



Media Report

Media Reporting

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2020

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Indicator

Media Reporting

Question

To what extent do media in your country analyze the rationale and impact of public policies?

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 the rationale and impact of public policies.
- 8-6 = About one-half of the mass media brands focus on high-quality information content analyzing the rationale and impact of public policies. 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 public policies. 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. Although declining, daily newspaper circulation numbers remain reasonably high, with most newspapers often providing high-quality political reporting.

Citation:

Lauri Karvonen, Heikki Paloheimo and Tapio Raunio, Evolution of Political Power in Finland, pp. 335-344 in Lauri Karvonen, Heikki Paloheimo and Tapio Raunio, eds. *The Changing Balance of Political Power in Finland*, Stockholm: Santérus Förlag, 2016.

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

airtime 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 (i.e., NRK and to a lesser extent P4) and major digital media publications also devote considerable coverage to political news.

Changes to the media economy – including digitalization, the need for new funding mechanisms and the increasing domination of Facebook and Google – 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 of government.” 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

Sweden has dropped somewhat over the past couple of years in terms of newspaper circulation. Most newspapers are experiencing a gradual shift in subscriptions from conventional print to digital formats. The overall quality of the political coverage provided by Swedish media is good, if not extremely good.

Public service radio and television in Sweden is still central to the media system. There have been discussions and Commissions concerning the future of public service but thus far no major changes have been put on the agenda. The only reform worth noting is that public service radio and television is now funded through the tax system and not, as was previously the case, by annual fees.

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 the most part, balanced. There is obviously sometimes less professional coverage, too, but taken together, the quality of Swedish newspapers is very good.

Citation:

Andersson, Ulrika, Anders Carlander, Elina Lindgren, Maria Oskarson (eds.) (2018), *Sprickor i fasaden* (Gothenburg: The SOM Institute).

Switzerland

Score 9

Radio and television programs are of high quality in Switzerland. With very few exceptions, radio reports are reliable, and analyses are conducted by independent and professional journalists. Some television programs, however, are trending toward infotainment and the personalization of politics.

On 4 March 2018, voters rejected a popular initiative (“Ja zur Abschaffung der Radio – und Fernsehgebühren”) aiming to eliminate per capita fees for the Swiss public broadcaster (SRF). A strong majority of 71.6% and all cantons voted against the initiative, signaling a strong commitment to public media. In spite of this strong showing, the SRF responded to the aggressive campaign with a downsizing project that aimed to dismantle the radio station in the Swiss capital, Bern. This, in turn, led to public protest faulting the SRF for violating its mission to cover the federalist cultural diversity of Switzerland. In November 2019, a decision was reached to keep the editorial desk for foreign and domestic politics in Bern.

Citation:

<https://www.admin.ch/gov/de/start/dokumentation/abstimmungen/20180304/volksinitiative-ja-zur-abschaffung-der-radio-und-fernsehgebueh.html>

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. 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. Canadian media coverage is further enhanced by international news channels such as CNN, BBC World News and Al Jazeera, which are readily available. One caveat is that there is little competition among public broadcasters. Conversely, private broadcasters, with the exception of the Canadian Parliamentary Access Channel, are generally focused primarily on infotainment, but also provide some 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.

The Liberal government revamped the Access to Information Act in 2019. The current version enables the Information Commissioner to order government institutions to disclose requested records.

Citation:

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

Denmark

Score 8

Media play an important role in the democratic process and, through editorial choice, the media has an important influence on agenda-setting. Among media outlets, there is a tendency to catch the interest of the public by simplification or personalizing the stories reported, and emphasizing an element of conflict. There is also a tendency to favor senior politicians and government representatives. Weaker actors, such as representatives of immigrants or ethnic minorities, get less coverage, although immigration stories have become important in recent years and are now regularly reported.

In addition to daily news programs, some television and radio stations offer more analytical in-depth programs, which can be quite informative. It is worth mentioning that the education of journalists has improved in recent years. Overall, the Danish media focus more on national rather than international news, including EU issues.

Traditional media face increasing competition from alternative news sources (e.g., news websites and social media) and their financing is declining due to falling advertisement revenue. Policymakers are increasingly using social media (e.g., 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 (Article 24) and between a minister and a member of the parliament (Article 27). Despite criticism from the Danish Association of Journalists that the exemptions are too extensive, the law remains in force.

The funding of public TV and radio has been debated for some years, and – as a result the funding of the main operator Danmarks Radio (DR) – is being changed from a near-universal license fee to financing via general taxation.

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).

Dansk Journalistforbund, Udtalelse fra DJ’s delegeretmøde: Styrk offentlighedsloven, <https://journalistforbundet.dk/nyhed/udtalelse-fra-djs-delegeretmode-styrk-offentlighedsloven> (Accessed 7 October 2018).

