



Position and Proposals of the Médiaforum Association on the Future Operation and Remit of Public Service Media and on the Media Market Environment

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PRINCIPLES

Sustainability. The indispensable technological and structural transformation of public service media must be carried out in a way that does not endanger but supports the sustainability of the independent media sector—a sector that has operated under extremely difficult circumstances over the past sixteen years and has done a great deal for the values of democracy and for their survival. In recent years, Hungarians committed to democracy have taken a stand for independent media with their money and their attention: through donations, through subscriptions, and by assigning one percent of their income tax to civil-society organizations. Among the objectives of renewing the media environment, and public media within it, there must also be that this ecosystem—created and strengthened over those sixteen years—can continue to operate and to develop.

Transparency and predictability. The transformation of public media, the development of its new strategy and the timetable for implementation should be open and transparent; stakeholders should have both the opportunity and the time to familiarize themselves with the plans and processes, and to contribute to them and shape them in line with their role. It is essential that, on the basis of the decisions now to be taken, the system of changes and its milestones be foreseeable in good time, that those affected have a way to prepare for them—and that they be given the necessary means to do so.

Representation. We welcome the commitment—set out in the law and confirmed by the present consultation—to involve professional and industry organizations.

- We consider it important that the designation and the operation of the participating organizations meet democratic norms. We propose that a transparent, objective set of criteria be developed for determining which organizations are entitled to delegate representatives—for example, demonstrated market representativeness, a transparent membership structure, and active professional operation during the period shaped by Fidesz propaganda, when free newsrooms were treated as enemies.
- We also consider it important that consultation between those directing public service media and the other actors of the plural media space be continuous from now on, so that the media profession can take part in shaping plans and processes not just sporadically, but continuously.

GOALS AND INSTRUMENTS

Complementarity. Finalizing the public media development strategy must be preceded by an assessment of the media environment and the identification of actual dysfunctions. Public media should concentrate on those tasks that independent for-profit and non-profit media cannot or will not perform, for structural or economic reasons, even in an environment more supportive than before. Despite all their differences, public media and well-functioning independent outlets should be able to be allies in strengthening genuine media pluralism.

Proportionate pay policy. In the interest of the efficient use of public funds and of preserving the balance of the market, the pay structure of public media should be aligned with the norms and the realities of the media sector. Pay levels significantly exceeding what is available in independent media can generate an artificial pull effect and wage tension that place privately financed newsrooms at an unwarranted competitive disadvantage.

Shared social responsibilities

Journalist training. Ensuring a supply of high-quality and ethical new journalists is in both the public and the professional interest, since without trained, honest professionals there is no democratic public sphere. Independent newsrooms and public media should cooperate in establishing a professional mentoring and internship program in which young journalists and university students can get to know both public service operation and the work of independent newsrooms.

Media literacy. In an age of disinformation spreading online and of AI-generated deepfakes, developing critical thinking is a vital task. The organizations of independent media and public media should jointly launch comprehensive, nationwide media literacy campaigns and educational programs, in schools and on digital platforms alike.

AI ethics. The advertising practices and the algorithmic monopoly of the global platforms (Meta, Google, TikTok) push verified, quality journalism into the background, while the explosive spread of artificial intelligence amplifies disinformation and the presence of deepfake content. Public media and independent newsrooms should jointly develop a transparent standard for the use of AI, thereby helping audiences to distinguish real content from generated content.

Practical cooperation

Syndication. A great deal of valuable investigative, cultural, educational and other content has been produced, and continues to be produced, in independent newsrooms that can be regarded as public service content. A legal and funding framework should be created for syndicated content sharing, through which public media takes over and distributes public-interest, quality content that has already been made and that will be made in future.

Infrastructure sharing. Sustaining local journalism is one of the guarantees of a plural public sphere; at the same time, for smaller independent newsrooms outside the capital, providing a professional technical background (studios, cameras, editing capacity) is often unaffordable. Public media could open the capacity of its nationwide studio network—on the basis of fixed, objective professional criteria and at fair access fees—to local independent and non-profit newsrooms. This shareable infrastructure would dramatically improve the quality of content production outside Budapest, while optimizing the utilization of equipment purchased from public funds.

The Médiaforum Association trusts that these proposals will contribute to the creation of a sustainable, modern public media system that supports the sustainability of plural media and serves the interest of Hungarian society as a whole. We stand ready to review the proposals in person and in detail, and to cooperate on an ongoing basis.

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Chair