

**Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States,  
meeting within the Council, on media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment**

(2014/C 32/04)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES,  
MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

NOTING THAT:

1. media freedom and pluralism are fundamental values enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. They are an essential pillar of democracy as the media play an important role in ensuring transparency and accountability and have an impact on the public opinion and on the participation of citizens in and the contribution of citizens to the decision-making processes;
2. a number of challenges to media freedom and pluralism have been noted over the last years in the European Union. These include issues highlighted by court cases, official enquiries, reports by the European Parliament and non-governmental organisations, as well as national and European parliamentary debates;
3. transparency of media ownership and of funding sources are essential with a view to guaranteeing media freedom and pluralism;
4. ensuring protection of journalists from undue influence is of key importance to guarantee media freedom, which becomes more relevant in times of economic crisis and the transformation of the media sector;
5. ensuring adequate protection of journalistic sources is a key element of media freedom;
6. the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the regulatory framework within the EU for audiovisual media services, contributes to the fostering of media freedom and pluralism. A crucial role in the enforcement of this framework lies with competent audiovisual regulatory authorities in Member States;
7. the Commission has funded a number of studies, reports, projects and coordinated actions in the field of media freedom and pluralism;
8. the Council of Europe carries out very important work in the field of media freedom and pluralism. In this regard, the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union lists freedom of expression and information among the shared priorities and focal areas for cooperation between these organisations;

9. the Internet facilitates access to information and offers citizens new opportunities for participation, discussion and shaping opinions. While this contributes to the freedom of expression and enhances pluralism of opinions, new challenges arise as to the way people access and assess information. Particular attention should be paid to the possible negative effects of both excessive concentration in the sector and the strengthening of gatekeepers' positions;
10. with the global character of the Internet it is not possible to contain these issues within geographically defined boundaries,

AGREE THAT:

11. a high level of media independence and pluralism is essential not only to democracy, but also contributes to the strengthening of economic growth and to its sustainability;
12. the Council of Europe plays an important role in setting standards for media freedom and pluralism and the cooperation with that body should be further continued and strengthened;
13. information about the ownership of a given media outlet and about other entities or persons benefiting from this ownership must be easily accessible to citizens so they can make an informed judgment about the information provided. In this context, media literacy plays an important role;
14. cooperation and sharing of best practice among audiovisual regulatory authorities and other relevant competent authorities contributes to the functioning of the EU single market and to an open and pluralistic media landscape;
15. ensuring high levels of media freedom and pluralism is essential for the EU to be credible in negotiations with acceding countries and in international fora,

WELCOME:

16. the Commission's Green Paper *Preparing for a Fully Converged Audiovisual World* <sup>(1)</sup>,

TAKE NOTE OF:

17. the independent reports of the High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism <sup>(2)</sup> and of the Media Futures Forum <sup>(3)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> Doc. 8934/13 — COM(2013) 231 final.

<sup>(2)</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/sites/digital-agenda/files/HLG%20Final%20Report.pdf>

<sup>(3)</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/media\\_taskforce/doc/pluralism/forum/report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media_taskforce/doc/pluralism/forum/report.pdf)

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

18. ensure the independence of their audiovisual regulatory authorities;
19. take appropriate measures to achieve genuine transparency of media ownership;
20. take appropriate measures to safeguard the right of journalists to protect their sources and to protect journalists from undue influence;
21. take appropriate measures, depending on their national context, to prevent possible negative effects of excessive concentration of media ownership,

INVITE THE COMMISSION, WITHIN ITS COMPETENCE, TO:

22. continue to support projects that aim at enhancing the protection of journalists and media practitioners;
23. continue to support the independent monitoring tool for assessing risks to media pluralism in the EU (Media

Pluralism Monitor), which is implemented by the European University Institute of Florence, and encourage its further use by Member States and all relevant stakeholders;

24. strengthen, through non-legislative actions <sup>(1)</sup>, cooperation between Member States' audiovisual regulatory authorities and promote best practice as regards the transparency of media ownership;
25. assess the effectiveness of these measures in order to consider any further steps,

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES, TO:

26. safeguard, promote and apply the values enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and in this context address challenges to media freedom and pluralism across the EU in full compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.

---

<sup>(1)</sup> The Commission disagrees with the reference to 'non-legislative actions' and would prefer a more open wording.