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 information on government plans and policies. There are three national daily newspapers, two main weeklies, two established online news portals, four general content TV channels and three public-radio channels. Together, these comprise the majority of the entire domestic media market (except for radio broadcasting, where music stations account for the largest market share) and provide adequate information and some analysis of government policy. 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, there are two important challenges. First, the media tends to pay more attention to the performance of political parties as organizations than to parties' policy positions; media coverage can also be overly simplified or sensationalist. This is a particularly salient issue in the print media where the small market size means that journalistic competence can be rather low. Secondly, information on government activities is typically not provided in advance of government 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 the BBC and there are several other political shows on which politicians can expect robust scrutiny.

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.

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 shares have 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. Recent opinion polls demonstrate that public trust in the media is decreasing. A total of 65% of Germans trust the public sector television, compared to 72% in 2017, with 66% trusting daily newspapers, and only 17% trusting private TV broadcasters (down from 29% in 2017). A quite small share of just 11% trusts the internet (Jakob et.al. 2019). Trust in the media is thus placed mainly in the public television and radio broadcast services. Nonetheless, according to another recent study, there are differences in the degree of trust accorded to public television depending on respondents' political orientation: People on the left and the center of the political spectrum trust ARD and ZDF significantly more than do people on the right of the political spectrum (FAZ 2019).

Overall, confidence in the media's truthfulness is increasing increases. In 2018, only 13% believed that the media were lying, compared to 20% the previous year (Spiegel Online 2018). However, the quantity of digital disinformation is increasing, creating a growing problem in this modern and digitalized media society.

Citation:

Jakob, N., Schultz, T., Jakobs, I., Ziegele, M., Quiring, O. & Schemer, C. (2019). Medienvertrauen im Zeitalter der Polarisierung. In *Media Perspektiven* 5/2019, 210-220

https://www.bpb.de/system/files/pdf_pdflib/pdflib-290439.pdf

<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/medienvertrauen-luegenpresse-hysterie-ebbt-laut-neuer-studie-ab-a-1190749.htm>

FAZ (2019): Politkurs von ARD und ZDF: Links von der Mitte, available at: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/reuters-studie-zur-akzeptanz-von-ard-und-zdf-16389494.html>

Israel

Score 7

Israel's media industry is adapting to the global trend of decreased consumption of print and radio news media and the increased dominance of television, the internet, and social media websites. While the Israeli media sector has been bolstered in recent years by the creation of strong independent investigatory websites and blogs that have gained considerable attention in professional and public circles, other new popular outlets such as the free daily Israel Ha'yom often fail to deliver in-depth news coverage.

Despite a frequent tendency to focus on prominent and popular topics of the hour, the Israeli press, public television channels, and radio shows do offer interpretative and investigatory journalism that informs the public regarding policy decisions and long-term strategies. Nonetheless, the growing rate of news consumption through social media websites, the decline in citizens' exposure to print media and TV, and the shallow nature of coverage in new media all significantly reduce the percentage of civilians exposed to in-depth journalistic information.

Nonetheless, according to several surveys published in January 2019 before the April 2019 elections, the public still appears to favor traditional media as a source of

information over social media. On the other hand, according to the Israeli Democracy Index 2018, the public's relationship with the media appears to be more complicated. Indeed, it found that a large proportion of Jewish respondents view the media skeptically, believing that it presents the current state of affairs as being worse than it really is. On the other hand, Arab Israeli respondents reported being less skeptical of the media, and a comparison to results from the previous year found that skepticism among Arab Israeli respondents actually decreased significantly. Yet, public distrust of the media remains high overall and especially high among Arab Israelis.

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 2016 – agendas, uses and trends," Ariel University School of Communication: https://store.ariel.ac.il/downloadable/download/sample/sample_id/6/ (Hebrew)

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

"Freedom of the Press: Israel 2017," Freedom House, 2017 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/israel>

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. For instance, the La7 channel alone averages approximately 10 hours per week of political content. 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.

Netherlands

Score 7

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. Nevertheless, the National Broadcasting Organization (NPO) is facing significant difficulties. Broadcasting organizations have lost as many as a million paying members in recent years, and members' average age now is 58. Younger people are increasingly shifting to online sources. In political circles, the NPO is regarded as inert, complicated and wasteful. Right-wing populist parties criticize NPO as being left-leaning; for their part, liberals and commercial broadcasters see the NPO as being state-subsidized competition. Some political effort has been made to rebalance public and advertisement-derived funding in order to make NPO budgets leaner. The recent government plans for reforming the NPO (less time for advertising, more cooperation between regional and local broadcasters, more online content, and more centralized leadership among a diverse set of broadcasting organizations) have drawn considerable criticism.

