



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE  
EU MONITORING AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM



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MEDIA PROGRAM

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The full text of this report is available (as of 11 October) at [http://www.eumap.org/topics/media/television\\_europe](http://www.eumap.org/topics/media/television_europe)

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## 4,000 channels in Europe, but what's on TV?

*Brussels and Budapest – 11 October 2005.* Television remains the primary source of information for most people in Europe, despite the dynamic progress of new information technologies. But the pivotal role of television in supporting democracy in Europe is under threat. Public service broadcasters are compromising quality to compete with commercial channels, and many of them depend on Governments or political parties. Meanwhile, ever-larger concentrations are developing in the commercial sector, often with clear political affiliations. These developments jeopardise broadcasting pluralism and diversity, with the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe most at risk.

These are the main findings of the monitoring report *Television across Europe: regulation, policy and independence*, released today in Brussels. The report, produced by the Open Society Institute, Budapest, covers 20 European countries--EU members, candidates and potential candidates--from the UK to Turkey, and from Romania to France. At 1662 pages, it is the largest ever comparative survey of its kind. The report analyses broadcasting across the continent and addresses policy recommendations to national and international authorities and groups.

While there are nearly 4,000 television channels in Europe, the report reveals that the television market is in reality highly concentrated in terms of both ownership and audience shares. In most countries, a handful of channels attract the vast majority of viewers. Ownership structures are controlled by a few companies and often shrouded in secrecy. Political pressure on regulators and public service broadcasters is widespread.

In Europe, universally available high quality programmes are scarce. Investigative journalism and minority programming are hard to find in both public service and commercial broadcasting. Newscasts are often tabloid, particularly on commercial channels. As a result, viewers often do not receive the information necessary to make informed democratic choices.

Whether the switchover to digital broadcasting will benefit the public remains to be seen. Digitalisation may instead enable leading commercial players to further erode public service broadcasting, undermining pluralism and diversity, as well as high quality content.

The report contains a series of recommendations for national governments, the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), and other interested parties. These include:

### **On media policy:**

- National governments and international organisations should live up to their commitments to the dual system of public and private broadcasters as an essential element of democracy. Market forces alone must not determine broadcasting policy.

- Governments and parliaments should ensure the political and operational independence of broadcasting regulators. The regulators must have the resources and powers to monitor broadcasters, and their compliance with legislation and licence conditions.
- The European Union should establish an independent agency to monitor media markets and media concentration in the EU and on global markets.

**On public service broadcasting:**

- Broadcasting regulators should ensure that the public service broadcasters' programming complies with a clear public service remit.
- Governments and parliaments must ensure that the funding of public service broadcasters is transparent.
- National media policy should include strategies for the development of local television stations and community media.

**On commercial broadcasting:**

- Governments and parliaments should adopt legislation ensuring transparency of ownership of all media outlets, including external investors.
- The EU should introduce legislation to ensure transparency of media ownership.
- Commercial broadcasters should be encouraged or obliged to broadcast public service programmes.

**On digitalisation:**

- Public service broadcasters should automatically receive licences for digital broadcasting.
- Regulators should allocate digital licences to a diverse range of operators to ensure that dominant positions in analogue broadcasting are not extended.
- Parliaments should adopt legislation to prevent the emergence of monopolies of operators involved in the digital chain – such as digital multiplex operators, television stations, programme packagers and software providers.

**Note to editors**

The report “*Television across Europe: regulation, policy and independence*” was prepared and published by EUMAP, the Open Society Institute’s EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program, in cooperation with OSI’s Network Media Program.

The report includes a regional overview and twenty individual country reports covering: *Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Estonia; France; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Poland; Republic of Macedonia; Romania; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Turkey; the United Kingdom.*

The report is in English. Country reports and the general overview are also available in the national language of the monitored country. Each country report contains specific policy recommendations. All are available on [www.eumap.org](http://www.eumap.org). For more information on the Open Society Institute see [www.soros.org](http://www.soros.org).

The report is presented on 11 October at a public event in Brussels, at the Residence Palace, starting at 10.00. The event is organised jointly with the European Policy Centre. To attend, please contact [info@theepc.be](mailto:info@theepc.be).