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(Final version)

The role of the media in times of crisis

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A. Draft Resolution

1. While freedom, pluralism and independence of the media are vital preconditions for our democratic societies, the importance of a healthy media ecosystem is even more obvious in times of crises. Free and independent media must provide citizens with accurate, comprehensive and high-quality information, this being both a right and a duty. It is vital for citizens to have access, through the media, to relevant, reliable, clear and factual information on the crises, as this can have a decisive impact on society's ability to cope effectively with tense situations such as health crises, environmental disasters, acts of terrorism, social violence or armed conflicts.
2. The media could play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and multicultural understanding, and in preventing or minimising oppression and conflict. However, when a crisis threatens dominant understandings of individual freedoms, such as the recent Covid-19 pandemic, debates tend to polarise and fragment the community itself, which is reflected in online and broadcast content. These polarising crises are likely to happen in the future, and their impact on public debates demands a comprehensive media approach for informing and engaging the public effectively.
3. Free and independent media must be the driving force of critical analysis of the causes of a crisis. Their professionalism is one of the preconditions for constructive public debate on how to deal with it, which must involve politicians and the various groups in society. The media help to stimulate discussion on the right measures to counter the causes and the adverse effects of a crisis and to overcome it; besides, they facilitate citizen participation in discussions on the long-term changes that are needed to increase society's resilience to crises of the same type or to prevent them more effectively.
4. The media help to reinforce the legitimacy of the decisions taken by political leaders and improve understanding both of their content and of the reasons for them; they also play a key part as links between decision makers and the public. Moreover, the media can take on an educational role: they must be capable of analysing and explaining the new obligations being imposed to tackle a crisis situation and the behaviour which the authorities expect of the public.
5. The risks of misinformation, polarisation and populism on-line increases in times of crises. The threat posed by information disorder is amplified and the need to prevent it and counter it becomes more pressing. The requirement

Amendment 1

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 1, replace the second and third sentences with the following sentences:

"The media must provide citizens with accurate, comprehensive and high-quality information, this being both a right and a duty. It is vital for citizens to have access, through the media, to relevant, clear and fact-based information on the crises, as this can have a decisive impact on society's ability to cope effectively with tense situations such as health crises, environmental disasters, acts of terrorism, social violence or armed conflicts."

Amendment 2

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 3, in the first sentence, delete the words:

"free and independent".

for professionalism and thoroughness in checking information disseminated is all the greater in times of crises and the media must be aware of the heightened responsibility that they must assume to the full, including in terms of effectively countering conspiracy theories and inflammatory discourses.

6. While this is a responsibility for all media outlets, there is a specific role for public service media which has to be recognised, enhanced and safeguarded. Public service media must remain independent and serve the public because they have a specific remit to fulfil as a factor for social cohesion and integration of all individuals and as a broad platform for pluralist public debate. In the particular context of crises, public service media should encourage citizens to develop critical thinking and the capacity to compare various sources of information.
7. As far as social media platforms are concerned, given the risk of false news or unchecked information being disseminated on their networks, the operators should redouble their efforts to counter this trend by developing fact-checking tools and promoting reliable and accurate news sources. Lockdowns and forced restrictions on movement during Covid-19 pandemic have significantly increased the importance of the media in general because the free flow of information also becomes a means of overcoming the isolation faced by individuals whose freedom of movement is restricted, while the restrictions have made social media much more important as a means of maintaining family, interpersonal, work and social contacts.
8. These various functions are interconnected and complement one another. It is important not to divide them up or limit them. It is wrong and dangerous to assume that governments are best placed to control and distil information in times of crises so as to avoid the dissemination of inaccurate information and direct collective behaviour effectively. An approach of that kind is incompatible with democratic principles and the protection of the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5).
9. Collaboration between public authorities and the media is one of the keyways of dealing with and overcoming a crisis. The authorities should support the media so that the latter can perform their various roles to the full. This willingness to co-operate should be given effect despite the critical stance of some sections of the press towards the action of governments, as collaboration between the authorities and the media should in no way undermine the independence of the latter.
10. There is a need to review existing multidisciplinary knowledge and approaches about media and society, communication and crisis management. Media should be able to actively play their role not only as a channel to communicate to publics and allow public opinion

Amendment 3

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 7, in the first sentence, after the words "to counter this trend", insert the following words:

"in a transparent manner by deleting illegal information,"

Amendment 4

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 8, replace the third and fourth sentences with the following sentence:

"It is important that all the producers and distributors of information including media and Internet intermediaries behave in a responsible and human rights compliant manner while producing and disseminating news".

formation, but also a channel for expert knowledge to be transferred to institutions.