Although newspaper circulation dropped again in 2018, a majority of Dutch citizens (55%) still read a newspaper or listened to the radio every day as recently as that year. Newspaper readers are to be found with relatively more frequency among the older and more highly educated population segments, and digital subscriptions are on the rise. The number of high-quality newspapers is fairly low. Younger people spend more time listening, watching and communicating on online platforms than do older people. Social-media platforms have become sources of news even for journalists. Regional and local newspapers in particular are experiencing severe financial troubles, owing to strong consolidation and concentration tendencies, and there has been a significant increase the number of one-paper and even no-paper cities. The internet is used daily by 86% of Dutch citizens.

The Commissariat for the Media, which is tasked with monitoring the diversity and accuracy of media information about government and public-policy issues, has reported a continuous and severe concentration in the ownership of media outlets. Yet it has also stated that this has not as yet resulted in a lack of pluralism or an impoverishment of news sources and varieties. In the digital sphere, viewers and consumers clearly have more choices. The past decade has seen a large expansion in digital radio and television programming. This has resulted in a richer supply of broadcasters, bundled in so-called plus packages, and more recently of podcasts, which serve their target groups with theme-specific broadcasts. Mediamonitor 2019 reported that compared to citizens of other countries, Dutch citizens have high trust in media reports and report relatively little fake news.

Public broadcasting – an important source of media plurality – is increasingly under pressure due to reductions in revenue from advertising (advertisers moving to social media). Moreover, the challenges of “fake news” and other methods of misinformation are significant, and the government has expressed concerns regarding the quality and pluralism of online news outlets and information.

Citation:

Mediamonitor 2018. Media bedrijven en markten; Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 ((mediamonitor.nl),

accessed 3 November 2018)

Mediamonitor, 2019 (<https://www.mediamonitor.nl/wp-content/uploads/Mediamonitor-2019-English-summary.pdf>)

Rathenau Instituut, 21 November 2018. Schriftelijke bijdrage van het Rathenau Instituut|Rondetafelgesprek Toekomst van het medialandschap, Vaste Kamercommissie OCW

De Sociale Staat van Nederland 2019 (https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2019/De_sociale_staat_van_Nederland_2019)

NRC Next, 27 November 2019. Vier publieke omroepen: welke wordt het?

NRC Next, 18 June, 2019. Moet meer regienieuws de omroep redden?

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 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 follow 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).

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. 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:

Estudio General de Medios (EGM) (2019), Evolución de audiencia <https://www.aimc.es/almc-c0nt3nt/uploads/2019/01/marco19.pdf>

Austria

Score 6

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 increasingly 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.

Any new government will have an impact on media reporting, especially concerning the ORF. The ORF faces ever-more criticism from the right-wing FPÖ, which was in government between 2017 and 2019, for the ORF's understanding of independent journalism. During the 2017 – 2019 legislative period, it was expected that the law which defines the structure, functions and finances of the ORF would be rewritten. However, the governing coalition imploded before any legislative activity was started.

Regarding the print media, the problem of high concentration remains the main challenge for a system which guarantees media freedom but does not seem to offer enough pluralistic choices. The impact of social media has been acknowledged but no clear political strategy has been developed for dealing with media beyond the traditional rules of responsibility.

Czechia

Score 6

The main TV and radio stations provide daily news programs and some more in-depth 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 a continual analysis of domestic and international events.

In the second and third quarters of 2019, approximately 46% of the population between the ages of 12 and 79 were readers of at least one of the national-level daily newspapers (two percentage points less than in the same period in 2018). The print media is dominated by Prime Minister Babiš's MAFRA group, which typically praises ANO ministers and criticizes Social Democrat ministers and the opposition.

However, the growing diversity of the online and blended media sphere (i.e., combined online and print media) has increased the availability of investigative journalism and in-depth analysis. Citizens are increasingly concerned and willing to support independent journalism. Online media often engage experts, members of parliament and stakeholders in in-depth debates. Social media play an essential role in increasing the visibility of policy issues.

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. In 2018, the TV station was struggling financially and aired sponsored programs. In late 2019, a merger between Hringbraut and the newspaper Fréttablaðið was announced. Further, Fréttablaðið then purchased DV, a smaller newspaper. That will probably strengthen the ability of all three media outlets to undertake in-depth analyses as well as their economic position. Critical analysis of government policies by independent observers, experts, and journalists is a fairly recent phenomenon in Iceland.

The Special Investigation Committee 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 as was the case, for example, in the United States during the 1920s.

Japan

Score 6

The Japanese media system has historically been dominated by five major TV networks, including the public broadcaster NHK, along with a handful of major national newspapers. These publications remain widely read even though their circulation is declining, and 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 editorials can be quite critical of government policy. Investigative journalism is typically undertaken by weekly or monthly publications. While some of these are of high quality, others are more sensationalist in character. International publications also expose scandals from time to time.

