

Public Service Media and Information Disorder

Public Media Institutions at a Crossroads: Visions, Strategies, Tactics

Minna Horowitz

Center for Media, Data and Society
Central European University

August 2018



About CMDS

The [Center for Media, Data and Society](#) (CMDS) is a research center for the study of media, communication, and information policy and its impact on society and practice. Founded in 2004 as the Center for Media and Communication Studies, CMDS is part of CEU's School of Public Policy and serves as a focal point for an international network of acclaimed scholars, research institutions and activists.

About Minna Horowitz

Minna Horowitz is Assistant Professor in Mass Communication at St. John's University in New York, and the manager for RIPE@GLOBAL. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Helsinki and has taken part in several international research activities in the past decade, including comparative work based on the Open Society Foundation's global Mapping Digital Media project (2009-2013). Her recent research includes conceptualizing participation in the web 2.0 era, public service media and citizenship, communication rights, and collaborative research design. In addition, she is especially interested in new forms of collaboration emerging in relation to the media justice and reform movements.

Preface: Public Media Institutions at a Crossroads	3
1. Introduction: Information Disorder and Public Service Media	6
1.1. Definitions: Dimensions of Information Disorder	11
1.2. Definitions and Practices of PSM: From Principles to Variations	11
2. Public Service Media and Information Disorder: Strategies and Tactics	14
2.1. Quality and Innovation	14
Quality Programming	14
Platforms, Apps, and Other Tech Solutions	15
2.2. Critical Thinking and Literacy	16
2.3. Online: For and With Young People	17
Understanding Media	17
Content That Matters, via Multi-platform Delivery	18
Attracting Youth with Fiction	18
2.4. Collaborations	19
2.5. Case Study: Sweden	21
3. PSM and Challenges of Information Disorder	24
3.1. Audiences – Citizens	25
3.2. National – Global Ecosystem	25
3.3. Remits and Resources vs. Political and Commercial Challenges	26
3.4. Disagreements About Remedies	27
3.5. Beyond Information Disorder: Continuing Value in Turbulent Times	28
Core Task: Serving the Public? Structural-Societal Relationships	28
Core Value: Pluralism	28
Key Role: Harbinger of Democracy	29

Preface: Public Media Institutions at a Crossroads

Public service media (PSM) institutions around the world exist in challenging conditions: not only do the commercial counterparts claim that PSM is distorting the market, governments are increasingly meddling with content and tightening financing for these institutions. This is an alarming trend in times of viral misinformation, filter bubbles, distrust of media, and global political and economic turbulence.

PSM should be the institutional harbingers of universality and public interest media: principles that bring people together. But do they play that role anymore? Can public service media institutions survive these tumultuous times?

The Center for Media, Data and Society has curated a series of lectures addressing the challenges and the future of public media titled *Public Media Institutions at a Crossroads: Visions, Strategies, Tactics*.¹ The speakers and themes have included a multi-dimensional outlook on what PSM institutions, and public media more generally, are and can be:

- Jawhar Sircar: Public Broadcasting in India²
- Karen Donders: Public Service Media and Challenges of the Digital Era³
- Monroe Price: Pluralism and Public Service Media⁴
- Judit Bauer and Petra Bard: Between Market and Human Rights – Media Pluralism and Democracy Under Threat in the EU⁵
- Sally-Ann Wilson: Battered But Not Broken – Why We Need Public Media in the Digital Age⁶
- Marko Milosavljević: Between Scylla and Charybdis - Commercial and Public Media in Central and Eastern Europe Captured Between Market and Politics⁷
- Des Freedman: Media Power and Fake Democracies – An Activist Response⁸

In addition, the series has included two conferences, BEA 2017⁹ and IAMCR Post-Conference 2018.¹⁰

¹ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/public-media-speakers-series>.

² <https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2017-03-08/public-broadcasting-india-successes-failures-and-challenges>.

³ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2017-04-11/looking-practice-find-theory-public-service-media>.

⁴ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2017-05-05/public-service-media-age-hyper-pluralism>.

⁵ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/events/2018-01-16/between-market-and-human-rights-media-pluralism-and-democracy-under-threat-eu>.

