CMFE

COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE -
National Assembly, Belgrade,
6 November 2013

Joint meeting of the Committee on Culture and Information of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the Sub-Committee on Media and Information Society of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on the occasion of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Almost three thousand community media in 29 European countries, 2.300 radio stations, more then 500 TV stations.

An estimated three hundred thousand active citizens are involved, mostly as volunteers, but also thousands as employees. Together they reach millions of listeners and viewers with thousands of radio and TV programmes on local culture, programs in minority languages, local talk shows, local sports, local politics, with public access programs.

It is an honour to be here and to be able to present Community Media on behalf of CMFE, the Community Media Forum Europe. CMFE is an International Non-profit organisation with 118 members from 26 European countries, from Russia to Ireland, from Norway to Spain. 27 Federations representing hundreds of community radio and TV stations, 35 community media as radio's, TV's and internet-based stations, and 56 researchers, media-activists and practitioners. We work close together with AmarcEurope, part of the worldwide Community Radio organisation, Amarc International.

Community Media, is a growth sector within the media landscape, the third pillar in the broadcasting sector.

How to define Community Media?

In terms of the Council of Europe, in the Declaration on the role of Community Media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, adopted in 2009 by the Committee of Ministers in Reykjavik, I quote:
"Community media may share to a greater or lesser extent some of the following characteristics:
- Independence from government, commercial and religious institutions and political parties;
- A not-for-profit nature;
- Voluntary participation of members of civil society in the devising and management of programmes;
- Activities aiming at social gain and community benefit;

CMFE Office Heliodoorstraat 3 6534 SH Nijmegen The Netherlands *Tel:* + 31 24 3550559 *Mobile:* + 31 6 34150581
www.cmfe.eu We prefer mail to be sent electronically to info@cmfe.eu

1

CMFE

COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE -
National Assembly, Belgrade,
6 November 2013

Joint meeting of the Committee on Culture and Information of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the Sub-Committee on Media and Information Society of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on the occasion of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and Information Society

- Ownership by and accountability to the communities of place and/or of interest which they serve;
- Commitment to inclusive and intercultural practices

'May share' in this definition is very important, because it doesn't exclude but includes different types of community media: "Let a hundred flowers bloom", as the late Karol Jakubowisz stated it in Bucharest, 2008

In short: Community media are not-for-profit media, to service specific groups of citizens and operated and owned by these citizens.

Not-for-profit is of course a misleading notion. Community stations certainly contributes to society, they offer citizens their own media tools and build media literacy, they build cohesion, tolerance and trust. In that way community media certainly are 'profit' organizations. Instead of 'financial gain' they offer 'social gain'.

Examples:
– The local public station in Amsterdam, SALTO, with a professional local and three public access TV channels on cable and five radio access channels broadcasting on FM;
– Frikanalen in Norway, a national public access channel, broadcasting on the digital TV network;
– Ràdio Televisió Cardedeu, oldest community TV station in Catalone – Spain, operating their own digital TV– transmitter;
– Studio 12, a student radio in Ljubjana Slovenia, started broadcasting in 1969, now struggling to survive;
– Roma Youth Radio (Czech Republic), a Community Radio owned and operated by Roma youth groups, broadcasting on internet;

To summarize this section: already thousands flowers bloom!
Are community media still relevant in a world where millions use Twitter, Facebook, Google and YouTube? Are this the new Social Media ?

Vinod Pavarala, UNESCO chair for Community Media, stated: "The risk is great that politicians reduce Community Media to user-generated content, and so losing sight of the role of Community Media for education, community building, civic engagement and local content production".

CMFE Office Heliodoorstraat 3 6534 SH Nijmegen The Netherlands *Tel:* + 31 24 3550559 *Mobile:* + 31 6 34150581
www.cmfe.eu We prefer mail to be sent electronically to info@cmfe.eu

2

CMFE

COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE -
National Assembly, Belgrade,
6 November 2013

*Joint meeting of the Committee on Culture
and Information of the National Assembly of
the Republic of Serbia and the Sub-
Committee on Media and Information Society
of the Council of Europe Parliamentary
Assembly on the occasion of the Council of
Europe Conference of Ministers responsible
for Media and Information Society*

I strongly agree with Pavarala. Community Media combine the power of traditional and social media. They don't isolate people, but bring citizens together. Community media offer citizens tools to use their own media, to share instead of 'push' opinions, to stimulate 'public discourse'.

Community media will continue to combine the use of online and traditional broadcasting platforms, providing media and Internet literacy for a variety of age, language and minority groups, people with special needs. But online and social media are not an alternative for broadcasting media, they should be seen as an enhancement. The combined use of this kind of media is proved to be very efficient.

