluralistic.”

The largest TV and radio stations in Ireland are operated by RTÉ, a state-owned public service broadcaster financed by revenue from the mandatory TV license, as well as by advertising. Since 1988, RTÉ has faced competition from privately owned radio and television stations. RTÉ devotes a significant proportion of TV and radio

air time to news and commentary on current affairs and political issues. It also undertakes original investigative journalism. The privately owned TV and radio stations have to devote specified proportions of airtime to current affairs and public service programs. However, in terms of listener hours, music and entertainment outweigh current affairs and analysis.

The main stations produce high-quality information programs and programs devoted to in-depth analysis of government policy and decisions. They provide forums for discussions of current affairs, as well as outlets for opinions and grievances. These programs elicit reactions and responses from politicians. The two largest-circulation daily newspapers provide ample information on and analysis of government decisions.

The Press Council of Ireland provides an independent forum for resolving complaints about the press. In 2012, the United Kingdom's Leveson inquiry mentioned the Irish Press Council as a model.

Irish newspaper circulation (print and electronic versions combined) continued to fall over the review period, but the main journals are devoting additional resources to improved electronic dissemination of news and analysis.

Norway

Score 9

The mass media's treatment of government decisions and policy is accurate and informative. The two largest broadcast-television channels, NRK and TV2, both produce broad-ranging evening news programs that typically devote considerable space and time to governmental and political affairs. Both channels also regularly (almost daily) broadcast debates and discussions on current affairs.

Statistics show news programs and political debates to have a high number of viewers. Both large television organizations have recently strengthened their news coverage, in TV2's case by establishing a new news channel, and in NRK's case by reforming NRK2 into a news and facts channel. Political news is frequently featured on popular televised infotainment shows on Friday nights. The leading radio channels, NRK and to a lesser extent P4, also devote considerable time to political news.

Sweden

Score 9

Together with Norway, Japan and Finland, Sweden ranks very high regarding the news consumption. The overall quality of the political coverage provided by Swedish media is good, if not extremely good.

Public service radio and TV in Sweden is still central to the media system. There have been discussions and Commissions concerning the future of public service but so far no major changes have been put on the agenda.

Compared to many other countries, the coverage is presented by journalists who are experts on Swedish politics. The level of analysis is good and, for most the part, balanced. There is obviously sometimes less professional coverage, too, but taken together, the quality of Swedish newspapers is very good.

Citation:

Bergström, Annika et al. (eds.) (2014), *Fragment* (SOM rapport 63) (Göteborg: SOM).

Switzerland

Score 9 Radio and TV programs are of high quality in Switzerland. With very few exceptions, radio reports are reliable and analyses performed on an independent basis in a professional way. Some television programs are trending toward infotainment and the personalization of politics.

Canada

Score 8 Canada's main TV and radio stations produce a mix of infotainment and high-quality information programs. Public broadcasters, including the CBC and provincial TV channels such as TV Ontario (TVO), provide extensive and often high-quality coverage of politics and news, with a minimum of five to seven hours per week of in-depth information on government decisions, and often more. Examples of such programs include TVO's *The Agenda* and CBC's *The House*. A 2013 study comparing news coverage in 11 countries found that the share of news content as a percentage of total broadcast time was highest in Canada, both for domestic and international news coverage. The Canadian media coverage is further enhanced by international news channels such as CNN, BBC World News and Al Jazeera, which are readily available through cable networks. One caveat is that there is little competition among public broadcasters; on the other hand, private broadcasters (with the exception of the Canadian Parliamentary Access Channel) are generally focused primarily on infotainment. Private broadcasters, especially the Canadian Parliamentary Access Channel (CPAC), also provide analysis of government decisions. Certain print media, such as the *Globe and Mail*, provide comparatively high-quality and comprehensive analysis of public policy. Others, such as *La Presse*, the *National Post* and other Postmedia publications, provide good coverage of public-policy issues.

Citation:

Aalberg et al (2013). *International TV News, Foreign Affairs Interest, and Public Knowledge*, *Journalism Studies*, 14:3, 387-406.

Denmark

Score 8

As in other democracies, the media plays an important role in Denmark. Some have argued that the media constitutes a fourth power, next to the legislative, executive and judiciary powers in modern democracies; and that journalists play the role of citizen advocates vis-à-vis public authorities. The media partly have power, through editorial decisions, not to cover certain stories, yet obviously they have to be selective. Like media outlets elsewhere, the Danish media shows a tendency to make the news easier for the public to relate to by simplifying or personalizing the stories reported, and emphasizing an element of conflict. In editorial decisions about who or what is covered, there appears to be a tendency to favor top politicians and government representatives. Weaker actors, such as immigrant representatives or ethnic minorities, get less coverage, although immigration stories have become important in recent years and now form part of daily news coverage.

Apart from daily news programs, some television and radio stations offer more analytical programs where issues can be analyzed more in depth. Some of these programs can be quite informative. It is worth mentioning that the education of journalists has improved in recent years.