⁶ <https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/72015-2/>.

⁷ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/events/2018-05-08/between-scylla-and-charybdis-commercial-and-public-media-central-and-eastern>

⁸ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/events/2018-06-20/media-power-and-fake-democracies-activist-response>.

⁹ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2017-05-26/so-different-yet-so-similar-opportunities-and-challenges-psbs-around-world>.

¹⁰ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2018-08-02/public-service-media-time-global-reordering-old-challenges-new-hope>.

This white paper is an extended reflection on the theme of the speaker series, focusing on a specific challenge for public service media: “fake news” and disinformation, or more broadly, the current “information disorder”. The paper draws from the outlined problems and threats, as well as opportunities, strategies, and tactics discussed in the above presentations when documenting how PSM institutions around Europe have tackled the challenge. The paper builds on a background report (April 2018) for the ongoing work by the Council of Europe.¹¹

The challenge of “fake news” and propaganda serves as a poignant case study to discuss strategies and tactics of PSM at a crossroads, in the current media ecosystem where public service broadcasting has lost its default prominent position and needs to re-justify its existence as public service media, one content and service provider among so many others. At the same time, information disorder is a particularly serious and widely debated example of the turbulent conditions of current media landscapes in Europe and elsewhere.

“Fake news” and related phenomena are also a real concern for audiences. According to the Reuters Institute’s 2018 *Digital News Report*, of 37 countries¹² over one half of the surveyed news audiences agree or strongly agree that they are concerned about what is real and fake on the internet. The *Eurobarometer* of March 2018 reveals that almost 40% of Europeans come across fake news every day or almost every day. Over 80% of the respondents perceive fake news as a problem in their country and as a problem for democracy in general.¹³

Recent multi-stakeholder working groups and policy statements, as well as academic and applied research¹⁴, coupled with prolific commentary by scholars, technologists, media policy-makers, as well as journalists and other media professionals,¹⁵ all illustrate the many dimensions of the question of

¹¹ The Council of Europe commissioned a thorough review of the issue and the concept of “fake news”, completed and published in November 2017, as well participated in numerous occasions in which the challenge has been addressed. It is also focusing on public service media, as initiated in “The importance of public service media in the context of fake news and propaganda” (AS/Cult (2018) 12; Motion for Resolution <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=23729&Lang=EN>.

¹² <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2018/overview-key-findings-2018/>.

¹³ <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/flash/surveyky/2183>.

¹⁴ For instance, in March 2017, the European Broadcasting Union completed its survey on 22 of its members on how concerned they were over the rise of fake news on social networks, what initiatives they engaged in or envisaged to tackle the issue, and whether they would engage in collaborations with other stakeholders.

Around the same time, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, produced a “Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and ‘Fake News’, Disinformation and Propaganda”.

The European Union has funded a disinformation review: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>. In March 2018 the European Commission multi-stakeholder High Level Expert Group (HLEG) finalized their report, “A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Disinformation”. See also the synopsis report: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/synopsis-report-public-consultation-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

The European Broadcasting Union, a participant in the HLEG, has published its own policy paper in April 2018:

<https://www.ebu.ch/publications/fake-news-and-the-information-disorder>

The Nordic Council of Ministers convened its own high-level expert group in September 2017 of a high-level group of key experts and launched in April 2018 a booklet to create a debate on how to counter fakes and build trust in words and facts: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1200348&dsid=687>.

¹⁵ A rich resource for research and activities by different stakeholders is the open access, crowdsourced repository “Misinformation Research – public bibliography”, initiated by Professor Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Director of Research, Reuters

disinformation. Due to the multi-dimensionality of the phenomena, a number of experts from academic institutions, media and civil society organizations has been consulted for this document:

