



Media Report

Media Reporting

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2017

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 newspapers 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 fairly 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, over time, maintained and to some extent strengthened their news coverage, in TV2's case by having a new news channel, and in NRK's case by developing a strong brand for news, documentaries and public debate. 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.

The changing media economy, which is undergoing digitization and struggling to find ways to fund content, has posed massive challenges to many Norwegian media outlets. Staff cuts have resulted in a reduction of news production, which will likely undermine reporting quality and the media's role as the fourth pillar. At the same time, social media has become a key source of news. Powers and resources have therefore also shifted from the professionally edited media, to new digital media actors and to a more complex mix of edited and unedited 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:

Olsson, J., H. Ekengren Oscarsson and M. Solevid (eds.) (2016), *Equilibrium* (Gothenburg: The SOM Institute).

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.

In March 2016, the liberal government eliminated all fees related to Access to Information requests except for the CAD 5 application fee in an effort to increase transparency. Parliament has voted to amend the Access to Information Act to streamline the request process and make more information available.

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. Moreover, they face competition from social media. Policy makers are also increasingly using social media, like Twitter, to make policy statements.

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).

Jørgen Grønnegård Christiansen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske system*. 4. udg. Chapter 7. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

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 increasing significance of social media is a deepening challenge because it is not bound by the rules of impartiality as the ORF is.
- 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. In 2016, the number of daily newspapers was reduced again when the "Wirtschaftsblatt" stopped its circulation.

Germany

Score 7 Public TV and radio broadcasters generally offer in-depth reports on political processes. Competition between the two main public television broadcasters, ARD and ZDF, has forced them 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 and their market share has stabilized in recent years. 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 increased dominance of television, Internet and social media websites. While the media landscape 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 ha'yom" often fail to deliver in-depth news coverage.

Despite common tendencies to focus on 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. Nonetheless, the growing rates of news consumption through social media websites (68% of 13 to 34 year olds and 50% of those 35 and over), with its shallow coverage, significantly reduce the percentage of Israelis exposed to in-depth journalism.

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 legislative 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 a law. According to Freedom House, Israel's press is only partly free. This is attributed to the owner-subsidized business model of "Israel ha'yom" and the unchecked expansion of paid content common in several media outlets. Some of the other factors contributing to lapses in Israel's freedom of the press, according to Freedom House, can be found in PM Netanyahu's decision to hold the position of communications minister himself. This has granted him exclusive control over media regulation. In addition, the government decided in October 2015 to outlaw the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, shutting

down its media channels. It also shut down the Israeli Broadcast Authority, threatening public broadcasting.

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).

Mann, Rafi and Lev-on, Azi, “Annual report: Media in Israel 2015 - 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 (March 2016):

<http://aunmedia.org/sites/default/files/research/MediaReport2015%20FULL.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 2016”, Freedom House website:

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/israel> (English)

Tucker, Nati, “Israel Hayom and Ynet are to blame: the Freedom of the Press in Israel is going downhill” *TheMarker*, 27.4.2016, <http://www.themarker.com/advertisiang/1.2928127> (Hebrew)

Lubell, Maayan, “Israel PM Netanyahu is accusing an investigative journalist of trying to bring down his government”, 08.11.2016

<http://www.businessinsider.com/r-netanyahu-attacks-israeli-media-singles-out-investigative-journalist-2016-11?IR=T>

Italy

Score 7

The space allocated to political themes in Italian media is quite significant in the 10 most important mass media brands (the three main national newspapers, *Corriere della Sera*, *la Repubblica* and *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 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.

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 broadcasted on Chamber TV (also available online) and debates of the country’s four largest local councils (Luxembourg City and Esch/ Alzette,

Differdange, Dudelange) can be followed online. Furthermore, the 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; although 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. Furthermore, 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. In addition, since the 2013 general election, social media has become more important due to the increasing number of social media users, and potential for disseminating information easily and rapidly.

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 crucial role in bringing light to issues that were not made clear by public prosecutors.

Citation:

"Das Bommeleer-Dossier." Luxemburger Wort, www.wort.lu/de/lokales/das-bommeleer-dossier-5092c3a9e4b0fe37043e8be8. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

Esch.tv, esch.tv. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

Hilgert, Romain. "Unter dem Tresen des CSV-Staats." Land.lu, 26 Apr. 2013, www.land.lu/2013/04/26/unter-dem-tresen-des-csv-staats/. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

"Länderporträt Luxemburg." Mediandatenbank, www.mediadb.eu/de/europa/luxemburg.html. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

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 relatively more to commercial media.