Overall, it is fair to say that the Danish media covers national news much more closely than international news, including issues regarding the European Union. Like elsewhere in the world, public and media outlets increasingly use the internet, with all major media now having websites.

Media access to internal government documents has been a sensitive issue because of changed legislation regarding the access to such documents (offentlighedsloven). The new law entered into force 1 January 2014. The two aspects of the new law most criticized were the possibility of the government denying access to internal documents exchanged between a minister and experts (Art. 24) and between a minister and a member of the parliament (art. 27). The law will be evaluated after its third year.

Citation:

Peter Munk Christiansen og Lise Togeby, *Magten i Danmark*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

“Fakta om ny offentlighedslov,” <http://www.politiko.dk/nyheder/fakta-om-ny-offentlighedslov> (accessed 23 October 2014).

“Ny offentlighedslov – ny praksis for journalister,” <http://www.aabenhedstinget.dk/ny-offentlighedslov-ny-praksis-for-journalister-2/> (accessed 23 October 2014).

Estonia

Score 8

By providing a continuous flow of information and background analysis, the main daily newspapers, TV and radio stations offer substantive in-depth information on government plans and policies. There are six national daily newspapers, two main

weeklies, two online news portals, four TV channels and three public-radio channels. Together, these provide adequate information and in-depth analysis of government policy, and comprise the majority of the entire domestic media market (except for radio broadcasting, where music stations account for the largest market share). Policy-related information takes different forms, including inserts in regular news programs, interviews with experts, debates between proponents of conflicting views, debates between representatives of government and opposition, regular broadcasts of parliament sessions and government press conferences.

However, two shortcomings are evident here. First, the media tends to pay more attention to the performance of political parties as organizations than to the parties' positions on various policy issues. Secondly, information on government activities is typically provided not in advance of decisions, but only after decisions have already been made.

United Kingdom

Score 8

The main TV and radio stations in the United Kingdom – especially those like the BBC that operate under a public charter – provide an extensive array of high-quality news services. Government decisions feature prominently in this programming, and information and analysis on government decisions are both extensive and held to a high standard. There is substantial competition for viewers, in particular between the BBC, ITV, Sky and Channel 4. In addition to news programs, all provide in-depth analysis programs on politics and policy in a variety of formats. The Today Programme on BBC Radio 4 is well known for its highbrow political analysis and scrutiny, and often sets the tone for political debates. Newsnight is the flagship political-news program on TV.

The style of interview on these programs is often explicitly not deferential, and even quite confrontational – especially toward ministers. This is justified by the need to hold politicians and especially government ministers to account. Local radio and press also have a tangible influence within their localities and an increasing number of people resort to online services, most notably BBC Online, as a source of information on government.

Scandals both in the private sector (News of the World) and the public sector (BBC) may have cost some credibility but have so far had no recognizable influence on the functioning of the media system as a whole. Despite political pressure, The Guardian newspaper played a crucial role in the global surveillance disclosures of 2013 and was awarded the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for its efforts.

Austria

Score 7 The freedom of the press in Austria is guaranteed by European and national law. Nevertheless, two problems are relevant:

- The Austrian media lack pluralism. The publicly owned Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) dominates the radio and television broadcast markets, although competition by foreign and privately owned media is growing. In response to criticism of this dominance, the ORF offers guarantees of internal independence and internal political pluralism. The ORF is impartial by law and fulfills its mandate reasonably well, making up for deficits existing elsewhere in the media environment.
- The country's print-media market is highly concentrated. One daily paper, Die Kronen Zeitung, serves more than a third of the country's readership, and uses this dominant position to issue biased political information, often in a simplified manner. Moreover, the expanding role of freely distributed print media, more or less dependent on funds for commercial or political promotion is problematic insofar as it makes it more difficult for readers to distinguish propaganda from information. High-quality political information is available from daily and weekly papers with more limited circulation, but high-quality media face considerable financial difficulties.

Germany

Score 7 Public TV and radio broadcasters generally offer in-depth reports on political processes. The market share of the two main public television broadcasters, ARD and ZDF, has declined in recent years, forcing the public broadcasters' head editors to copy the private channels' successful infotainment and politainment formats. Nevertheless, by international standards, ARD and ZDF in particular offer citizens the opportunity to obtain a relatively deep knowledge of political decision-making. The plurality of the country's television broadcast market is enhanced by the availability of programming from international broadcasters such as CNN, BBC World, CNBC Europe and Al-Jazeera. However, public trust in the media has decreased considerably over recent years, particularly regarding mainstream reporting of the refugee situation.