- Rafael Díaz Arias, Professor, Studies Group Teledetodos
- Jo Bardoel, Professor, Media Policy Advisor, the Netherlands
- Marta Catalano, Digital Author, Public Media Alliance
- Helene Diyabanza Peterson, St. John's University (case study on Sweden; including interviews of SR, SVT, and UR representatives)
- Marius Dragomir, Director, Center for Media, Data and Society, Central European University
- Ivor Gaber, Professor, University of Sussex
- Rast'o Kužel, Executive Director, MEMOg8
- María Lamuedra Graván, Professor, Universidad de Sevilla
- Davor Marko, Researcher, Center for Social Research Analitika
- Giacomo Mazzone, Head of Institutional Relations and of Members Relations, UER-EBU
- Marko Milosavljevic, Professor, University of Ljubljana
- Gianpietro Mazzoleni, Professor, Università di Milano
- Kristian Porter, Researcher, Project Coordinator, Public Media Alliance
- Elina Ravantti, Head of the Journalism Academy, YLE
- Sari Virta, Visiting Researcher, University of Tallinn (Tampere University, University of Jonkoping)
- Julia Theilen, St. John's University (Germany)
- Sally-Ann Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Public Media Alliance

1. Introduction: Information Disorder and Public Service Media

As media content, “fake news” is nothing new.¹⁶ What makes today’s context particularly challenging is that old forms of propaganda, including editorial decisions, are now combined with human influencers and opinion makers, viral online sharing, and automated content creation of disinformation.¹⁷

There are several interconnected broad trends that can be said to contribute to the challenge. As societies, and individuals, we have witnessed a shift in our relationship to knowledge, that is, common ideas of objectivity and “truth” are not prominent in public debates. That is coupled with a cultural shift that is marked with distrust in elites and institutions, whether political, journalistic, or scientific. More broadly, cases of deep dissatisfaction in existing political actors, systems and structures are continuously emerging. Economic conditions of the media and communication markets are marked by fierce competition. Technological advances have fostered fragmentation among media publics, and created information habits based on algorithms, micro-segmenting, and viral content sharing usually among peers and closed groups.¹⁸

Consequently, the consensus from several recent policy reports,¹⁹ and from the experts interviewed for this background overview, is that “fake news” as a term should not be used. The related challenges are numerous, “news” should have a connotation of facts, and the term has been far too politicized to be useful in analytical and policy work. All these developments together have resulted in the “information disorder” of rampant disinformation, and, in an increasing trend of “information and media capture” (where the freedom of the press is subtly limited by political and commercial factors).²⁰

When discussing information disorder, public service broadcasting (PSB) and its multiplatform variant public service media (PSM) get mentioned, even if not emphasized, as a part of the toolkit for solutions. For instance, the *Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and ‘Fake News’ Disinformation and Propaganda* of March 2017, by Special Rapporteurs of several intergovernmental bodies;²¹ a report

¹⁶ See, e.g., <https://www.icfj.org/news/short-guide-history-fake-news-and-disinformation-new-icfj-learning-module>.

¹⁷ <http://aej-belgium.eu/fake-news-undermines-democratic-freedoms-aejs-road-map-right-responses/>.

¹⁸ McNair, B. (2018). *Fake News: Falsehood, Fabrication and Fantasy in Journalism*. London & New York: Routledge.

¹⁹ E.g., <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/synopsis-report-public-consultation-fake-news-and-online-disinformation> and https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/news/-/asset_publisher/thFVuWFiT2Lk/content/tackling-disinformation-in-the-global-media-environment-new-council-of-europe-report?_101_INSTANCE_thFVuWFiT2Lk_viewMode=view/&desktop=false.

²⁰ E.g., Schiffrin, A. (2017). Introduction to Special Issue on media capture. *Journalism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917725167>.

²¹ The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information; with the assistance of the non-governmental organizations ARTICLE 19 and the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD); <https://www.osce.org/fom/302796?download=true>.

commissioned by the Council of Europe;²² and a recent report²³ by the European Commission multi-stakeholder *High Level Expert Group* (HLEG)²⁴ all recognize the need for robust and diverse media ecosystems and acknowledge the role of public service broadcasting / public service media in that regard. The Joint Declaration notes that independent and resourced public service media with a clear public mandate for high quality journalism is essential for freedom of expression.

