



Towards a European Initiative for Media Pluralism

European Parliament, Brussels

Working Conference

March 31st, 9.30 - 17.30

The conference brings together a significant representation of European civil society organisations with an interest in media pluralism from over 10 EU member states, to start constructing a common trans-European action and advocacy platform in support of media pluralism.

Participant organisations:

European Alternatives, transnational; **Alliance Internationale de Journalistes**, international; **Council of Europe**, international; **OSCE**, international; **UNESCO**, international; **European Federation of Journalists**, international; **Articolo 21**, Italy; **Libertà e Giustizia**, Italy; **FNSI**, Italy; **Il Manifesto**, Italy; **Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom**, UK; **Capital Newspaper**, Bulgaria; **Galeria Newspaper**, Bulgaria; **Danish Union of Journalists**, Denmark; **Hungarian Europe Society**, Hungary; **Hungarian Civil Liberties Association**, Hungary; **Élet és Irodalom**, Hungary; **Hungarian Radio**, Hungary; **Centre for Independent Journalism**, Romania; **Reporteurs Sans Frontiers**, France; **Pascal Decroos Fund**, Belgium.



The European Initiative for Media Pluralism promotes the idea that European institutions should safeguard the right to independent and pluralistic information as sanctioned by the European Charter on Human Rights. Through a series of regional seminars and European conferences, the Initiative aims to establish a transnational civil society platform for the advocacy of media pluralism and independence in Europe.

The steps of the Initiative are:

- June 10, 2010, European Parliament, seminar on the media pluralism monitor
- November 20, 2010, European Parliament, participation in the MEDIA Intergroup
- February 5th 2011, Rome (Italy): Consultation on media freedom
- February 19th 2011, Iasi (Romania): Consultation on media freedom
- March 19th 2011, Stara Zagora (Bulgaria): Consultation on media freedom
- March 31st 2011, European Parliament: European civil society conference on media pluralism
- May 14th 2011, Bologna (Italy): European Congress on media freedom

There are three major long-term objectives to the Initiative:

- Establishing a pan-European coalition of civil society organisations with an interest in media pluralism going beyond exclusively professional or sectorial associations. Nothing of this kind currently exists, and the creation of such a coalition would be a significant advance in promoting media freedom at a pan-European level and providing ongoing support to advances in and advocacy for the protection of media pluralism at the level of European institutions.
- Bringing about a substantial improvement in legislation regarding media pluralism and freedom at a pan-European level, through a campaign inside European Parliament and the possible launch of a European Citizens' Initiative to directly target the European Commission. Legislation within current EU competences to be improved includes: a) The implementation of the European Commission's own Media Pluralism Monitor, employing clear indicators for threats to media pluralism in the Member States; and/or b) The definition of clearer and more effective antitrust legislation at EU level governing concentration in media and publicity.
- Campaigning for media pluralism and freedom at European level, raising awareness of the European dimension of the defence of media freedom, and developing a common transnational platform going beyond already-existing EU competences.

We aim to better discuss the aims, methods, and structure of the Initiative with all organisations participating in the conference at the European Parliament.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

9.00 - 9.30: Registration

FIRST SESSION: FRAMING THE DEBATE

9.30 - 10.00: Introduction: towards a European Initiative on Media Pluralism

Giovanni Melogli, Alliance International de Journalists
Lorenzo Marsili, European Alternatives

10.00 - 11.00: Statements from MEPs from all main political groups of the European Parliament, illustrating the work of Parliament in pushing for greater protection of media pluralism, and the role it plans to take with increased civil society pressure for a stronger role of European institutions in defending the independence of the media.

11.00 - 12.45: The importance of media pluralism for democratic life

- Roland Bless, OSCE Director of the Representative on Freedom of the Media
- Juan Miguel Mariotto, Presidente della Autoridad Federal de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual (AFSCA, Argentina)
- Giovanni Cutini, S-COM
- Andrea Cairola, UNESCO
- Council of Europe

Discussion with participants

LUNCH

12.45 - 14.00

SECOND SESSION: DEMANDS FOR AN INITIATIVE

This session will present and discuss main demands for the Initiative to take forwards. The aim is to form small workgroups around all or some of these demands, working towards presenting a campaign proposal by the next conference in Bologna on the 14th of May.

14.00 - 14.50: Monitoring media pluralism: the work of the monitor and possible reinforced application.

Overview

As part of its three-step approach, the European Commission has published study providing clear indicators for the monitoring of media pluralism. The resulting product, the Media Pluralism Monitor, can become the basis of a regular check-up of member state's compliance with the principles of freedom and pluralism of expression and information. Importantly, the results would not come from external NGOs or think tanks, but represent the European Commission's own view, providing a much stronger legal and political base for action. We intend to look at ways for this to happen, and its possible "reinforced"

application through the establishment of a dedicated European agency of institute responsible for monitoring the health and independence of Europe's media.

Introductions by Mark Thompson, Soros Foundation (outlining functioning of the monitor)

Discussion with participants

14.50 - 15.40: Better antitrust legislation for media

Overview

The application of European competition law should play an important role not only in preventing the creation or the abuse of dominant positions, but also with regards to ensuring market access for new competitors. Application of the Merger Regulation should prevent concentrations that significantly impede effective competition in the Common Market, especially through the creation or strengthening of dominant positions. Thus, in applying antitrust and merger control principles competition policy could make an important contribution to maintaining and to developing media pluralism. Why doesn't it work? How should it be changed?

Introduction tbc, (presenting why current European antitrust legislation for media is not working and what options exist): 15 minutes

Discussion with participants

15.40 - 16.30: Transnational advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns

Overview

Violation of the liberty and pluralism of the media in one member states should be seen as a general European concern and a source of worry for European civil society. In this session we want to discuss possibilities of transnational actions aimed at building a reaction-network capable of mobilising at a trans-European level when serious problems with media freedom become apparent in any member state, including the possible launch of a European Citizens' Initiative.

Introduction by Niccolo Milanese, European Alternatives

Discussion with participants

THIRD SESSION: NEXT STEPS

16.30 - 17.15: How to construct a European Initiative for Media Pluralism

Overview

We see the aim of this working conference as building the possibility of establishment a trans-European action and advocacy platform in defence of media pluralism. In this session we will decide how to go forwards and on next steps.

Introduction by Lorenzo Marsili and Giovanni Melogli: Proposed plan and follow-up

Discussion with participants

17.15 - 17.30: Concluding Remarks