Israel

Score 7 The Israeli media industry is adapting to the global trend of decreased consumption of print and radio news media, and the increased dominance of television, Internet and social media websites. While Israeli media was joined in recent years by strong

independent investigatory websites and blogs, which gained considerable attention in professional circles and among the public, new popular outlets such as the free daily “Israel Hayom” often times fail to deliver in depth news coverage. Despite common tendencies to focus on the prominent and popular topics of the hour, the Israeli press, public television channels and radio shows do offer interpretation and investigatory journalism that inform the public regarding policy decisions and long term strategies. In 2011, a law dramatically increasing the amount of damages for libel suits raised concerns about the future of the free press as an investigatory arena. A year later, a bill proposal sought to respond to this danger by establishing a national fund to cover legal expenses for journalistic work. The bill passed first call in the parliament, but never became law. According to Freedom House, Israeli journalists remain generally unobstructed in their work and are not censored for political criticism.

Citation:

Goldenberg, Roi, “‘the seventh eye’ website won the Israeli prize for critical media,” *Globes*, 28.1.2013: <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000817765> (Hebrew).

Mann, Rafi and Lev-on, Azi, “Annual report: Media in Israel 2012 - agendas, uses and trends,” Ariel University School of Communication The Institute for the Study of New Media, Politics and Society In cooperation with IFAT and Kantar Media, June 2013: <http://aunmedia.org/sites/default/files/research/mediareport2012.pdf> (Hebrew).

Persisco, Oren, “Restraint and prudence”, The seventh eye website: <http://www.the7eye.org.il/9774> (Hebrew).

“Israel Freedom of the Press Country Report 2015,” Freedom House website, 2015: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/israel> (English).

Italy

Score 7

The space allocated to political themes in Italian media is quite significant in the 10 most important mass media brands (the two main national newspapers, *Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, which have print and online versions; the three state television channels RAI1, RAI2 and RAI3; the two Mediaset channels Canale 5 and Rete 4; and two other private TV channels – Skynews and La7). Television time (both public and private) allocated to political themes is substantial throughout the year, averaging more than seven hours per week. A large part of this time is devoted to debates and talk shows involving politicians, journalists and experts, and to covering the most important aspects of current political controversies.

However, detailed, in-depth analysis of government decisions is much rarer, and debates tend to focus on the personality-driven dimensions of power politics. National newspapers provide more in-depth coverage of government decisions, often providing detailed dossiers on their content. Some radio and internet programming gives high-quality information in advance. The broader public has no access or does not seek access to these media.

Japan

Score 7

NHK, the public broadcaster, provides ample and in-depth information on policy issues. It had a near-monopoly in this role until the 1970s. Since that time, major private broadcasting networks have also moved into this field, while trying to make the provision of information entertaining. NHK also operates a news- and speech-based radio program (Radio 1). The widely read major national newspapers also provide information in a sober manner and style. However, because of their dense personal links with political figures, which finds its institutionalized expression in the journalist club system, these newspapers rarely expose major scandals. Nonetheless, their editorializing can be quite critical of government policy. Investigative journalism is typically confined to weekly or monthly publications. While some of these are of high quality, others are more sensationalist in character.

The 3/11 disaster undermined public trust in leading media organizations, while spotlighting the emerging role played by new social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Personnel changes at NHK after the Abe-led government took power, resulting in a leadership that openly declared its intention to steer a pro-government course, as well as a reporting scandal involving the liberal Asahi newspaper, reduced faith in some major media channels further. According to the 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer, the share of Japanese citizens saying they trust the media tumbled to 31% in 2014 from a previously level of 40%. Online search engines (drawing trust ratings of 37% vs. 20% for TV and just 18% for newspapers) have become the medium of choice for confirming or validating news.

Citation:
Edelman, op. cit.

Luxembourg

Score 7

Luxembourg's media outlets offer quality reporting on public affairs. All parliamentary debates are conducted in Luxembourgish and in public. Parliamentary meetings are broadcast on the television channel Chamber TV (also available online), and the activities of the country's two largest local councils (Luxembourg City and Esch/Alzette) can be followed online. Ministers' weekly public press briefings are given more importance than under the previous administration.

In daily and weekly papers, articles are written in the three official languages (Luxembourgish, French and German) and sometimes in English as well. Certain newspapers are printed only in French; an English-language monthly journal is also published. Moreover, the government is reforming the press-subsidy system to include online media in recognition of the shifting media landscape.

Media coverage is often reactive, when issues have already reached the public in the

form of draft legislation or through parliamentary debate. Media outlets are quite often used as instruments by interest groups or lobbyists seeking to influence government decision-making in its early stages. Such procedures often have a strong influence on government thinking, as political actors need to take into account views and opinions that are published in the media.

Reporting has lost some of its partisan bias. Most media outlets, especially newspapers, have adopted more balanced reporting to preserve or enlarge their audience. The media does play an important role in uncovering information behind government scandals or issues. One example is the extensive media coverage of the so-called Bommeleer affair (a series of bombings of public infrastructure in the 1980s) that was finally brought to court. Allegations of dubious activities of the State Secret Service (SREL) also received extensive media coverage, and were subsequently the subject of a special parliamentary inquiry. In these two events, media outlets played an active role in bringing light to issues that were not made clear by public prosecutors.