In addition, the aforementioned report commissioned by the Council of Europe on research and policy approaches to information disorder recommends, among other strategies and tactics, support for public service media organisations and local news outlets, and in general, supporting quality journalism initiatives at the local, regional and national level needs to be a priority.²⁵ And a report by the European Commission, titled *A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation*, posits that the general objectives of the EU are to increase the long-term resilience of EU citizens, communities, news organisations, Member States and the EU as a whole; as well as respond to various challenges of disinformation always with up-to-date and appropriate measures. One dimension of this is support for demonstrably independent public service media who can help produce quality information, counter disinformation, and increase media and information literacy.

Finally, the *Introductory Memorandum* for the ongoing (August 2018) efforts by the Council of Europe to examine and support the role of public service media highlights the issue:²⁶

Editorial and institutional independence remains the essential condition for public service media to effectively fulfil their mission. Without truly independent public service media, there is a risk of having State-owned media which would only broadcast information favourable to the government. Moreover, there are well-known cases where State-directed media have been turned into propaganda tools and misused to spread disinformation and fake news or incite xenophobic hatred against minorities and vulnerable groups.

Similarly, the Memorandum points out the areas for good practice and potential collaboration for public service media:

1. Attracting audience through quality and innovative communication practices;
2. Developing specialised/targeted programmes containing analysis and comments regarding fake news and propaganda (counter discourse);

²² https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/news/-/asset_publisher/thFVuWFiT2Lk/content/tackling-disinformation-in-the-global-media-environment-new-council-of-europe-report?_101_INSTANCE_thFVuWFiT2Lk_viewMode=view&desktop=false.

²³ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/experts-appointed-high-level-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

²⁵ https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/news/-/asset_publisher/thFVuWFiT2Lk/content/tackling-disinformation-in-the-global-media-environment-new-council-of-europe-report?_101_INSTANCE_thFVuWFiT2Lk_viewMode=view&desktop=false.

²⁶ By Mr. Petri Honkonen; re: Motion for a resolution Doc. 14312

“The importance of public service broadcasting in the context of fake news, agitation and propaganda”
<http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?FileID=23729&Lang=EN>.

3. Stimulating critical thinking among audiences; and
4. Developing targeted online communication with young people.

This white paper takes its cue from the above categories of strategies and tactics that public service media may employ in combating information disorder. The aim is to highlight some core activities and novel “best practices” by European PSM organizations in providing quality content and countering different forms of disinformation by informing and educating audiences. It is obvious that “fake news” is not only a European phenomenon,²⁷ and that solutions to related challenges are not only envisioned among European public service organizations.²⁸ It is also clear that public service media in different European countries differs greatly, as do manifestations and the scope of information disorder.²⁹ At the same time, the good practices discussed in this paper, if not always transferable to different contexts, may at least illustrate the variety of tools PSM organizations are using. Also, Europe showcases the longest traditions, strongest transnational policy and advocacy networks, and arguably most applied and academic research to support the existence and development of public service media, so the “leadership” for PSM organizations in combating information disorder could be expected to come from there.

First, this white paper seeks to define and operationalize the core elements of the current phenomena of “fake news” and the institutional contexts of public service (Section 1). It then highlights a variety of examples, based on the above types of activities, on the ways in which public service media can act as an antidote to disinformation (Section 2). Finally, the paper reflects on some broader challenges of PSM and the information disorder in the European, and global media ecosystems (Section 3), including some key takeaways of the lecture series *Public Media Institutions at a Crossroads: Visions, Strategies, Tactics*, as they apply in this case study of PSM and information disorder.

1.1. Definitions: Dimensions of Information Disorder

“Fake news” may be a too narrow or too value-laden term; in turn, the more neutral and comprehensive concept of information disorder requires unpacking. For the purpose of recognizing the complexity of the issue, this paper will use the term *disinformation* when referring to content, and *information disorder*, when addressing the media ecosystem and context more broadly. The below table highlights recent thinking around the various dimensions of the complex phenomenon, highlighting the different lenses that can be used to analyze and understand it:

²⁷ See, e.g., Fighting fake news: What tools do we need to combat misinformation in SA? Ideas for fake news intervention areas for journalists <https://medium.com/jamlab/fighting-fake-news-what-tools-do-we-need-to-combat-misinformation-in-sa-71b49137b761>; Fighting Misinformation (Fake News) Around the World <https://glean.info/fighting-misinformation-fake-news-around-the-world/>; Information Disorder in Asia: Overview of Misinformation Ecosystem in India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan <https://poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=50600101306502302609509308306500312302502106805507008202508608702607111609001600003105712211022009036109119004086000004080067017084012076061120012001069124092067091009075044009085079108069097029071093099069127074094097093030031005065107118095085000007&EXT=pdf> .