In 2015, a majority of Dutch citizens (55%) still read a newspaper or listen to the radio every day. Newspaper readers are to be found increasingly among the older and more highly educated population segment; digital subscriptions are on the rise. Younger people actually spend more time listening, watching and communicating on online platforms than older people. Social media platforms have become sources of news, even for journalists. 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. The internet is used daily by 86% of Dutch citizens.

Citation:

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

Media monitor, Jaarverslag 2015 (mediamonitor.nl, consulted 10 November 2016)

Spain

Score 7

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, Nada es gratis or Piedras de Papel).

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.

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:

Noviembre 2016, Evolución de audiencia OJD de eldiario.es

<http://www.ojdinteractiva.es/medios-digitales/eldiario-evolucion-audiencia/totales/anual/3896/trafico-global/>

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 but their circulation is weak and on the

decline. 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 since the small size of the market limits the financial resources of TV stations. However, in-depth analysis on TV increased significantly when the private TV station Hringbraut increased such analyses in their program in 2016. 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.

Japan

Score 6 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-oriented radio program (Radio 1). The widely read major national newspapers also provide information in a sober style. However, because of their close personal links to 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 openly declaring its intention to steer a pro-government

course, as well as a reporting scandal involving the liberal Asahi newspaper, which further reduced faith in major media organizations.

The dismissal and resignation of critical TV journalists point to government involvement, with the communications minister stating in early 2016 that broadcasting licenses may be withdrawn if programs are found politically biased. This has led to a public outcry, but with little tangible result. The new policy line of the government may result in lower quality information content on major media channels.

Citation:

Tomohiro Osaki, Academics, TV journalists slam minister's threat against 'biased' programming, fear media self-censorship, *The Japan Times*, 2 March 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/02/national/tv-journalists-slam-ministers-threat-biased-programs-fear-media-self-censorship/>

Poland

Score 6

Government decisions are widely covered by the country's main TV and radio stations. Due to the media law, the public TVP is often dubbed as TV-PiS. Jacek Kurski, party ideologist, was appointed as TV director and hired several party loyal journalists as anchors for the news shows and other relevant positions. In the private media, despite a tendency toward infotainment, the quality of reporting, especially of the two major 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. Public trust in the objectivity of the media was always been quite low, but now it is at a very low position. The main TV news show *Wiadomosci* in TVP has lost 17% of its viewers.

Citation:

Markowski, R., M. Kotnarowski (2016): *Rewolucja mniejszości*, in: *Polityka*, No. 6.

Portugal

Score 6

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 SGI report before last, 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. It is probably not accidental that he won the presidential election on the first round with 52% of the vote, despite a field of 10 candidates.

Citation:

Corinne Deloy, "Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa wins the presidential election in Portugal in the first round," Foundation Robert Schuman 24 January 2016.

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. In addition, reflecting the economic problems of print journalism, the number of reporters covering Washington for daily newspapers declined from about 860 in 1998 to 575 in 2014.

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, 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. As for electronic media, market share has shifted from the partisan public broadcaster HRT to the more objective independent broadcasters TV Nova and RTL Croatia.

Cyprus

Score 5 The crisis has exacerbated the chronic problems of the media landscape, dominated by infotainment programming that lacks 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 media ethics code. The media’s dependency on financial interests is visible on editorial content and news coverage.

Political issues are widely covered in print and electronic media, but with little insight offered. In-depth information is only occasionally offered, typically by invited academics or experts on the public broadcaster. Analysts often fail to disclose their political or other connections. Journalists’ personal views and preferences often influence reports and debates. In the period under review, government has continued

attracting criticism for inconsistent or controversial actions. The media often takes a populist approach in covering institutions and politicians.

Media coverage is generally not helped by political figures' polarizing rhetoric, confrontational tactics, and the absence of a creative and productive public debate. Polarized views on the Cyprus Problem affects media content.

The absence of an audit body for print-media circulation figures and transparency in media-ownership affect the public's capacity to evaluate the information received.

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 ownership changes have further reduced the quality of the commercial media and increased the influence of private media owners on media content. 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 media have been badly hit by Greece's economic crisis. Facing declining circulation figures and advertising revenues, some outlets have imposed cuts or closed altogether.

Reporters Without Borders has noted conflicts of interest in the senior management of some media outlets, saying wealthy owners and state officials have tried to consolidate and extend their power through the media.

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.

Political debates in the media tend to be rather general, along partisan lines, focusing on the government budget and trying to speculate on political developments.

Substantive in-depth information is rare and the presentation of issues is sentimental and partisan (pro- or anti-government) than objective.

On the other hand, the circulation of dailies is comparatively low, though they are quite influential in shaping the daily agenda and in framing debates. 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. On only a few websites, may one follow debates provoked by an informed contributor. In short, one may find interesting in-depth information by browsing Greek websites, but overall in the period under review there was no change in the aforementioned rather unsatisfactory performance of Greek media.

