

## **Recommendations of the Hungarian Europe Society**

The state of media pluralism in Europe is under regular scrutiny of media institutions, think tanks, NGO-s and the European institutions. Recently, serious concerns have emerged because of new regulations that violate the European and universal norms of the freedom of expression and the freedom of the media even in EU member states.

The Hungarian Europe Society strongly supports the initiative “Towards a European Initiative for media pluralism” launched by the European Alternatives and welcomes the outcome of the meeting organised in the European Parliament in Brussels on 31 March 2011.

We have elaborated some recommendations facing the following conference to be held in Bologna on 13 May 2011.

1. The competences of the European Union regarding media affairs and regulations must be strengthened based not only on the Audiovisual Media Services Directive but especially on the Charter of Fundamental Rights which is part of the Lisbon Treaty. We urge for the direct implementation of the Charter on media pluralism issues in case of its violations under national media legislations and practices.
2. The Media Pluralism Monitor prepared by the initiative of the European Commission should be implemented in its full strength. The use of general indicators is a practical and objective tool of assessment of the freedom of the media even in sensitive cases for member state governments. It is time to move to the 3rd step of the concept, whilst the EU Task Force for Coordination of Media Affairs must strengthen its observatory role. The country reports should be updated by the Commission and current situations in member states shall be measured against the indicators of Media Pluralism Monitor. “The Commission Communication on indicators for media pluralism in EU Member States” must have a public consultation both on national and European levels.

4. The European Agency for Fundamental Rights in Vienna should have a crucial role in monitoring, analysing and assessing the situation of media pluralism in member states.

5. The modified Hungarian Media Act still demonstrates serious deficit to European standards of media pluralism. Beside many other critical views, the European Parliament strongly opposed the new regulations in its resolution. Therefore we propose the screening of the Hungarian media scene using the media pluralism indicators of the Media Pluralism Monitor. We also suggest to the European Initiative as well as to the political groups of the European Parliament to monitor closely and report on the implementation of the Hungarian Media Act, especially the operation, practice and decisions of the new Hungarian Media Authority which has members only from the ruling party as well as its potential penalties imposed on different media organs.

6. New legislation on European level on national media authorities is needed in order to guarantee the independence of the media regulatory bodies of member states from political influence by setting the basic standards of their operation.

7. The European Initiative might actively participate in the new advisory body to be set up by Commissioner Neelie Kroes to discuss the strategy of the European Union on various media pluralism issues.

8. The European Initiative should start its own European wide awareness raising campaign as soon as possible. However, the initiative and the information campaign can only be successful if it is strong, coherent, and well articulated.

Budapest, 5 May 2011