Citation:

<http://www.esch.lu/laville/stream/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.land.lu/2013/04/26/unter-dem-tresen-des-csv-staats%e2%80%a9/>

<http://www.wort.lu/de/view/das-bommeleer-dossier-5092c3a9e4b0fe37043e8be8>

<http://www.mediadb.eu/europa/Luxembourg.html>

Netherlands

Score 7

The past decade has seen a large expansion of digital radio and television programming. This has resulted in a richer supply of broadcasters, bundled in so-called “plus packages” for viewers, which serve their own target groups with theme-specific broadcasts. In the digital sphere, viewers and consumers clearly have more choices.

Dutch public television and radio stations produce high-quality information programs analyzing government decisions on a daily basis. Of the 13 national public broadcasters in the Netherlands, eight may be said to consider it their task to inform the public about governmental affairs and decision-making. The main public TV news channel, NPO (previously NOS), is required to provide 15 hours of reporting on political issues every week. On the radio, the First Channel is primarily tasked with providing information. In recent years, the scope of the First Channel within society has been decreasing. This is not surprising since new media (i.e., the Internet) have grown at the expense of more traditional media and are becoming more influential in the provision of news. NPO broadcasts Politiek 24, a digital television channel on the Internet that contains live streams of public debates, analyses, background information and a daily political show. As noted under the “Media Freedom” section, recent policy has pushed for a merger between public media organizations, as well as for limiting their broadcasts to issues of information and culture, leaving entertainment to commercial media.

A majority of Dutch citizens (54%) still read a newspaper every day. Newspaper readers are to be found increasingly among the older and more highly educated population segment; digital subscriptions are on the rise. Regional and local newspapers in particular are experiencing severe financial troubles, leading to strong consolidation and concentration tendencies, and a significant increase in one-paper and even no-paper cities.

Citation:

Raad voor Cultuur, Advies Meerjarenbegroting 2009-2013 Nederlandse publieke omroep. Politici en journalisten willen te vaak scoren.

Media monitor, 13 October 2014 (mediamonitor.nl, consulted 27 October 2014)

Poland

Score 7

Government decisions are widely covered by the country's main TV and radio stations. TV and radio journalists often refer to, and make use of, the in-depth information provided by the print media. Despite a tendency toward infotainment, the quality of reporting by the public broadcaster and the two major private TV companies, POLSAT and TVN, has increased. *Rzeczpospolita*, the second-largest daily paper in Poland, has benefited from a change in ownership and editorial staff, and has become less politically partisan. However, there is still comparatively little public trust in the objectivity of the media. Moreover, citizens do not see major differences in the reliability of the information programs offered by public and private TV broadcasters.

Citation:

Markowski, R., M. Kotnarowski, M. Wenzel, M. Żerkowska-Balas. 2015. *Democratic Audit of Poland 2014*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, chapter on media.

Markowski, R. and M. Kotnarowski. 2016. "Rewolucja mniejszości", *POLITYKA* nr 6 (3045)

Spain

Score 7

The continuous flow of political information in the mainstream Spanish media includes a high proportion of superficial coverage of current political controversies. However, driven by Spaniards' intensifying political engagement during the crisis, the space allocated to high-quality information is also substantive; particularly in the print press and the electronic media.

The main print periodicals (*El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia*) provide a fairly significant amount of in-depth analyses of the Spanish policy process and sophisticated op-ed analyses of government decisions, despite their partisan preferences. The print-media readership is declining, and the impact of these publications is thus limited, but a growing number of readers have begun following online newspapers (either electronic versions of the mainstream print publications or standalone online publications such as *El Confidencial* or *eldiario.es*) and politics-

themed blogs (such as Agenda Pública, Politikon or Piedras de Papel). However, political debates in the Spanish blogosphere are still followed by only a minority of Spaniards.

TV is the most important source of political information for the average citizen, since almost 70% of Spaniards watch TV news every day. However, a large portion of the time devoted to political information is given over to news and talk shows. News programs, which are generally objective and balanced, are aired on a twice-daily basis (from 14:00 to 15:00 and from 20:30 to 21:30) on all major TV channels. In addition, several infotainment-style debate shows are aired during workday mornings and on some evenings (on weekends) but these are often superficial, focusing on polarized arguments with limited contextualized analysis. The public-television organization Televisión Española (TVE) offers some high-quality information programs, although its audience ratings are decreasing and the political independence of the corporation has suffered since 2012 (see “Media Freedom”).

A third of Spaniards also follow political news via radio stations, which devote many hours a week to political information. All main stations have early-morning and afternoon programs combining both background news and political debate, as well as a late-night news program. Privately owned radio stations are more ideologically biased than the major TV stations (with participants in the radio debates blatantly biased in favor of or against the government). There are also daily radio programs of reasonable quality focused on business, and therefore on economic policymaking.