Personnel changes at NHK after the Abe-led government took power produced a leadership that openly declared its intention to steer a pro-government course. The government's assertive approach has also been evident in other media areas.

In recent years, social-media outlets such as YouTube, Line, Twitter and Facebook, along with the news channels based on them, have gained a considerable following. This also holds true for new online publications such as BuzzFeed Japan and Huffington Post. While the impact of the new media on the overall quality of information remains unclear, they do seem to be contributing to the emergence of so-called partisan media in Japan.

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/>

Philip Brasor, Sticky bonds of the media and government, The Japan Times, 24 June 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/24/national/media-national/sticky-bonds-media-government/>

Edelman, 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer – Japan, <https://de.slideshare.net/EdelmanJapan/2019-edelman-trust-barometer-japan>

Luxembourg

Score 6

Luxembourg's media landscape is changing. Several newspapers went out of business in 2018 and 2019, including the French-language weekly *Le Jeudi* and the weekly satirical newspaper *Feierkrop*. The 10 most important media outlets in the country are: RTL Online, RTL Radio, RTL Television, *Luxemburger Wort*, *Reporter* (an online publication), *Lëtzebuerger Journal*, *forum*, *Quotidien*, *Lëtzebuerger Land* and the (state-funded) *Radio 100.7*.

The public's degree of interest in political processes and legislative projects, which are in fact discussed and analyzed in advance, is rather low. However, the situation is better than in other small European states. The launch of the online *Reporter* publication has created a medium that fills some gaps in reporting. *Radio 100.7* has seen the quality of its coverage of political issues decline.

On Saturdays the daily *Luxemburger Wort* newspaper publishes a section called "Analysis and Opinion." Legislative plans are discussed on several pages in this section. Contributors include journalists, politicians and civil society representatives. The *Lëtzebuerger Journal*, also a daily paper, has a correspondence section called "Kloertext."

Media coverage is often reactive, in particular when issues have already reached the public in the form of draft legislation or through parliamentary debate. All parliamentary debates are conducted in Luxembourgish and in public. Parliamentary meetings are broadcast 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.

Citation:

Forum. www.forum.lu. Accessed 20 Oct. 2019.

Reporter. www.reporter.lu. Accessed 20 Oct. 2019.

Portugal

Score 6

Portugal's media landscape is comprised mostly of newspapers that focus on providing high-quality content analyzing the rationale and impact of public policies. Indeed, the country has only one tabloid newspaper (with a sister cable news channel). While these are respectively the most popular newspaper and cable channel in Portugal, it should be stressed that they are very tame compared to other tabloid media in Europe.

The issue in terms of reporting is not so much one of the media's structure but rather of its resources. All media companies face significant financial constraints, which limits their ability to carry out systematic in-depth policy analysis. This often leads media outlets to delegate policy analysis to expert commentators, rather than focus on in-depth journalistic work into policy issues.

In a previous SGI report, we noted the large amount of commentary time allotted to former politicians, particularly on television, a pattern that generates potential conflict-of-interest questions and does not seem to have contributed to improving the quality of policy analysis. The most salient example of the confluence between politicians and television is provided by Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, a former leader of the PSD and Portugal's most popular TV commentator, who was elected president of Portugal in January 2016.

Citation:

<https://vidaextra.expresso.pt/.../2019-03-02-Os-politicos-invadiram-os-media-portugu>.

South Korea

Score 6

South Korea's main media-related problem is the low quality of many outlets, which renders them unable 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 the area of political journalism. Newspapers and TV rely heavily on advertising revenues. Most prominent TV stations produce a mix of infotainment and quality information about government policies. Information on international events in particular receives little coverage in the Korean news media. The major newspapers clearly lean to the political right, although alternatives do exist. Traditional media such as newspapers and broadcasting outlets are aggravating the situation by providing superficial, short-term-focused coverage, and by propagating extreme partisan content as a means of securing subscribers and viewers. The headlines given to newspaper editorials are becoming increasingly provocative,

while broadcasters are treating current-affairs news into entertainment. People describing important social issues in conspiratorial terms are being given an increasing public platform in the media. The internet news sector is dominated by two major news portals, Naver and Daum, although there are alternatives such as Newstapa, an investigative journalism network. In general, political reporting tends to be framed in the context of personalized power politics, diverting attention away from important policy issues. The recent scandals surrounding former Justice Minister Cho Kuk illustrated this focus on personalities, as supporters and opponents of President Moon focused on personally attacking each other instead of addressing the underlying political issue of judiciary reform.

