

## New Voices on the Future of Audiovisual Media Services in Europe



*Sally Broughton Micova, Deputy Director of the LSE Media Policy Project and a Fellow at LSE, on today's event, [The Future of Audiovisual Media Services in Europe](#). Follow the discussion on Twitter via [#AVMSfuture](#).*

Today, approximately 200 people will gather in Brussels to discuss the future of audiovisual media services in Europe. It has been 25 years since the Television without Frontiers Directive removed the legal barriers to broadcasting within the European Union and established some common standards for programming with the aim of creating a common market for television, now audiovisual media services. A lot has changed in 25 years, and the new European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Günther Oettinger recently announced that we can expect a draft of the newest generation of this Directive by the middle of next year. Across Europe production and broadcasting industries are struggling, and the forthcoming discussions about audiovisual media services will likely be fraught with contention stemming from different national approaches to this culturally and politically important industry.

The revision of the [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) (AVMSD) will start with a Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) assessment, and in expectation of this, we at the LSE Media Policy Project, in co-operation with the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), brought to Brussels voices not usually heard into the debates about the Directive and the industries it regulates. Debates around broadcasting and the AVMSD have been largely dominated by interests from larger member states, mainly the UK and France, and to some extent Germany. Transnational media companies and pan-European lobby groups have contributed significantly, articulating clear positions and generating evidence to support them. Most EU member states are small countries with unique languages and it is important that the interests of the citizens and the industries in those states are also heard.

One of the core aims of the LSE Media Policy Project is to bring more scholarly evidence and ideas into media policy debates, today, so today the Brussels policymaking crowd, including Commission and MEP staff, industry lobbyists and other stakeholders, will hear from scholars on three topics: the implications of convergence; media plurality; and the independence of regulatory authorities for audiovisual media services. Most of the scholars presenting come from the new member states and from some of Europe's smallest audiovisual media markets, parts of Europe that have had little representation in previous rounds of AVMSD discussions.

As I have [argued previously](#), there are real challenges to the integration of these smaller markets into the common production and distribution market foreseen in the AVMSD. The topics chosen stem directly from concerns about the state of media in newer member states and across Southern and Eastern Europe. These concerns have been raised by researchers involved in the [INDIREG](#) study on regulatory independence and the [MEDIADDEM](#) study on media and democracy, as well as by civil society groups, such as the Open Society Foundation through its [Mapping Digital Media reports](#).

This is not to say that the European Institutions have been ignoring these issues, quite the contrary. In 2011 a [High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism](#) was convened and in response the EU decided to pilot a monitoring system for identifying risks to media freedom and pluralism in member states. The Commission conducted a consultation on the implications of convergence, and also formed the [European Regulators Group \(ERGA\)](#) to work with it directly. One of the group's first actions was to publicize a strong position on the issue of independence, and Madeleine de Cock Buning, Vice chair of ERGA, will no doubt comment on this in her [keynote](#)

speech. Today's event opens with remarks from the DG Connect's Head of Convergence and Content, Lorena Boix Alonso, and the closing keynote will be given by Director General of DG Connect, Robert Madelin, an indication that the Commission remains interested in these three topics and in audiovisual media.

The REFIT assessment of the AVMSD could be an opportunity to keep the momentum going on these issues and discuss whether there are legislative or other changes that should or could be made at the European level to address them. Scholars from 8 different countries present evidence today that both underlines the urgent need for open debate, and offers some ideas for change. Below are the short policy papers presented by the scholars today, along with synopses of the panels. We welcome reactions to the evidence and ideas and constructive discussion on the future of audiovisual media services in Europe.

**Content and Convergence:** Andres Joesaar's paper raises the country of origin principle, presenting evidence of the consequences of the broadcast of Russian state-controlled channels into Estonia. The papers by Andrej Skolkay and by Luca Barra and Massimo Scaglioni bring up the definitional problems arising in relation to how different types of media and types of content are treated under EU and national policy.

*Luca Barra & Massimo Scaglioni: [Production Strategies and Audience Practices in the Convergent Media Landscape](#)*

*Andres Jõesaar: [One Country, Two Information Fields: Estonia as the Battleground for the Information War](#)*

*Andrej Školkey: [The Regulation of New Online Media Services \(NOMS\)](#)*

**Media Pluralism:** Alina Dobрева's paper draws on evidence from Hungary, Bulgaria and Estonia, arguing for EU level intervention to ensure transparency not just of ownership, but also about funding sources and advertising, as well as regular monitoring to act as an early warning for cases in which concentration might impact the democratic functioning of the media. Indrek Ibrus' paper looks at the situation in the small market of Estonia and suggests ways that policy could encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in such markets. Based on evidence from the Croatian market Viktorija Car argues for changes to the conditions for state aid for public broadcasting and cross media ownership rules at the European level.

*Alina Dobрева: [Political Dependencies and Media Pluralism](#)*

*Indrek Ibrus: [Replacing Media Policies with \(Media\) Entrepreneurship Policies](#)*

*Viktorija Car: [Searching for a pluralistic public service media](#)*

**Independence of Regulatory Authorities:** In these papers there is a common thread in terms of the problem of a lack of de facto independence and political interference with the media being operationalised through the actions of national regulators. The paper by Adina Baya on Romania's regulator calls for more assurances in the AVMSD, while the authors from Serbia make the case for more legislative clarity on the definitions of new media services to avoid the over-regulation of online media. The Hungarian authors offer specific indicators for assessing the behaviour of NRAs as a way of determining de facto independence.

*Adina Baya: [When Formally Independent Regulators are not Actually Independent](#)*

*Gábor Polyák & Kristina Rozgonyi: [Regulatory Independence based on Performance Outcome](#)*

*Đorđe Krivokapić, Bojan Perkov & Nevena Krivokapić: [Ensuring Independent Regulation for Online/Citizen Media](#)*



*This article gives the views of the author, and does not represent the position of the LSE Media Policy Project blog, nor of the London School of Economics and Political Science.*

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