Citation:

www.eldiario.es/redaccion/eldiarioes-subida-lanzamiento-digital-Espana_6_478462175.html

Belgium

Score 6

Television-news programs provide a relatively reasonable level of information, with a greater share of high-quality content and less focus on personalities than in Italy or France, for example. However, the economic crisis in the media sector is accelerating a trend toward sensational, lower-quality information, as well as a growing inability to conduct in-depth investigations or monitor policymaking.

Almost all television channels, public and private, organize political debates on weekends, but the substance is superficial at best. Pure “infotainment” programs are more widespread on Dutch-speaking than on French-speaking channels.

The media from each linguistic community focus mostly on their own community, with little attention paid to events, personalities and perceptions in the other linguistic community.

France

Score 6 Mass media, notably morning (radio) and evening programs, offer quality information concerning government decisions. As for print media, the crucial issue is the division between local and national media. A few quality daily papers and weekly papers provide in-depth information. However, in many instances, the depth and magnitude of information is dependent upon the level of polarization of the government policy. Instead, in local newspapers, information is often superficial and inadequate. The same division applies to private and public audiovisual channels. Some private channels offer only limited, superficial and polemical information. On the whole, economic information is rather poor.

Iceland

Score 6 Iceland's main TV and radio stations provide fairly substantive in-depth information on government decisions. Radio analysis typically tends to be deeper than that found on television. The small size of the market limits the financial resources of TV stations. Critical analysis of government policies by independent observers, experts, and journalists is a fairly recent phenomenon in Iceland. The Special Investigation Commission report had a separate chapter on the media before and during the 2008 economic collapse. The report criticizes the media for not having been critical enough in their coverage of the Icelandic banks and other financial institutions before the 2008 economic collapse. The report argues, on the basis of content analyses of media coverage of the banks, that the media was too biased toward the banks. This bias, well known in the United States during the 1920s for example, was associated with overlapping ownership of the banks and media companies.

Mexico

Score 6 The quality of the media is mixed. The quality of some Mexico City newspapers and magazines is high, but the rest of the press, particularly radio and TV, focuses mainly on entertainment. One problem is that journalists are not always well educated, and sometimes fail to understand or explain complex issues accurately. Criminal gangs also sometimes target journalists, and fear can inhibit some kinds of reporting. A televisual media reform is on the government agenda. The main reform proposed is to expand the number of TV channels provided. This change would probably be good for public revenue, but is unlikely to improve the intellectual quality of the media. On the other hand, media diversity is increasing (if one includes online media), and Mexicans do have access to high-quality offerings if they are interested. Moreover, information on Mexican politics is easily accessible from U.S. and Latin America media outlets due to technical progress.

Portugal

Score 6 The period under review was marked by an increase in investigative reporting, with journalists uncovering an alleged social-security debt by the then-serving prime minister, as well as reporting on the cases of José Sócrates and the visa-corruption scandal referred to in the “Corruption Prevention” section.

However, there continues to be a lack of systematic in-depth policy analysis. Policy analysis is usually delegated to expert commentators, with little or no journalistic work performed on policy issues.

In the previous SGI report, we noted the large amount of commentary time allotted to former politicians, particularly on television, a pattern that generates potential conflict-of-interest questions and does not seem to have contributed to improving the quality of policy analysis. Perhaps the most salient example of the confluence between politicians and television during the review period was provided by Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, a former leader of the PSD and Portugal’s most popular TV commentator. De Sousa held a regular slot in the main evening news every Sunday on the TVI channel, and announced in October 2015 that he would run for president in the January 2016 presidential elections.

Slovenia

Score 6 In Slovenia, the majority of both electronic and printed mass media fail to provide high-quality information on government decisions and mostly focus on superficial subjects. However, there is a clear distinction to be made between the private and public media here. Whereas the private media, especially private electronic media, tend to focus on non-political information and infotainment, the public media, especially television and radio broadcasters, put much more emphasis on providing high-quality information about government decisions. They even devote some attention to the debates preceding these decisions. This particularly applies when debates are initiated by the government.

United States

Score 6 For the interested citizen, it is easy to find a large volume of serious, high-quality reporting on government and policy, with balanced, reasonably objective treatment of issues – in print, on the Internet or on television. But such qualities do not describe the majority of major news outlets, nor the outlets used by the largest audiences. A majority of citizens obtain most of their news from television rather than newspapers or the Internet, and the quality of the national news broadcasts has

been declining. However, reputable news-reporting and news-analysis programs are available on radio and TV networks. The information quality of talk shows varies, ranging from “infotainment” to the serious discussion of policy issues with reputable experts.

The most damaging trend for public understanding is the decline of journalistic standards. Some media – most notoriously the conservative Fox News cable TV-news network – exhibit pervasive ideological biases that are not confined to identifiable commentary or opinion segments, but also affect news reporting. Their broadcasts amount to outright polemical campaigning for or against certain political positions and their advocates.