11. Measures to enhance the role of the media during crises should involve institutions, services, experts and civil society, in order to make community, institutional and research processes visible and approachable, as well as to strengthen trust. Maintaining a resilient and adaptable media ecosystem is the best way to confront crises in democracies. Efforts need to be focused on long-term policies, which start long before a crisis begins.
12. Consequently, the Parliamentary Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to recognise and value the role of the media as a crucial actor in the management of a crisis and an essential node in the wider network of communication especially in time of crises, and, in particular, to:
 - 12.1. ensure the conditions for a strong, pluralistic and independent media ecosystem that can support coherent deliberative processes locally and internationally;
 - 12.2. encourage a structured collaboration and networking – before, during and after crises – between the media, experts, public authorities, services and the public;
 - 12.3. support collaboration between public media and institutions with a view to provide permanent spaces for citizens to access and share knowledge about the processes of science in transparent ways, and to appreciate the constant evolution of scientific knowledge;
 - 12.4. support critical research and investigation journalism able to explain complex processes that are still in the making and aim at unveiling unfair and misguided actions of powerful authorities and businesses, such as corruption and abuse of power;
 - 12.5. support media coverage of the scientific debate, in order to raise awareness and expand the knowledge of the public on both the technical and the social nature of the changes and responsibilities involved in the management and solution of the emergency.
13. Considering real danger of misinformation, polarisation, populism on-line in times of crises, the Assembly also calls on member States to:
 - 13.1. bring their legislation and practice into line with Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the remit of public service media in the information society, as well as the Assembly Resolution 2255 (2019) “Public service media in the context of disinformation and propaganda”, and Recommendation 1878 (2009) “Funding of public service broadcasting”;
 - 13.2. put in place policies that may disperse the concentration of opinion power by social media and create countervailing power, as well as regulations of and about

Amendment 5

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 12.4, replace the word "investigation" with the word:

"investigative".

Amendment 6

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN,

social media, to prevent that powerful digital businesses become centres of political power;

Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 13.2, replace the words "to prevent that powerful digital businesses become centres of political power" with the following words:

"including the development of a relevant binding legal instrument, to prevent that powerful digital businesses become centres of political power and violate human rights including freedom of expression".

- 13.3. put in place policies that may encourage social media to develop further their fact-checking capacities to ensure that business interests do not overshadow the need to respect ethical principles of any publication online;

Amendment 7

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 13.3, at the end insert the following sentence:

"These fact-checking mechanisms should be human-rights compliant, contain clear and efficient appeal provisions and checks against possible misuse aimed at providing unfair advantages to some media while disadvantaging others".

- 13.4. support the development of a strong mixed-media approach across sectors, in order to deactivate polarisation and misinformation driven by digital conglomerates and exclusivist narratives;

- 13.5. ensure that administrative services and institutions can use social media to provide, monitor and collect information during crises, whereas citizens can use them to ask for information or to provide their own;

Amendment 8

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 13.5, at the end insert the following sentence:

"This should be done in compliance with relevant privacy legislation, in particular the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (CETS No. 108)"

- 13.6. support the media which have developed verification procedures that allow them to play a new role of verifying the accuracy of user-generated information.

Amendment 9

Tabled by Mr Andrey EPISHIN, Ms Irina RUKAVISHNIKOVA, Mr Alexander BASHKIN, Mr Sergey KISLYAK, Ms Svetlana ZHUROVA, Ms Maria BUTINA, Ms Olga KAZAKOVA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 13.6, at the end insert the following words:

"while guaranteeing the right to the freedom of expression".

- 13.7. support community media projects and seek to involve citizens more deeply in public debates by taking specific measures, such as creating and maintaining multidisciplinary social media spaces and involving students in educational activities for and communication with the community before and during a crisis;
- 13.8. support focused training for science journalism that covers the social sciences, as well as the hard sciences, to enhance journalists' ability to report on scientific work and help the public to understand the scientific dimension of crises management;
- 13.9. support trainings offered by national and international journalism organisations, universities and research centres focused on the sociological study of journalism and on constructive journalism approaches in training;
- 13.10. support journalistic coverage of both local and global contextualisation and narratives, and discouraging nationalistic frames in the media;
- 13.11. support documentary production and podcasting of knowledge that can make science, services and institutional work more visible through media cultural outputs.