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Press release // ERGA // COVID-19

European Regulators call upon European Commission: Systemic importance of media in times of crisis

Never before have we been so dependent on quality media coverage and digital communications. The persistence of our democracies relies on effective flow of trustful information and people's mutual solidarity. Robust and independent media can primarily guarantee this.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for reliable information on the disease itself and the protective measures taken by authorities. Professional journalism is important as it counters the dangers of disinformation, which can further aggravate the situation. Adequate digital communication capabilities, for example online services, are equally important in order to cultivate social contacts and guarantee access to quality content in times when citizens are asked to stay at home. Even in the times of crisis, media companies need to be able to fulfil their mission of bringing the society together and securing democracy.

However, the economic effects of the crisis hit hardest audio-visual media companies, many of which were already under financial strain in a rapidly changing market. The restrictions of movement and other control measures decided by the national authorities to contain a further spread of the virus also complicate the functioning of media outlets.

In view of the critical importance of media for our societies and the current crisis, ERGA will contribute to shaping the measures aimed at reducing the impact of COVID-19 on the media sector in the EU Single Market. Concretely, in concertation with the European Commission, ERGA will extend its current work on Disinformation by conducting an assessment on how platforms react to the challenges posed by the 'infodemic' accompanying the pandemic. In addition, ERGA will form an Action Group to exchange experience and information about the crisis' impact on the economic conditions for the audiovisual media sector in the Member States. Especially with regards to the different scopes and competences of the ERGA members this exchange promises to be helpful and fruitful.

The actions taken by the Member States and ERGA need to go hand in hand with those of all other relevant institutions. ERGA therefore calls upon the European Commission to take into consideration measures to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the media sector and the European Single Market.

It is our common duty to ensure stability of our democracies in these troubled times jointly.

Notes for Editors

The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) consists of the national regulatory authorities in the field of audiovisual media services. ERGA advises the European Commission and facilitates cooperation between the regulatory bodies in the EU.

Dr Tobias Schmid, Commissioner for European Affairs of the German Media Authorities, is the Chairman of ERGA in 2020. For questions, please refer to the ERGA Secretariat CNECT-ERGA-SECRETARIAT@ec.europa.eu.