

SGI Sustainable
Governance
Indicators

2014 Media Report

Media Reporting



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.

Estonia

Score 9

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 non-dailies, four TV channels and three radio channels in Estonia that together provide information and in-depth analysis of government policy. These media outlets compose the majority of the entire domestic media market, except for radio broadcasting where music takes the major 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.

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 is dedicated to the workings of government on television or radio. Circulation numbers are still very high for daily newspapers, which often focus on high-quality reporting on political issues.

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.”

RTÉ operates the largest TV and radio stations in Ireland. It is a state-owned public service broadcaster financed by revenue from the mandatory TV license, as well as by advertising. It claims to be “Ireland’s cross-media leader, providing comprehensive and cost-effective free-to-air television, radio and online services, which are of the highest quality and are impartial, in accordance with RTÉ’s statutory obligations.” 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 UK Leveson inquiry mentioned the Irish Press Council as a model and suggested that some of its procedures should be imitated in Britain.

Irish newspaper circulation has fallen steeply in recent years.

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.

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.

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 programming shows a tendency 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*. This local coverage is further enhanced by international news channels such as CNN, BBC World News and Al Jazeera 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.

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, 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 better than international news, including issues regarding the European Union. Like elsewhere in the world, in Denmark the public and media outlets alike increasingly use the Internet, with all major media having websites now.

Media access to internal government documents was a sensitive issue at the end of the review period, with the government trying to change legislation about the access to documents (offentlighedsloven). It seemed the new law would be adopted despite its controversial nature.

Citation:

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

Germany

Score 8

Public TV and radio broadcasters generally offer in-depth reports on the political process. 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. There are also two public and two private channels focused specifically on the provision of high-quality information relevant to politics and the economy, which together have a market share of 3%. The plurality and heterogeneity of the country's television broadcast market is enhanced by the availability of programming from international broadcasters. Journalists' organizations are trying to improve the quality of investigative journalism, which is underdeveloped compared to some other markets.

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 towards 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.

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. High-quality political information is available from daily and weekly papers with smaller circulations.

Czech Republic

Score 7

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 the views of the main political parties are overrepresented. 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 on the internet 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. Circulation of newspapers is not high by international standards and

even the quality papers are relatively small, with little scope for deeper analysis. Much of the focus has been on personalities, corruption and scandals rather than detailed discussion of policies. Nevertheless, by taking advantage of television discussions that are available and of the increasing amount of information online, it is possible to find thorough discussions of policy proposals.

Iceland

Score 7

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 parliament's Special Investigation Committee (SIC) report had a separate chapter on the mass media before and during the economic collapse in 2008. The report criticizes the mass media in general for not having been critical enough in their coverage of the Icelandic banks and other financial institutions during the boom period. The report argues on the basis of several content analyses that media coverage of the banks was to a large extent biased toward the banks' own worldviews. This was likely associated with the fact that the owners of the banks also owned the main newspapers and the main private TV station. One of the key players in the economic collapse and its aftermath, Jón Ásgeir Jóhannesson, still holds at least close to a majority ownership in the country's biggest private media company, 365 Miðlar, which owns a TV station (Stöð2), several radio stations (including Bylgjan), one morning paper (Fréttablaðið) and the Internet site Visir.is. Jóhannesson's wife is owner of more than 90% of 365-miðlar stock. However, Jóhannesson no longer owns a bank.

Israel

Score 7

Media coverage has become more aggressive and fearless toward the government in recent years (examples include coverage of government decision-making after the abduction of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit). This has created an atmosphere in which decision-making is increasingly subject to critical inquiry. However, media coverage is also becoming more personalized, focusing on marginalia instead of the main aspects of important issues.

Citation:

[http://cdn.www.inss.org.il/reblazec_dn.net/upload/\(FILE\)1329746053.pdf](http://cdn.www.inss.org.il/reblazec_dn.net/upload/(FILE)1329746053.pdf)

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* have print and online versions; the three state television channels RAI1, RAI2 and RAI3; two Mediaset channels 5 and 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. Infotainment prevails.

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. Intellectuals blamed the established media for their tame reporting and their lack of clarity with respect to the dangerous situation in and around Fukushima. The lack of serious journalistic coverage of the cozy relationships between the state, the electric power industry and mainstream scientists was also criticized. However, according to a Nomura

Research Institute poll taken shortly after the 3/11 events, 29% of respondents said they had more trust in NHK than previously, while 13% said their trust in individual social-media sites had risen. These figures were surprisingly positive for the established channels of information.