Citation:

Sang-young Rhyu, "McCarthyism in South Korea: The Naked Truth and History of Color Politics," East Asia Foundation Policy Debates, No.68 (March 28, 2017).

Newstapa, <https://newstapa.org/>

Han-yong Sung, "The Crisis in the South Korean Press: What Should Be Done?," East Asia Foundation Policy Debates, No. 127 (November 05, 2019).

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 much more than half of major news outlets, nor the outlets used by large 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.

In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election campaign, investigations have determined that Russian content farms, working through disguised social media accounts, created false and misleading news posts on Facebook and other social media that were received hundreds of millions of times by unsuspecting social media users. The posts were generally designed to increase division and conflict in American society and, in particular, to promote the candidacy and subsequent presidency of Donald Trump, and have continued to do so. Facebook and other media companies have been embarrassed by their failure of self-policing. It is unclear how effectively such interventions can be prevented.

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. The takeover of Australia's respected newspaper publisher Fairfax by the television station Channel Nine will lead to greater concentration and may further weaken existing newspapers.

To some extent, the emergence of a number of online-only news and commentary providers has countered this decline. While the impact of these news outlets is as yet difficult to assess, it is clear that at least several have risen to the status of widely read mass-media outlets.

Citation:

<https://theconversation.com/the-death-of-newspapers-have-we-reached-the-tipping-point-54728>

<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2013/july/1372600800/eric-beecher/death-fairfax-and-end-newspapers>

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2018/aug/03/the-fairfax-takeover-and-how-it-will-worsen-australias-media-industry-squeeze>

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/nov/19/fairfax-media-shareholders-approve-nine-takeover-bid>

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/>

Belgium

Score 5

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. As a consequence, public perception of media quality is on a downward trend.

Bucking the trend, however, a spate of national and international scandals emerged during the review period. These ranged from abuse of public office to international tax evasion. This stimulated popular attention to the news, and induced newspapers and other media to improve the depth of their information on specific political and policy matters. But their capacity to maintain attention to specific issues over time and to explain complex policies effectively remains weak.

Citation:

<http://www.institut-solidaris.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/LaConfianceDansLesMedias.pdf>

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. Though this does not necessarily mean that those media outlets sacrifice in-depth analysis due to excessive reliance on infotainment. In a society in which television is still the most important source of information, it is noteworthy that two leading commercial televisions enjoy significantly higher levels of brand trust than the public broadcaster HRT. The daily newspapers Jutarnji list and Vecernji list provide relatively broad coverage of Croatian political, economic and social affairs, although their quality is far behind world-class newspapers, such as Die Welt or The Guardian. Internet portals such as Index.hr and Telegram have made a large contribution to revealing corruption affairs and the misuse of public funds. They have a rather strong followership.

Cyprus

Score 5 Media display a generally low capacity to analyze and evaluate policies. This is linked to poor issue knowledge, limited research capacities and political bias. Low awareness and respect of media ethics rules often combine with increased dependency on financial interests. Economic difficulties have reduced the number of daily newspapers to four.

Coverage of political issues generally offers little insight. In-depth reporting is offered mostly by the public broadcaster. Analysis on television and in Sunday papers are becoming increasingly rare. Analysts often fail to disclose their political connections or possible conflicts of interest. Personal views and preferences influence journalists' reporting. In 2019, individual journalists took a critical view of inconsistencies in some government policies. Overall, however, the media's bias and leniency vis-a-vis institutions and politicians was often founded on self-interest.

The usual polarizing and confrontational rhetoric in media coverage of issues related to the Cyprus problem dominated the 2019 EU elections. Media failed to provide the information citizens needed to assess what was at stake in the elections.

There is no audit body for print-media circulation figures. In addition, deficient transparency in media ownership, in particular the press, makes it impossible to verify claims that the influential lawyer and businessman Andreas Neocleous holds shares in several media companies. In 2019, he bought the English-language daily Cyprus Mail. Such lack of transparency negatively affects scrutiny and the public's capacity to properly evaluate the information they receive.

Citation:

Founder of disgraced Cypriot law firm buys the Cyprus Mail, OCCRP, 1 March 2019, <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/9301-founder-of-disgraced-cypriot-law-firm-buys-the-cyprus-mail>

France

Score 5

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 low 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), and to the emerging online media (only some of which offer quality information and analysis). On the whole, economic information is rather poor. Use of social-media networks is increasingly substituting for consumption of traditional media, but this usually offers a very poor alternative. Mobilization is becoming more important at the expense of providing fair and accurate information. This tough competition has contributed to a deterioration in the quality of traditional media. Rather than providing neutral information about an issue, media outlets tend to illustrate their points by relying on “man/woman on the street” interviews, generally selecting someone expressing dissatisfaction or a fear of future consequences.