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. Additional challenges include the proliferation of pro-Russian narratives in the media, broadcasted by Russia as well as Latvian outlets and shared through social networks.

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. Andrius Tapinas, a famous Lithuanian journalist and TV host, recently launched a weekly political discussion show, which attracted about 4,000 financial supporters and thousands of viewers. 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 July 2016, only 38.7% of respondents to 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, as has improvements to the Freedom of Information Act in 2012, though numerous restrictions still exist. Although increased competition has also allowed for more sensational or artificial reporting.

Citation:

Aquilina, K Information Freedom at last, Times of Malta 22/08/12

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. This is particularly troublesome as there is a high degree of media concentration, with only two national TV companies (Televisa and TV Azteca) controlling 94% of commercial TV frequencies. These companies have similar

programming and political inclinations, and account for 76% of the political news content consumed by Mexicans. The close ties between the two major television companies and the government limits their capacity to impartially inform the public. For example, the president's wife is a former Televisa actress and model. In addition, the 2012 election created the "telebancada," a prominent caucus of 20 congressmen who have worked directly or indirectly for one of the two TV companies.

In an effort to reduce telecommunications concentration and increase transparency, the government approved a Federal Law of Telecommunications and Broadcasting in 2014. This was an important step toward dissolving the questionable ties between the presidency and TV networks: Televisa was declared a preponderant agent and the government can impose restrictions on the share of frequencies it controls. However, doubts remain as to the reach of the telecom law. Telebancada altered some elements of the reform proposal and critics worry that TV networks' interests will prevail. To date, the effect of the restrictions and sanctions is not yet clear.

On the supply side, the quality of journalists remains a challenge as they sometimes fail to understand or explain complex issues accurately. Particularly on security related issues, increasing violence against critical and investigative journalism often results in self-censorship. Even if the telecom law is successful, it will not erase these challenges as it mainly focuses on the expansion of existing TV channels. This change will probably be good for public revenue, but is unlikely to improve the intellectual quality of news media and the safety of journalists.

At the same time, media diversity (online media) has strongly increased in the last decade and Mexicans do have access to high-quality offerings if they are interested. Moreover, information on Mexican politics is easily accessible from US and Latin American media outlets due to technical progress. However, this diversity in content and quality will hardly have an impact on the majority of the population as only a very small minority of Mexicans use the Internet and newspapers as their main sources of political information. The influence of manipulating news and social media – a topic of increasing relevance in many OECD countries – is as yet an understudied theme in Mexico, but probably will gain importance in the next national elections.

Citation:

<http://www.encup.gob.mx/work/models/Encup/Resource/69/1/images/Resultados-Quinta-ENCUP-2012.pdf>

<http://www.americasquarterly.org/content/telecommunications-mexicos-new-reform>

<http://www.internationalhispanicmedia.org/the-captured-liberal-model-media-systems-journalism-and-communication-policies-in-latin-america/>

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. A new risk is the growing popularity of conspiracy websites, many of which are sponsored by Russia.

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. While the most prominent TV stations produce a mix of infotainment and quality information about government policies, the last four years have seen TV and radio organizations further shift 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. Online media, whose numbers and importance are increasing, offer a new venue for coverage of policy decisions. In some instances, such media hold a promise for both more timely, and more in-depth reporting on topical issues.

Chile

Score 4

Legal norms are published in the Official Journal (Diario Oficial de la República de Chile), a state institution dependent on the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security. Its print version was terminated on 17 August 2016. Since then, the Official Journal is available only as an online edition.

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 significantly.

Citation:

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

<http://www.diarioficial.cl/quienes-somos/>

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 public media, or in those private outlets close to Fidesz. 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 mass demonstrations, as well as the deepening rift within Fidesz, stemming from regular corruption scandals and provocative luxurious consumption habits, have elevated the significance of media reporting. The print media, including the tabloid press, such as Blikk and Bors, have been important in discovering the big scandals and policy failures. In the period under review, the significance of online media – Index, 444, HVG, Átlátszó, Kettős Mérce, and even some right-leaning websites like Mandiner – has grown tremendously because they have been decisive in revealing the behind the scene activities of the government. The websites of professional NGOs have also been very active and are closely followed by journalists. The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ), for instance, was able to publish the instruction signed by Orbán personally to harass the NGO Ökotárs.

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. 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. The situation for free media deteriorated greatly after the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016. 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, self-censorship and dismissal of critical journalists from their job 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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Sabahattin Önkibar, *İmamlar ve Haramiler Medyası*, İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 2015.

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Ethical Journalism Network, *Censorship in The Park: Turkish Media Trapped by Politics and Corruption*, 2014. <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/assets/docs/021/035/02fc715-bc8d623.pdf> (accessed 27 October 2015)

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