Luxembourg

Score 7

Luxembourg 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, and the activities of the country's two largest local councils can be followed online. In daily and weekly papers, articles are written in the three official languages (Luxembourgish, French and German) plus sometimes in English. Certain newspapers are printed only in French; an English-language monthly journal is also published.

Media coverage is often reactive, when issues have already reached the public in the form of draft legislation or through parliamentary debate. Reporters tend not to inquire into the preparatory stages of public policy. But quite often media outlets are used as instruments by interest groups or lobbyists looking to influence government decision-making in its early stages. Such manipulation often has 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 during the period 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 of this is the extensive media coverage of the so-called Bommeleer affair (a series of bombings of public infrastructure in the 1980s) that late in the review period was finally brought to court. Another issue that received serious media coverage is allegations of dubious activities of the state Secret Service (SREL), events which were the subject of a special parliamentary inquiry committee. 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.wort.lu/de/view/das-bommeleer-dossier-5092c3a9e4b0fe37043e8be8>

<http://www.land.lu/2013/04/26/unter-dem-tresen-des-csv-staats%E2%80%A9/>

Netherlands

Score 7

Dutch public television and radio stations produce on a daily basis high-quality information programs analyzing government decisions. Of the 13 national public broadcasters in the Netherlands, eight may be said to consider it their task to inform the public on governmental affairs and decision-making. The main public news channel, 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. Strikingly, parliamentary debates are no longer publicly broadcast on television. Nonetheless, NOS 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.

The commercial media are much more geared to infotainment content, except most dailies and a few television and radio programs.

Due to increasing competition between all media, the Netherlands has developed the features of a mediocracy – a democracy governed by those who exercise power over the media in order to influence the populace. Journalists are said to report only on issues for which they expect to attract a large amount of public attention rather than report on politically important issues. This, in turn, influences politicians who act strategically in order to attract journalists' attention. Politicians now more than ever have to react to short-term issues in order to get attention from journalists instead of focusing on the content of political issues that attract less attention.

Citation:

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

Media monitor: <http://www.mediamonitor.nl/> Part of Commissariaat voor de Media (www.cvdm.nl)

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, in-depth information provided in print media. Despite a tendency toward infotainment, the quality of both public programs 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, public trust in the objectivity of the media is still relatively low. According to a European Trust Brands 2012 study, over 60% of Polish citizens do not believe the information they receive from traditional media.

Spain

Score 7

Almost 71% of Spaniards watch TV news which is broadcast on a twice-daily basis at 14.00 – 15.00 and 20.30 – 21.30, making it the most important source of political information for the average citizen in Spain. Apart from these news programs, which are generally objective and balanced, several infotainment debates can be watched during workday mornings and in some evenings too (at weekends) but they are often superficial – focusing on polarized arguments with limited contextualized analysis. Due to the crisis and its consequences for Spaniards, there is much more interest than ever before in the background of economic and social policies, institutional design or international affairs, but this doesn't change the fact that most political programs tend to be talk shows. Nevertheless, the public television organization Televisión Española (TVE) has some high-quality information programs, although their audience ratings are decreasing and the political independence of the corporation has suffered since 2012 (see "Media Freedom").

A significant number of Spaniards (31%) follow the political news via radio stations, which devote many hours a week to political information. All main stations have a morning program combining both background news and political debate (6.00 – 10.00), two news programs (14.00 – 15.00 and 20.00 – 21.00) and a late night one (22.00 – 24.00). Radio stations owned privately are more ideologically biased than major TV stations (with the 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. Finally, the main newspapers (El País, El Mundo, ABC, La Vanguardia) are the media that provide more background information and contextualized op-ed analysis on the government's decisions. However, the number of print media readers is falling and, thus their impact limited.

Citation:

<http://www.noticiasdealava.com/2012/04/21/politica/estado/un-retroceso-para-la-independencia->

<http://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/tele/los-informativos-tve-1-pierden-liderato-con-2329770>

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2013/05/29/comunicacion/1369822293.html>

Belgium

Score 6

Television news programs provide a relatively reasonable level of information, with greater insight on content and lower personalization than in Italy or France, for example, but the economic crisis in the media sector is accelerating the trend toward lower-quality information, and a growing inability to lead in-depth investigations, in particular to monitor policymaking.