Rather than taking a neutral stance and trying to weigh the pros and cons of proposed reforms, media tend to take partisan stances – not in the sense of being leftist or rightist, but in objecting to change. Two recent examples may illustrate this point. The press (and even more so the social media networks) predicted catastrophe from a change in the way income taxes were paid (shifting from an annual payment by individuals to the state to a direct transfer from the employer to the state) and a change in the system of registering for university (a shift from a previously disastrous system). In both cases, the transformation went very smoothly. The same phenomenon can be observed with regard to the pension reform, in which the press has mainly served to express the voices of vested interests.

Greece

Score 5

While in terms of newspaper circulation and quality newspapers Greece is ranked in the middle among OECD countries, the reliability and accuracy of Greek news media is largely doubted by the public. Pew research published in October 2018 showed that in no other country do people as extensively believe that news reporting is inaccurate as in Greece. This finding is confirmed by a 2017 Reuters Institute report that also notes that Greece is the only country where trust of social media exceeds that of news media.

The Syriza-ANEL government, which lost the elections of July 2019, sought to tighten its control over state-owned media. The new government has by contrast started relaxing such control, although it remains too early to assess the government-appointed managers of the public broadcaster (ERT). Most importantly, an oligopolistic structure has taken shape in the media sector. In the period under review, one major television channel (Mega) went out of business, but its remaining assets were bought by a media mogul in late 2019. The same person had previously bought a corporation owning two major newspapers (To Vima, Ta Nea), and launched a new TV channel (One TV). Meanwhile, another new media mogul had bought a TV channel (Open TV) and two national newspapers (Ethnos, Hemeresia), while a third big business entrepreneur owns two other TV channels (Star TV, Alpha TV). Most of these privately owned channels have popularized infotainment, while marginalizing professional and in-depth reporting. Media owners often change sides, first favoring the government and then the opposition, while selectively highlighting certain issues depending on their business strategies.

Political debates in the media tend to be rather general, along partisan lines, while in-depth analysis is rare. The presentation of issues is more sentimental and partisan (pro- or anti-government) than objective. Most people inform themselves through television programs or various news websites. Finally, there is recurrent, deep divide between pro-government and anti-government media (partisanship has been a strong feature of Greek media for decades). Overall, there was a further decline in the already unsatisfactory performance of Greek media during the review period.

Citation:

Information on newspaper circulation and quality newspapers is available on this platform, through the SGI dataset. The Pew research, published in October 2018, which contained comparative tables on citizens' views on accuracy and reliability of news media is available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2018/01/11/publics-globally-want-unbiased-news-coverage-but-are-divided-on-whether-their-news-media-deliver/>

Reuters Institute, Digital News Research 2017
https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_0.pdf?utm_source=digitalnewsreport.org&utm_medium=referral

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 as well as publishes leaked information of broad

political significance. Investigative reporting on public and private television stations fulfills a watchdog function. In 2017, a concerted effort of investigative journalism by the public broadcaster put the treatment of children in institutions on the political agenda. 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, corruption, 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 on 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:

1. Rožukalne A. (2010), Research Paper on Hidden Advertising Issues in the Media, Available at (in Latvian): http://providus.lv/article_files/2117/original/slepta_reklama_mediju_prakse.pdf?1343212009, Last assessed: 05.11.2019.
2. Ministry of Culture (2017). Media Literacy. Available at (in Latvian): https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/mediju_politika/petijumi/Medijpratiba_petijuma%20rezultati_Latvijas%20Fakti_18_07_2017.pdf, Last assessed: 05.11.2019.
3. Cabinet of Ministers (2016). Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016–2020. Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/286455>, Last assessed: 05.11.2019.
4. Vita Zelce (2018), The Diversity of the Media Environment in Latvia (in Latvian, with and annotation in English), Available at: https://www.km.gov.lv/uploads/ckeditor/files/mediju_politika/petijumi/Latvijas-mediju-vides-daudzveidiba-small.pdf, Last assessed: 05.11.2019

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 television host, launched a weekly political discussion show, which attracted 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 2019, only 39.8% of respondents to a national survey stated they trusted the media.

Citation:

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

Malta

Score 5 Maltese media outlets often publish what can be described as “infotainment,” or sensational or superficial content. Two reasons may explain this: First, in the country’s highly polarized and very small society, media outlets tend to follow their owners’ political lead, which here is often political parties or people with political connections to a political party. Second, the competition for readership and audiences is fierce, and revenue constraints restrict the quality of publications’ output. High-quality analysis of government policies, for example, remains rare. That said, people in Malta today see their national media as being more free and independent, and as providing more diversity of viewpoints, than was the case five years ago. Improvements to the Freedom of Information Act in 2012 have also improved media reporting, though numerous restrictions still exist and newspapers are often unable to obtain relevant data. The 2018 Media Pluralism Monitor has increased the (still medium-) level of risk associated with the country’s media environment, but this is a consequence of the murder of a journalist. Malta is one of the few countries in Europe in which there is no media-literacy policy aimed at giving citizens the critical skills needed for active participation in the contemporary exchange of information. Foreigners have been allowed to own a broadcasting media license since 2000.