Community media should be part of broadcasting policy

The European Parliament advised EU Member States in 2008 to "give legal recognition to community media as a distinct group alongside commercial and public media where such recognition is still lacking". Also the Declaration on community media of the Council of Europe stresses the importance of adequate regulation.

Both these texts already had great impact. They are used in broadcasting policy documents and debates in countries as Spain, Poland, The Netherlands, Czech Republic, Sweden and United Kingdom. Also EPRA, the European platform for independent media authorities, has put community media on their agenda: local and community media are recognized as essential to pluralism and diversity.

But there is still a lot to do. Together with EPRA, CMFE has ranked European countries regarding the quality of their community media policy. Norway, Denmark, The Netherlands and Austria came on top of the list. But only 8 countries passed the test. 21 Countries scored below 5 on a scale from zero to ten. And 21 Countries do not yet recognize community media as a separate sector yet.

So what do we expect from national governments?
– Create a legal base for community media: media legislation has to recognize the special role of community media, next to private and public media. The right to Freedom of expression in the European Convention on Human Rights is more then

CMFE Office Heliodoorstraat 3 6534 SH Nijmegen The Netherlands *Tel:* + 31 24 3550559 *Mobile:* + 31 6 34150581
www.cmfe.eu We prefer mail to be sent electronically to info@cmfe.eu

3

CMFE

COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE -
National Assembly, Belgrade,
6 November 2013

*Joint meeting of the Committee on Culture
and Information of the National Assembly of
the Republic of Serbia and the Sub-
Committee on Media and Information Society
of the Council of Europe Parliamentary
Assembly on the occasion of the Council of
Europe Conference of Ministers responsible
for Media and Information Society*

a 'passive' right. It states, in Article 10, clearly the right to also "impart information and ideas". It also stresses the importance of independence of media.

– Facilitate structural funding for Community Media: To quote the Declaration on Community Media once again: "Stresses the desirability of recognizing the social value of community media and examining the possibility of committing funds at national, regional and local level to support the sector". Funding should be synchronized with licensing periods. We questioning schemes in where Community media have to apply for yearly project funding. This obstructs the independence and creates yearly 'beauty contests' with all the administrative work, for community media and regulators. Others sources of income should be allowed, e.g. sponsoring and advertisement within restrictions as used for public broadcasting and, of course fully respecting independence. The local business sector can also be seen as an essential part of the local community.

– Governments should provide community media with adequate access to broadcasting networks. We need FM frequencies, access to cable networks and access to new digital networks. Especially the digitalization of broadcasting is a challenge. New technologies tend to facilitate large broadcasters and to deny the special needs for small–scale broadcasting. But new technology is meant to offer more, not less possibilities. Technology has to serve media policy, not dictate it.

Conclusion:

So we have thousand of community media in more then half of the countries in Europe, may be the largest media sector. Hundreds of thousands active citizens are involved in recording, interviewing, managing, editing, filming, media training, etcetera. In this sense, community media are well resourced.

But the sector is under resourced when it comes to adequate regulation, financial means and distribution channels. In this areas we need support from national governments: please use the CoE declaration and EP resolution in reviewing broadcasting legislation. In this area we also need European institutions: to build further on their important texts: new initiatives are needed, a progress report with an evaluation of countries on community media policy, examples of best practices. Also community media should be included in new media policy development in areas as media pluralism and digitalization policy. And online and

CMFE Office Heliodoorstraat 3 6534 SH Nijmegen The Netherlands *Tel:* + 31 24 3550559 *Mobile:* + 31 6 34150581
www.cmfe.eu We prefer mail to be sent electronically to info@cmfe.eu

4

CMFE

COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE -
National Assembly, Belgrade,
6 November 2013

*Joint meeting of the Committee on Culture
and Information of the National Assembly of
the Republic of Serbia and the Sub-
Committee on Media and Information Society
of the Council of Europe Parliamentary
Assembly on the occasion of the Council of
Europe Conference of Ministers responsible
for Media and Information Society*

social media are not an alternative for more traditional broadcasting media, they should be seen as an enhancement.

Welcome tot the three pillar based broadcasting system!

Thanks for your attention.

CMFE, Pieter de Wit, 6 November 2013

CMFE is supported by the EU under the 'Europe for Citizens Programme 2013'

CMFE Office Heliodoorstraat 3 6534 SH Nijmegen The Netherlands *Tel:* + 31 24 3550559 *Mobile:* + 31 6 34150581
www.cmfe.eu We prefer mail to be sent electronically to info@cmfe.eu

5