Australia

Score 5

Television and radio stations vary in the time they devote to substantive information on policy issues and government decisions. Commercial broadcasters devote relatively little time to such matters, but the state-owned broadcaster, which has one national television station and a number of radio stations, as well as a website, devotes a considerable amount of time to high-quality analysis of government decisions. Newspaper coverage is likewise variable, with the popular newspapers providing superficial coverage and the quality “broadsheets” providing more in-depth coverage and discussion. While Australia used to have more high-quality newspapers in the past, market concentration has contributed to a decline in print-media diversity and quality. To some extent countering this decline has been the emergence of a number of online-only news providers. While the impact of these news outlets is difficult to assess, it is clear that at least several of them have risen to the status of mass-media outlets that are widely read by members of the Australian community.

Croatia

Score 5

As a result of the rise of media conglomerates and the dominance of foreign owners, the Croatian media sector is highly commercialized. Entertainment genres prevail in both the electronic and print media. Croatia lacks a great, serious daily newspaper comparable with Delo in Slovenia or Politika in Serbia. Nevertheless, the newspapers Jutarnji list and Vecernji list provide good coverage of Croatian political, economic and social affairs.

Cyprus

Score 5

The media landscape is dominated by infotainment programming, and media organizations largely fail to provide in-depth analyses. The capacity to analyze and evaluate policies is hampered by a low level of issue knowledge, partisan approaches and low awareness of the code of journalistic ethics. Journalists themselves have

acknowledged the media's dependency on financial interests, and the extent to which this has influenced coverage. This has been exacerbated during the crisis.

Political issues are widely covered in print and electronic media, but with little insight offered. In-depth information is only occasionally offered, typically by academics or experts invited in particular by the public broadcaster. Analysts linked to specific political parties often fail to disclose their connections. Most journalists do little to hide their personal views and preferences in reports and debates. In the period under review, while the government generally benefited from lenient media treatment, it attracted harsh criticism for its inconsistent or faulty actions. The media often takes a populist approach in covering institutions and politicians.

Media coverage has not been helped by political figures' polarizing rhetoric, confrontational tactics, and the absence of a creative and productive public debate.

The lack of transparency in print-media circulation figures and media-ownership data are additional factors affecting the public's capacity to evaluate the information received. This has a negative impact on the quality of information.

Czech Republic

Score 5

The main TV and radio stations provide daily news programs and some deeper discussion and analysis programs on a weekly basis. However, much of the commentary is superficial, and debates are usually structured to represent the views of the main political parties. The quality of information on government decisions has improved with the digitalization process. Czech TV established CT24, a channel dedicated to news, which also broadcasts online and offers continual analysis of domestic and international events. The Czech Republic's commercial media sector tends to eschew in-depth analysis of current affairs and instead follows an infotainment or scandal-driven news agenda. The recent ownership changes have further reduced the quality of the commercial media. The negative and often inaccurate articles on the migration issue in most of the print media testify to the lack of quality.

Greece

Score 5

The most popular TV and radio channels are privately owned and provide infotainment rather than in-depth information. Such channels may offer in-depth information only in cases in which the economic interests of private media owners are affected by a prospective government decision. Media owners often change sides, first favoring the government, then the opposition. The state-owned TV and radio channels – which cater to a small audience and cannot effectively compete with the private channels – offer somewhat more sophisticated information and analysis.

However, the sudden shutting down of the national broadcaster (ERT) by the government in June 2014 led to a gap in public broadcasting. A transitional, understaffed, public broadcaster functioned until May 2014 when a new public broadcaster (NERIT) fully replaced the previous one. Throughout 2014, Syriza's party cadres rejected all invitations by NERIT and demanded the reopening of ERT. In NERIT, the quality of information and analysis depended on the professionalism of producers and journalists. In June 2015, five months after coming to power in January 2015, Syriza abolished the NERIT, re-established the ERT and hired back almost all personnel dismissed by the preceding government.

On the other hand, the circulation of dailies is comparatively low. Sunday newspapers have a larger circulation and Sunday newspapers feature articles based on investigative journalism. Most people inform themselves through TV programs or various news websites. In a few websites, one may follow debates provoked by an informed contributor. Such debates often revolve around the causes and consequences of the economic crisis and the management of the crisis. In short, one may find interesting in-depth information by browsing Greek websites.

Citation:

The public broadcaster, ERT, was re-established by the Syriza-ANEL government through law 4324/2015, passed in April 2015 and implemented two months later.

Latvia

Score 5

A minority of the ten most important mass-media brands in Latvia provide high-quality information. The majority of reporting is a mix of quality information and infotainment programs. The financial constraints on the media brought about by audience and advertising shifts to Internet-based sources and limited budgets for public broadcasting have had a negative effect on the provision of high-quality content.