Almost all television channels, public and private, organize political debates on weekends but, again, programming substance is superficial at best. Pure “infotainment” programs are more widespread on Dutch-speaking than on French-speaking channels, but the French-speaking media are the ones that suffer the most from a narrow customer base and foreign (French media) competition.

Overall, media from each linguistic community focuses mostly on their own community, with little attention paid to events, personalities and perceptions in the other linguistic community. This has improved somewhat from 2009, however, with deliberate attempts (mostly from public broadcast companies Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie (VRT) and Radio Télévision Belge Francophone (RTBF)) to provide broadcasts examining the views of the “other side” of the country. The same holds for some major daily newspapers, also operating in duo (for instance *Le Soir* and *De Standaard*).

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 could apply between private and public audiovisual channels. Some private channels offer only limited, superficial and polemical information. On the whole, economic information is rather poor.

Portugal

Score 6

As a result of the increased interest in policy with the bailout, media reporting has improved somewhat. That said, analyses of government decisions fail to carry out systematic in-depth policy analysis. Moreover, policy analysis is carried out by expert commentators, with little or no journalistic work on policy issues.

One interesting trend of 2011 – 2013 has been the increasing commentary time allotted to former politicians, especially on television – the main source of political information. An analysis in early May 2013 indicated that there were 69 hours of political commentary per week on the four free-to-air channels and three main cable news channels. Of a total of some 97 regular commentators, 60 of these were politicians. The current crop of commentators includes, for instance, the previous prime minister, José Sócrates, and the former leader of the Social Democratic Party (Partido Social Democrata, PSD), Manuela Ferreira Leite. This profusion of politician-commentators does not appear to contribute to greater policy analysis, not least as many of these commentators are engaged in a political career.

Citation:

(1) Dias Mendes, Filipa & Nunes Rodrigues, Pedro, "O império dos comentadores onde quem manda são os políticos", *Público*, 12/05/2013

Slovenia

Score 6

In Slovenia, the majority of both electronic and printed mass media fail to provide high-quality information on government decisions. However, there is a clear distinction between 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, put much more emphasis on 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. The major networks emphasize human interest stories and entertainment, while, not coincidentally, cutting the resources for news gathering. When serious policy issues are discussed on these networks the emphasis is on an adversarial dialogue. Reputable news reporting and news analysis programs are available on radio and TV networks, however. The information quality of talk shows varies, ranging from “infotainment” to the serious discussion of policy issues with reputable experts. C-Span 1-2 offers in-depth coverage of political proceedings in Congress and of political events in the wider sense, including proceedings at think tanks and academic institutions.

The most damaging trend for public understanding is the decline of journalistic standards, especially in right-leaning media such as Fox News and some radio stations. These media exhibit pervasive ideological bias and often reckless inaccuracy – tendencies 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, without regard for professional standards.

Of course, the United States has had polarized, partisan media before (especially in the 19th century) and there are counterweights to the hardline conservative media, such as the left-leaning MSNBC. The polarization of the media both reflects and reinforces the general polarization of American political discourse. It may tend to enhance citizens’ attention to and participation in politics, but at the cost of creating deeper, more severe divides. It is certainly not conducive to consensus building and deliberation.

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, 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 quality newspapers in the past, concentration processes have contributed to less diversity and quality in printed media. The government financed ABC and SBS are excellent television stations, but the private channels lack substance.

Croatia

Score 5

As a result of the rise of media conglomerates and the dominance of foreign ownership, Croatian media are highly commercialized. Both in electronic and print media, entertainment genres prevail. Croatia lacks a great, serious daily newspaper comparable with Delo in Slovenia or Politika in Serbia.

Cyprus

Score 5

Cyprus' current 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 the low awareness of the code of journalistic ethics.

Though print and radio broadcasts are dominated by political affairs, little insight is offered, even in the case of issues that are at the center of current affairs or receive extended media coverage. In-depth information is occasionally provided by academics or experts invited to debates, in particular by the public-service broadcaster.