:

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

<https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20180309/local/maltese-journalists-basic-protection-takes-a-dip-report.672768>Media

Media Pluralism Monitor 2018

Malta Today 06/03/2019 Editors Sound warning over future of the press

Mexico

Score 5 The quality of the media is mixed. The quality of some Mexico City newspapers and magazines is high, but the majority of the press, and particularly radio and TV focus 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 Mexican NGO Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social claims that the concentration of media ownership in only a few hands undermines media pluralism. The new government is more critical of the media, with President López Obrador heavily criticizing mainstream media for supporting fraud in previous elections. Social media plays a more important role for the new government.

On the supply side, the quality of journalism remains a challenge. Particularly on security-related issues, increasing violence against critical and investigative journalism often results in self-censorship.

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 United States 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.

Citation:

MOM (2018). Media Ownership Monitor Mexico: Who owns the media?. <http://mexico.mom-rsf.org/>

New Zealand

Score 5 The New Zealand media landscape is dominated by commercial companies, the largest of which are controlled by international conglomerates. While the newspaper segment, which is split between New Zealand Media and Entertainment (The New Zealand Herald) and Australian-owned Stuff (The Dominion, The Press), does generally provide high-quality content on New Zealand politics, the same cannot be said about television and radio. TV broadcasters mainly focus on entertainment, the only major exceptions being publicly owned Television New Zealand (1 News, Q+A) and Three (Newshub). However, in October 2019, MediaWorks – the U.S. media giant that owns Three – announced that the network is for sale, which could decrease the amount of political news content even further. Meanwhile, among radio stations, it is essentially only publicly owned Radio New Zealand that produces programs on domestic politics (e.g., First Up, Five O'clock Report, The Panel).

Poland

Score 5 Government decisions are widely covered by the country's main TV and radio stations. Due to the media law, the public TVP is often referred to as TV-PiS. Jacek Kurski, a PiS 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. Still, there are few print outlets and TV and radio stations that have been able to resist political pressure, and the media is divided into pro- or anti-government camps. Public trust in the objectivity of the media has always been quite low, but has today reached a new, very low level. The leading TV news show – Wiadomości, on TVP – has lost almost 20% of its viewers since 2015. Generally, survey respondents' party affiliations influence the level to which they trust public TV and radio

organizations: for example, 85% of PiS supporters think the TVP public TV station is “good,” while only 12% of PO supporters have the same opinion; by contrast, 84% of PO supporters trust TVN, compared to just 47% of PiS supporters.

Citation:

CBOS (2019): Oceny działalności instytucji publicznych i mediów, Komunikat z Badan, Nr 118, Warsaw.

Slovakia

Score 5

The quality of media reporting in Slovakia is limited. The public TV and radio stations provide daily news programs and some analytical, critical programs on a weekly basis. However, much of the commentary is superficial, and debates usually serve as a vehicle for the views of the parliamentary parties. 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. TA3, a private TV channel dedicated to news, is heavily influenced by its owner, who allegedly sponsors SNS and its leader. The commercial media sector tends to eschew in-depth analysis of current affairs and instead follows an infotainment or scandal-driven news agenda. 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. The Kuciak and Kušnírová murders have somehow united journalists and have fostered interest in investigative journalism, but have not changed the structural constraints on media quality.

Slovenia

Score 5

By facilitating a replacement of in-depth analysis by a preoccupation with scandals, whether real or alleged, the growing polarization of the media in Slovenia has infringed upon the quality of media reporting. The public media, especially television and radio broadcasters, which have traditionally provided high-quality information about government decisions, have become more biased and selective.

Bulgaria

Score 4

Bulgaria’s media sector 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.

Most print-media organizations can be considered as appendages to their owners’ businesses. As a consequence, high-quality journalism is secondary to the owners’ respective business interests in print media. However, high-quality investigative journalism and political commentary is still available in print, electronic and online media.

In their coverage, most major media organizations tend to frame government decisions as personalized power politics, diverting attention away from the substance of the policy toward entertainment or sensationalism. There is little 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. In some cases, outlets are actively pressured not to cover substantive issues; in one particularly egregious example, one of the national radio service's stations was taken off the air for several hours with the aim of preventing a well-known journalist from asking questions and analyzing the ongoing process of selecting the new prosecutor general.

