

Responses French-speaking Community

Meeting on: • <u>Pillar III – Media pluralism and media freedom</u>	1. Last year's concerns relating to political interference in view of editorial independence of the media are still present today. On 13 January 2026, for instance, the Media Minister of the French Community was accused of making offensive remarks about public broadcaster RTBF, expressing a wish for a political shift in its leadership and criticising the new generation of journalists as largely left-leaning. - Would you consider this to be an increasing trend? - If so, is this also the case outside of the French Community? - Is the government addressing any concerns about external interference in view of editorial independence? Answer: The Government and the Parliament have recently and clearly reiterated their position on the need to guarantee the independence of the media. Thus, in a motion voted on 23 February 2026, the Parliament of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation reiterated these principles in light of existing constitutional, European and legislative rules. This motion constitutes an official political statement by the Government and the Parliament. (The motion is included in the annex for the Commission's information.) The technical term is "Motion of confidence". This motion of confidence was voted in order to renew Parliament's confidence in the Government and reaffirms, among other things, editorial independence and all national and international standards that guarantee the freedom and independence of the media. 2. Following the recommendation in last year's Rule of Law Report, have there been relevant developments regarding the procedure for access to documents? More in particular, what is the current status of the legislative proposal seeking to amend the Act of 11 April 1994 concerning public access to administrative documents? 3. Over the last years, there has been an increasing concentration of media ownership by a limited number of actors. The Flemish media regulator's annual media concentration report indicates that for the aggregation of traditional media products, between 80 and 100% of the Flemish market remains in the hands of only five media groups. In line with this, several media stakeholders have expressed concerns in view of media concentration in Belgium. - How do you assess the increasing concentration of media ownership, and what implications does this have for media pluralism and democratic debate? - Have any measures addressing these concerns been implemented? Answer: There is indeed a phenomenon of media concentration, particularly in the French-language print media, as the two main players in this market are undergoing a process of merger. Of course, this phenomenon is raising concerns in the media landscape, particularly with regard to respect for media pluralism. This process (merger) is currently being examined by the Belgian Competition Authority in the light of the applicable European and Belgian rules. Just few precisions on this point. When it comes to protect media pluralism, it should be noted that our legislation already foresees some safeguards to protect
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	pluralism for audiovisual media services in French-speaking Community. Indeed, the media regulator (CSA) can impose measures on media players if there is a risk on media pluralism due to, for example, capitalistic concentration. Moreover, as you know, we are working on the implementation of EMFA. In this respect, a specific procedure will be introduced in the Belgian legislation in order to implement article 22 of EMFA. 4. Concerns remain regarding increased physical and online violence against journalists, how do you assess recent developments regarding the scale of such incidents, and how have public authorities responded in practice? 5. Could you share any additional media-related insights, including relevant legislative or regulatory initiatives, policy developments, or cases at the federal or regional level? <u>Answer:</u> as already communicated in the written answers, on legislative side, the implementation of the EMFA is underway. The draft decree must now be definitely adopted by the Government and the Parliament. Also, we are negotiating a cooperation agreement with other entities in order to implement article 22 of EMFA.
Meeting with the Media Regulators (CSA, VRM and Medienrat)	- On 15 April 2025, the case dealing with a conflict of interpretation of the "CDJ decree", which articulates the division of competences between the Conseil de déontologie journalistique (CDJ) and the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA), was decided by the Council of State. The Council of State endorsed the CDJ's interpretation that, in news programmes, the CDJ's intervention on the ethical aspect of a mixed complaint (i.e. relating to an information programme and covering both a decree and an ethical provision) exhausts the CSA's jurisdiction over its decretal counterpart. @CSA: Could you go into more detail on the outcome of this case and the concerns that remain from your side? @VRM & Medienrat: Do similar issues exist in the Flemish and German-Speaking Community? - Over the last years, there has been an increasing concentration of media ownership by a limited number of actors. The Flemish media regulator's annual media concentration report indicates that for the aggregation of traditional media products, between 80 and 100% of the Flemish market remains in the hands of only five media groups. In line with this, several media stakeholders have expressed concerns in view of media concentration in Belgium. @VRM: Could you comment further on the results of this report? Have recent changes impacted media pluralism and the diversity of voices available to the public? @CSA & Medienrat: How would you assess media concentration in your respective Communities? Have there been any significant changes that could impact media pluralism and the diversity of voices available to the public? - Have any measures addressing these concerns been implemented? - Do you consider your resources sufficient to effectively carry out your mandate?. Have the VRM, CSA, and Medienrat received (sufficient) additional (financial, human, or technological) resources in regard to new tasks? If so, could you elaborate more on which resources and how this has impacted the regulator's operational capacity and effectiveness? <i>Réponse : Position du Gouvernement : Concernant la dotation apportée à son régulateur, le Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel, un contrat de financement a été signé en 2024, pour les années 2024-2028.</i>

	<i>Ce contrat permet au CSA de disposer de ressources prévisibles et suffisantes, à savoir un montant de 3.751.000 euros versés annuellement.</i> <i>A l'instar d'autres institutions dépendant de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, ce montant n'est actuellement pas indexé, au vu du contexte de responsabilisation budgétaire face à une situation financière particulièrement préoccupante. Cette mesure pourra toutefois être réévaluée si les 2 parties l'estiment nécessaire au cours des prochaines années.</i>
	4. What are the most pressing challenges currently facing media regulators in the Flemish, French, and German-speaking communities? 5. Could you provide any additional media-related insights, including relevant legislative or regulatory initiatives, policy developments, or cases at the federal or regional level?