However, analysts in many cases come from specific ideological camps and do not disclose their links with political parties. Most journalists do little to hide their personal views and preferences in the course of their work. In the period under review, the government's failures and low public approval rating, as well as its attacks on the media, were coupled with a further decline in balanced media coverage. Finally, political figures' polarizing rhetoric and tendency to avoid nuances in their public statements has led to the provision of low-quality and superficial information. The lack of transparency in print-media circulation figures and media ownership data are additional factors affecting the quality of public information.

Greece

Score 5

The most popular TV and radio channels are privately owned and do not provide in-depth information but rather infotainment programs. 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. For instance, if a media owner opposes a certain investment or project, then he or she will have the channel's staff report extensively and in a negative fashion on the investment or project at hand. The withholding of

in-depth information on government decision-making is linked to the fluctuating relations between private media and the government. Media owners often change sides, now favoring the government, then the opposition. This depends on the flow of information media owners obtain from the government, on the access to state-owned bank credit they may enjoy and more generally on the extent of preferential treatment they may enjoy from the state in comparison with their competitors.

The state-owned TV and radio channels – which cater to a small audience and cannot really compete with private channels – offer somewhat more sophisticated information and analysis before government decision-making. However, even in such channels, the quality of information and analysis largely depends on the professionalism of producers and journalists. On state-owned TV and radio channels the quality of information also depends on the personal agenda and political ideology of producers and journalists, who may be either pro-government or anti-government. In other words, even though the government of the day controls the board of directors of state-owned TV and radio, journalists employed by these media are not controlled by media management. This lack of control over the content of TV and radio programs may not increase the extent and quality of in-depth information or reduce political bias, as journalists employed by state-owned media may feel free to openly favor the political party with which they are affiliated. In other words, the quality of in-depth information provided is very uneven.

The situation is somewhat different with regard to newspapers. The circulation of dailies is comparatively low. However, among the daily newspapers and particularly Sunday newspapers one finds interesting pieces of analysis and even some articles based on reliable investigative journalism. The problem for Greek democracy of course is that, as in many other advanced democracies, the reading of and debate over newspaper reports is gradually becoming an interest of the urban, educated elites, as the masses seem to prefer the popular electronic media and the sensationalist press.

Online news is available through various websites which provide unreliable information, often based on rumors or gossip. Such information is rarely accompanied by informed analysis. However, on the positive side, readers looking for opinion articles and in-depth information may visit a few websites which do not provide news coverage but instead offer an array of perspectives. On these websites one may also follow debates in exchanges provoked by an original contributor. Such debates often evolve around the causes and consequences of the economic crisis, the policies of economic austerity followed in Greece since 2010, democracy, corruption, nationalism, unregistered migration into Greece, racism, and the future of European Union. In short, one may find interesting in-depth information by browsing Greek websites.

Hungary

Score 5

The sharp polarization of political life in Hungary has witnessed the replacement of in-depth analysis with a preoccupation with scandals, be they real or alleged. There is relatively little in-depth analysis of government decisions and of government performance in media that is under the control of the government or maintains close ties to Fidesz. Save for party bias or a weak coverage of international affairs, however, some print media close to the parliamentary opposition have maintained a relatively high standard of balanced reporting. As a reaction to the government's attempts at controlling the media, social media and the online versions of established print media have become more influential and are now frequently used as sources of information.

Latvia

Score 5

A minority of the 10 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 shifts to Internet-based sources, by as well as budgetary constraints affecting public broadcasting, have had a negative effect on organizations' ability to provide high-quality content.

Nonetheless, some newcomers to the media scene 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 Re:Baltica, founded in August 2011. Re:Baltica is a non-profit organization that produces investigative journalism in the public interest. Since its establishment, it has focused on issues such as the social costs of economic austerity, consumer protection and drug-money flows, and by cooperating with the mainstream media 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.

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
value_6

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, their public trust is on the decline; in early 2013, only 33.5% of the country's population said they trusted the media.

Citation:

<http://www.vilmorus.lt/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=2&cntnt01returnid=20>.

Mexico

Score 5

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 journalists are not always well educated and they fail to understand and explain complex issues. While reform of the televisual media is on the government agenda, the main reform proposed is to offer more TV channels. 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 can choose high quality formats, if they are interested

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 March 2008, offers a range of programming, 30% of which focuses on news programs that offer background information. Although the channel attracted a small but loyal audience, it has since been closed. 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 law and order and celebrity stories dominating the headlines.