Nevertheless, some media players have succeeded in meeting a high standard of quality. The weekly magazine IR, established in 2010, provides in-depth information on government policy plans. Investigative reporting on public and private television stations fulfills a watchdog function. Sustained analytical focus on issues of public concern is provided by the non-profit investigative-journalism center Re:Baltica, founded in August 2011. It focuses on issues such as the social costs of economic austerity, consumer protection and drug-money flows. By cooperating with the mainstream media, it has succeeded in moving these issues onto the public agenda.

Economic constraints on the media have exacerbated the media's tendency to allow financial pressures to influence content. Research indicates that hidden commercial advertising can be arranged in any media channel in Latvia. Hidden political advertising is denied by the Latvian-language media, but acknowledged by the Russian-language media.

New concerns have arisen about the influence of Russia's "hybrid warfare" on the media environment in Latvia, especially for Russian-language media consumers. Proposals to expand the public-broadcasting services to include Russian-language programming have stalled, however.

Citation:

Rožukalne A. (2010), Research Paper on Hidden Advertising Issues in the Media, Available at (in Latvian): http://politika.lv/article_files/21_17/original/slepta_reklama_mediju_p_rakse.pdf?1343212009, Last assessed: 20.05.2013

Lithuania

Score 5 A minority of mass-media organizations, whether TV, radio, print or online, provide high-quality information content analyzing government decisions. Since it is quite expensive to provide high-quality analysis within Lithuania's small media market, the state-funded National Radio and Television is in the best position to undertake in-depth analysis of government decisions. Other mass-media brands tend to produce infotainment-style programming. Although the Lithuanian media are regarded as quite independent, they are not widely trusted by the public; indeed, in October 2015, only 36.2% of respondents in a national survey said they trusted the media.

Citation:

<http://www.vilmorus.lt>.

Malta

Score 5 Media outlets are dominated by Malta's two major political parties and published information can often be described as "infotainment," sensational or superficial. Detailed reports on government policy are rarely available. However, increased competition among the independent media has improved the quality of media reporting. Improvements to the Freedom of Information Act has made this possible. Although increased competition has also allowed for more sensational or artificial reporting.

New Zealand

Score 5 Not all television and radio stations produce high-quality information programs, but both Television New Zealand (TVNZ) and Radio New Zealand provide a regular evaluation of government decisions. TVNZ's TVOne has three news programs per day, each lasting between 30 minutes to one hour, as well as a lighthearted daily current affairs magazine-style program. It also has an hour-long current affairs program, "Q and A," which screens once a week and focuses on domestic politics.

TVNZ 7, a station established in 2008, offered a range of news and current affairs programming and attracted a small but loyal audience prior to its disestablishment in 2012. A second television network, TV3, offers a similar news and current affairs schedule to that of TVNZ. Radio New Zealand has four extensive news features per day in addition to hourly news programs. Newspapers provide information and analysis on government decisions and policy issues – although many articles report government statements verbatim and such stories tend to be relegated to the inner pages – with crime and celebrity stories dominating the headlines. The decline of investigative journalism by electronic- and print-media outlets has been noted by media commentators, although Internet commentary, including blogs, has to some extent provided a substitute.

Citation:

TV One: <http://tvnz.co.nz/tv-one> (accessed October 9, 2014).

Radio New Zealand: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/programmes> (accessed October 9, 2014).

Slovakia

Score 5

The quality and professionalism of media reporting in Slovakia is not extraordinarily high. The public TV and radio stations have lost market shares. Moreover, the commercialization of nationwide broadcasters, with a consequent negative impact on public-interest news and current-affairs coverage, has not left the public stations untouched. As for the print media, the recent ownership changes have raised concerns about the political agenda of the new owners and the resulting decline in journalistic quality.

South Korea

Score 5

South Korea's main problem with regard to media is the low quality of many outlets in terms of their ability to serve as facilitators of public debate or civic culture. Part of the problem here is the country's strong commercialism and associated weakness in political journalism. The main TV programs produce a mix of infotainment and quality information about government policies. Unlike President Lee Myung-bak, who instituted a biweekly radio address in which he explained government policies, President Park rarely holds press conferences, and even less frequently answers questions at her public appearances.

Evening news programs are extensive, but a large portion is devoted to various scandals and scoops. Deeper analysis of information exists, but is rare on television in comparison to public radio stations, such as KBS 1. In the last four years, TV and radio organizations have shifted their programming in the direction of entertainment and infotainment. Political programs have either been replaced or their teams shuffled. In December 2011, four new cable channels run by South Korea's main

newspapers began broadcasting. As commercial programs, they tend to favor infotainment. On the other hand, however, their connection with major newspapers may prove to be a good basis for the production of quality information. Some mass media intentionally conceal or distort politically sensitive information in order to help the president and ruling party.