The number of online media outlets is increasing, with their importance growing. These provide a new venue for coverage of policy decisions that in some cases offers timelier and more in-depth reporting on topical issues. In 2019, the Radio Free Europe outlet for Bulgaria was reestablished online, and its investigative reporting producing immediate impact in the two serious corruption scandals of the year – the real-estate dealings of high officials and the violation of municipal construction regulations by the head of the anti-corruption agency.

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 or regionally produced news programs tend to be of higher 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. In 2018, the Senate approved an additional \$47 million in funding for TVN in order to save the channel from bankruptcy.

During the mass protests of October 2019, misinformation regarding the backgrounds of allegedly involved actors was published even by large newspapers such as *La Tercera*. Following the intervention of a public prosecutor, a number of print publications offered a joint public apology.

Citation:

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

<https://www.diariooficial.interior.gob.cl/>

<https://www.biobiochile.cl/noticias/economia/negocios-y-empresas/2018/10/09/rescate-de-tvn-en-la-cuerda-floja-plan-de-inversion-del-canal-incluiria-gastos-no-permitidos-por-ley.shtml>

Romania

Score 4

Media coverage of government decisions and public policy continues to be highly partisan and emphasize political scandals and politicians' personalities rather than in-depth policy analysis. Many journalists believe that their media environment is protected from outside threats, although Romania ranks first among EU countries in the spread of "Fake News." There is increased anxiety that Russia might exploit Romanian media's limited ability to counter disinformation by fueling protests on the eve of the presidential election, funding fringe political parties, and spreading fake news to provoke civil unrest and divide society. These disinformation efforts are often helped by Romanian actors voluntarily or inadvertently. Romania has begun to fight disinformation and external media infringements, although many journalists claim that the Romanian government is the main threat to press freedom. Some journalists believe that pressures from western partners over Romania's widespread corruption has prompted the Social Democratic party to be more critical of the West, which results in high levels of fake news that affect the uninformed citizens of rural Romania in particular.

Citation:

Boros, C., J. Cusick (2017): Bought and paid for – how Romania's media is pressured by corporate and political masters. *openDemocracy*, November 22, London (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/bought-and-paid-for-how-romania-s-media-is-pressured-by-corporate-and-polit/>).

Hungary

Score 3

The Hungarian media landscape has undergone two different processes in the last few years: depoliticization and scandalization. Depoliticization has turned to repoliticization due to the October 2019 municipal elections, while scandalization reached a new peak in 2019 due to Fidesz's aggressive and dirty electoral

campaigning. However, Fidesz has fallen into its own trap, since the real scandals have been in its corner. In general, as a new type of self-censorship has emerged due to government attacks on the press and civil society organizations, the area of the independent media has shrunk. The official media often does not report on the events that reflect poorly on the government, and since the majority of the population can reach only the state-controlled media, they are not informed of these events. 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 in the state-controlled public media, or in those private outlets close to Fidesz. 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, have been important in discovering the big scandals and policy failures. The significance of online media – Index, 444, HVG, Átlátszó, Mércé – has grown tremendously because they have been decisive in revealing the government's behind-the-scene activities.

Turkey

Score 2

Media freedoms deteriorated significantly after the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016. Numerous journalists were imprisoned without indictment, which had an intimidating effect on other journalists. In consequence, it is difficult for citizens to find objective or substantive in-depth information on government policies and government decision-making. In the aftermath of the early presidential and parliamentary elections in June 2018, the pluralistic structure of Turkey's media was fatally undermined by the sale of Doğan Media, a powerful mainstream media outlet, to Demirören media, a pro-government media conglomerate in early 2018. 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. News coverage and debates are mainly one-sided in the pro-government media, while self-censorship is common in the mainstream, neutral media. 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.

The so-called fake news have been at the center of political debates in Turkey since the new presidential system was put into force in 2018. As a result, the fact-checking organizations such as Teyit.org and Doğruluk Payı play a significant role in this

context. According to a survey conducted for the Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 49% of respondents stated that they have come across “stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons.” Turkey is clearly in the lead on this whereas the average across all 37 countries is 26%.

Citation:

European Commission, Turkey 2019 Report, Brussels, 29.5.2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-turkey-report.pdf> (accessed 1 November 2019)

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Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2018: The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/freedom-net-2018/rise-digital-authoritarianism> (accessed 1 November 2018)

N. Newman and et al., Reuters Institute Digital News Reports 2019, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/DNR_2019_FINAL_0.pdf (accessed 1 November 2019)

Media Ownership Monitor 2019, <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/tr/> (accessed 1 November 2019)

S. Yanatma, Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 Turkey Supplementary Report, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-11/Digital%20News%20Report%20-%20Turkey%20Supplement%202018%20FINAL.pdf> (accessed 1 November 2019)

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