



Mediadelcom Recommendations for media governance in Greece

Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Peloponnese; Senior Research Fellow, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP).

Anna Kandyla, Research Fellow, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP); National School of Public Administration and Local Government.

Introduction

Mediadelcom (1/3/2021-29/2/2024) has been an EU-funded research project that aimed at developing a diagnostic tool for the assessment of risks and opportunities concerning deliberative communication through the media in Europe. To achieve this objective, Mediadelcom:

- Detected and described configurations of the potential sources of Risks and Opportunities (ROs) for deliberative communication in four domains (legal and ethical considerations, journalism, media usage patterns, media-related competences) and formulated variables for revealing the interrelations between them.
- Mapped and analysed ROs-related research and data, enabling the assessment of the quality of the research on media related ROs in different EU countries.
- Described nation-specific paths and Europe-wide trends in the development of the European media landscape.

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Mediadelcom's research took place in 14 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden).

This policy brief presents the RO configurations for Greece and puts forward policy recommendations for supporting the development of media-related deliberative communication and relevant research capacities.

Recognising ROs: CMM (capability of monitoring mediascapes)

Greece features a prolific scholarly community in the field of media law, journalism and communication that is well embedded within international networks and often participates in collaborative research projects funded by European institutions. These have been particularly important for knowledge production in media and communications since domestic funding opportunities are extremely limited and there are no schemes funding research in the field on a regular basis. As a result, much of the academic research conducted is small-scale and clustered around topics that reflect the research interests of individual researchers. Indeed, the research carried out in the framework of the MEDIADELCOM project identified differences in the breadth of academic research production *across* but also *within* the domains under review. The gaps between the topics covered by the extant research and those that are relevant for monitoring media-related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication is, therefore, flagged as an important risk in the case of Greece.

Another risk is connected to knowledge gaps caused by the lack of systematic data collection that would enable an analysis of relevant developments in the *longue durée*. The dearth of such data is particularly pronounced when it comes to the competences of media users and levels of media literacy, media usage patterns as well as the profile, skills and competences of professional journalists. Further, important data related to the media market (such as, for instance, audience and advertising figures) is not collected by public bodies but by private market research companies and, as such, it is not freely available.

Wisdom-based media governance: risks and opportunities

Overall, in designing and implementing laws and regulations for the media, the balancing that takes place between freedom of expression, freedom of information, and other rights and

interests seeks to reconcile competing positions without curtailing freedom of expression and the right to information. Moreover, the literature on freedom of expression and freedom of information is well developed and it is able to provide a systematic, long-term analysis of the domestic legal framework and the scope of protection granted to freedom of expression and freedom of information. At the same time, the presence of experts in media law is strong and has been increasing in recent years. These are factors that create an opportunity for knowledge-based policy-making in the field.

In the domain of ethics, risks can be discerned in the limited effectiveness of the system of professional accountability. The system rests with the journalists' unions on the basis of codes of ethics and does not involve the media organizations. As such, it cannot guarantee that ethical standards are being applied and respected in reporting. Moreover, accountability instruments are also lacking at the organizational level. Greek media have refrained from creating own codes of ethics.

In the domain of journalism, the impact of the economic recession (2008-2018) and digitalization has been strongly felt on media market structures and working conditions. Economic hardship has threatened the fragile sustainability of the media market and put journalists' employment conditions under strain. At the same time, a number of new alternative media outlets were set-up by networks of journalists and other media professionals who had been laid off collectively during the crisis. These media outlets aim to provide independent news and cover socially-relevant topics often neglected by mainstream media outlets. As for the digital transformation, this is often cherished by Greek journalists as an opportunity for its potential to help them perform better and more efficiently. However, it is also associated with risks in so far as it has created new burdens on the practice of the profession, where journalists are now required to master ICT tools and skills and adapt their reporting practices accordingly. However, the effects of such developments have yet to crystallize and more research is needed to understand their dynamics.

In the domain of media usage, digitalization and the diffusion of the internet appear as opportunities in so far as they brought increased diversity in terms of the media on offer. Media supply has expanded with the addition of online media outlets and alternative news sources. Certainly, the main risk in this domain is the absence of comprehensive data collection structures, which prevents the regular assessment of the entire media sector in terms of users' media access. The data compiled is fragmented, which undermines efforts to gain knowledge on the risks and opportunities affecting the field.

In the domain of media-related competences one risk relates to the lack of a thorough media literacy policy strategy. Yet, several public and private actors (mainly civil society organizations) are active in the field and they often cooperate in the organization of actions and initiatives. This creates a dynamic that could be further bolstered by streamlining and coordination, so as to maximize impact. Another risk concerns individual-level data on user competences. Existing data covers a limited set of aspects and does not allow the risks and opportunities relating to media-related competences and user autonomy in the changing media environment to be identified.

Agent oriented analysis

The role of the state in driving risks and opportunities for media-related deliberative communication in Greece cannot go unremarked on. State actors play an important role in defining the legal context in which free speech and freedom of information can be exercised. EU-level rules and international human rights also contribute to the design of the legal framework. State influence is also clearly discernible in the domain of journalism. Media policy-making has been highly centralized, reflecting efforts to keep a close eye on the operation of the media. This has impacted journalistic professionalism and fed into the marginalization of the public service broadcaster. For their part, commercial news media have in general refrained from investing in quality journalism. It is to be noted that the Greek media have not set up media accountability instruments, and that they do not participate in the existing system of professional self-regulation. The latter involves only the journalists' unions and their members. The analysis also shows that several other actors engage in data collection and research into aspects of journalism, media usage and media-related competences, while civil society is much involved in media literacy initiatives. This does not, however, suggest that these actors play an important role in driving risks and opportunities for the Greek media.

Policy recommendations

CMM: Provide stable funding for research and data collection in the field of media and communication to ensure regularity and continuity in research and diversity in terms of the topics covered; strengthen and systematize data collection in areas related to the media

market, journalism, media usage and media-user competences; ensure that data is freely available.

Ethics/accountability: Public authorities should create incentives for media outlets to set up media accountability instruments; the media and journalists' associations should support the creation of a press/media council which brings together media owners, editors and journalists to ensure that ethical standards are respected and enforced.

Journalism: Support independent, journalist-driven media organizations; support the continuous development of digital and data journalism competences for professional journalists through skills-development programmes.

Media-related competences: Public authorities should develop a thorough media literacy policy strategy, they should support synergies between public and private actors engaging in media literacy initiatives and ensure coordination.