Bulgaria

Score 4

Bulgaria's media sector is characterized by three main features. First, it suffers from heavy bias, focusing on sensationalism and scandal as a means of gaining public attention rather than producing in-depth and consistent coverage and analysis of important societal processes. Second, in recent years, due to a combination of economic crisis and increasing competition from new media, the mainstream media (both press and electronic) have become heavily dependent on government money for advertising and information campaigns, a fact that enables the government to exert influence. Thirdly, most print-media organizations can be considered as appendages to their owners and publishers' businesses; as a consequence, high-quality journalism definitely takes a back seat relative to other business interests. In their coverage of government policies, most major media organizations concentrate on short-term sensationalist aspects. They tend to frame government decisions as personalized power politics, diverting attention away from the substance of the policy toward the entertainment dimension. Usually there is no coverage of the preparatory stages of policy decisions. When coverage begins, basic information about a given decision or policy is provided, but typically without any deep analysis of its substance and societal importance. Exceptions – such as the very substantial and in-depth discussion of the South Stream gas pipeline project in 2013 and 2014 or the analyses of the failed fourth-largest bank in the period 2014 and 2015 – are rare.

Chile

Score 4

Although locally produced news programs are generally of high quality and draw large audiences – particularly through radio – Chile's newspapers and the main public TV stations report tabloid news, and employ bold headlines and techniques with strong popular and infotainment appeal. Furthermore, statistics released by the National TV Commission (Consejo Nacional de Televisión) show that on average, less than five hours a week per channel or radio station is spent discussing in-depth political information. More than 50% of the news presented through publicly accessible channels is dedicated to sports and crime. Surveys indicate that the Chilean audience would prefer less sports news and more focus on national and international politics. Due to the biased media landscape, there is a strong ideological framing of political information and policy discussion.

Chile's largest free TV channel (TVN) is state-owned, and by law is required to

provide balanced and equal access to all political views and parties – a regulation which is overseen by the National Television Directorate (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, CNTV). Although La Nación and TVN are state-owned, they must operate according to market rules; they have to fund themselves by relying on advertising and high audience ratings. Since the print edition of the La Nación newspaper was eliminated under former President Piñera, the quality of its reporting and in-depth information on government decision-making has dropped dramatically.

Citation:

http://www.cntv.cl/prontus_cntv/site/artic/20130723/asocfile/20130723171104/pluralismo_en_la_televisi_n_p_blica.pdf

Hungary

Score 4

The sharp polarization of political life in Hungary has facilitated a replacement of in-depth analysis by a preoccupation with scandals, whether real or alleged. There is relatively little in-depth analysis of government decisions and the performance of the government in the government-controlled media, or in those outlets close to Fidesz. Aside from the influences of camp bias and a weak coverage of international affairs, however, some of the print publications close to the parliamentary opposition have kept up a relatively intensive coverage of government actions. As a reaction to the government's attempts at controlling the media, social media and Internet editions of established print publications have gained in importance. The independent policy institutes and some expert based NGOs have regularly published policy analyses that have been widely discussed in the opposition media. The establishment of the government's National Communications Office has raised concerns about a further decline in the quality of media reporting. At the same time, the rifts in the Fidesz camp with the Simicska affair have ultimately led to a greater degree of media pluralism.

Romania

Score 4

Media coverage of government decisions and action on the television stations and newspapers holding the highest market shares is highly partisan, largely focusing on political scandals and key politicians' personalities rather than in-depth policy analysis. While government officials often appear on political talk shows to discuss government plans and decisions with political analysts, the format and style of these shows (where participants often interrupt each other and primarily try to score rhetorical points) is not very suitable for providing nuanced and contextualized analysis of government decisions. Nevertheless, there is a clear minority of mass-media brands, such as the Digi 24 television station and HotNews.ro, an online news source, that produce higher quality, less partisan and more in-depth information. NineOClock.ro also serves as a useful political news outlet, but is produced in

English and targets a foreign market. These sources – as well as some of the more serious print media (such as the 22 weekly) – have much smaller market shares than do television stations specializing in political infotainment, particularly the Antena 3 television station.

Turkey

Score 3

Despite the pluralistic media scene in Turkey, the Turkish media (TV channels, newspapers, etc.) seems increasingly split between proponents and opponents of the AKP government. In consequence, it is difficult for citizens to find objective or substantive in-depth information on government policies and government decision-making. A media-ownership structure based on industrial conglomerates (the so-called Mediterranean or polarized pluralist media model), the government's clear-cut differentiation between pro- and anti-government media, and the increasingly polarized public discourse make it difficult for journalists to provide substantial information to the public. This is true even of the main news agencies, such as Anadolu, ANKA, Doğan and Cihan. Superficial reporting and self-censorship are widespread within the major media outlets. Media ownership, and direct and indirect government intervention in private media outlets and journalism obscure the objective analyses of government policies. Thus, few newspapers, radio or TV stations offer in-depth analysis of government policies or their effects concerning human rights, the Kurdish issues, economic conditions and so on. Social media has recently become a major means of communication, but is limited in its reach to urban, primarily young segments of society. However, it is frequently restricted by the government. In 2015, a total of 106,188 web sites were blocked.

Citation:

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