Citation:

TV One: <http://tvnz.co.nz/tv-one> (accessed May 8, 2013).

Radio New Zealand: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/programmes> (accessed May 8, 2013).

Slovakia

Score 5

The quality and professionalism of media reporting is not extraordinarily high. The public TV and radio stations have lost market shares. Moreover, the commercialization of nationwide broadcasters with its negative impact on public interest news and current affairs coverage has not left the public stations untouched. One important problem is the quality of journalists.

South Korea

Score 5

Taking into account not only freedom of the press/media, but also media pluralism and media quality, the main problem with Korean media is the low quality of many outlets in terms of their ability to serve as facilitators of a public sphere 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. Beginning in 2009, President Lee has instituted a biweekly radio address in which he explains government policies from his point of view.

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, but takes place more often on 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 Korea's main newspapers began broadcasting. As commercial programs, they tend to favor infotainment. On the other hand, however, their connection with major newspapers might give them good potential to produce quality information.

Bulgaria

Score 4

The current Bulgarian media is characterized by three main features. Firstly, it suffers from a heavy spin bias, seeking much sensationalism and scandal as a strategy of selling themselves to the public rather than in-depth and consistent coverage and analysis of important societal processes. Secondly, in the years of economic crisis the mainstream media (both press and electronic) has become heavily dependent on government money for advertising or information campaigns, which allows the government to exert influence. Thirdly, most print media organizations can be considered as appendages to other businesses of their owners and publishers, so quality journalism definitely takes a back seat relative to other business interests. As a result, most media and the manner of their coverage of government policies, concentrate on the short-term sensationalist aspects. They tend to frame government decisions as personalized power politics and divert attention away from the substance of the policy towards the entertainment dimension. Usually there is no coverage of the preparatory stages of policy decisions. When coverage begins, it does provide basic information about the decision or the policy discussed, but usually lacks deep understanding of its substance and societal importance. Exceptions – such as the timely, heated and quite substantive public debate through the media of the proposed ban on smoking in closed public spaces in 2012 – 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 the 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. 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 regarding 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). When the Concertación coalition was in power, this situation implied a certain counterbalance to the private media mainly owned and/or influenced by the elite attached to the Alianza coalition.

In the current political scenario, with the Alianza coalition running the government, the media landscape (state and private owned) is even more biased than it was before. Although La Nación and TVN are state-owned, they must operate according to market rules; they have to self-finance by relying on advertising and high audience ratings.

Malta

Score 4 As media outlets are essentially dominated by Malta's two major political parties, much of the information published by the media is often deemed "infotainment," or seen as sensational and/or superficial. Detailed reports on government policy or issues are seldom produced. Only a few media outlets push beyond this level of reporting.

Romania

Score 4 Media coverage of government decisions and action in the television stations and newspapers with the largest market share is highly partisan and largely focuses on political scandals and the personalities of key politicians rather than providing 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. Nonetheless, there is a clear minority of mass media brands, such as the Digi 24 television station and HotNews.ro, an online news source, that have achieved higher quality, less partisan and more in-depth information. However, these sources – as well as some of the more serious print media (like 22 magazine) – have much smaller market share than television stations specializing in political infotainment, particularly the Antena 3 television station.

Turkey

Score 4 Since Turkish media (TV channels, newspapers and so on) is often split into "proponents" and "opponents" of the government, it is difficult for citizens to find objective or substantive in-depth information on government policies and government decision-making. In the past, media companies that took a critical stance in coverage were directly or indirectly threatened by the government, for example through tax investigations or through public appeals not to buy newspapers or watch the TV station of the media outlet in

question. Thus few newspapers, radio or TV stations offer an in-depth analysis of government policies or their effects. Information which may be of interest to a viewing public often comes from alternative, “marginal” or foreign TV stations, satellite or cable. During the Gezi Park protests in 2013, for example, some public stations as well as pro-government stations broadcast a show on penguins instead of protest coverage.

Major mass media companies either offer entertainment programs or focus constantly on certain political debates as routine, with the participation of the same public opinion “leaders” or “intellectuals.” These programs however do not provide any details about government policies. State-run TRT, which was already pro-government, has stopped broadcasting parliamentary debates.

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