²⁸ A very similar approach to the one proposed in the Council of Europe work on PSM and information disorder is being discussed in Canada, see: <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/february-2017/the-public-broadcasters-role-in-the-fake-news-era/>.

²⁹ E.g., “Fake News” and Disinformation in Eastern Europe <https://en.ejo.ch/specialist-journalism/fake-news-and-disinformation-in-eastern-europe>.

Key dimension	Components
<i>Intention/actors</i>	<p>Facebook:³⁰</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information (or Influence) Operations. Actions taken by governments or organized non-state actors to distort domestic or foreign political sentiment, most frequently to achieve a strategic and/or geopolitical outcome. These operations can use a combination of methods. 2. False News. News articles that purport to be factual, but contain intentional misstatements of fact to arouse passions, attract viewership, or deceive. 3. False Amplifiers. Coordinated activity by inauthentic accounts that has the intent of manipulating political discussion. <p>By Wardle:³¹</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Satire/parody (potential to fool). 2. False connection (e.g., headlines do not match content). 3. Misleading content (not entirely false, but misleading; to frame an issue or an individual). 4. False context (genuine content, false context). 5. Imposter content (impersonation of real sources). 6. Manipulated content (e.g., manipulated images; to deceive). 7. Fabricated content (completely false, to harm).
<i>Content categories</i>	<p>LSE Policy Brief, D. Tambini:³²</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alleged foreign interference in domestic elections through fake news. 2. Ad-driven invention – new ad models open new opportunities for people to make money through the peddling of fake news (categories 1. and 2. may overlap). 3. Parody and satire. 4. Bad journalism. 5. News that is ideologically opposed. 6. News that challenges orthodox authority.

³⁰ As quoted in, Derakhshan, H. & Wardle, C. Information Disorder: Definitions. In: <https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-Disinformation-Ecosystem-20180207-v2.pdf?x72166>

³¹ <https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-Disinformation-Ecosystem-20180207-v2.pdf?x72166>

³² http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/73015/1/LSE%20MPP%20Policy%20Brief%202020%20-%20Fake%20news_final.pdf.

<p><i>Disinformation</i></p>	<p>EU HLEG:³³</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not actually or completely “fake” but fabricated information blended with facts, and practices that go well beyond anything resembling “news”. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Automated accounts networks of fake followers. b. Fabricated or manipulated videos. c. Targeted advertising. d. Organized trolling. e. Visual memes, etc. 2. An array of digital behaviour that is more about circulation of disinformation than about production of disinformation. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Posting. b. Commenting. c. Sharing. d. Tweeting and retweeting, etc. 3. Stakeholders. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. State or non- state political actors. b. For-profit actors. c. Citizens individually or in groups. d. Infrastructures of circulation and amplification. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. News media. ii. Platforms and underlying networks. iii. Protocols and algorithms.
<p><i>“Comprehensive Framework” of “information disorder”</i></p>	<p>By Derakhshan & Wardle:³⁴</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Types of information disorder. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Mis-information: unintentional (=false content). b. Mal-information: deliberate for personal or corporate gain; misuse of private information and deliberate change of context (=intent to harm). c. Dis-information: false, manipulated content and context, broader social use, e.g., conspiracy theories (=false content and intent to harm). 2. Phases of information disorder. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Creation – the core message. b. Production – the message is turned into a media product. c. Distribution – the message is distributed and re-distributed by sharing. 3. Elements <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Agents – who created the message? why? b. Message – what was the content? c. Interpretation – how was it interpreted?

³³ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

*Additional categories:
journalism*

By Association of European Journalists (AEJ):³⁵

1. Intentional disinformation aimed at changing the geopolitical reality.
2. So-called ‘active measures’ of political subversion or reputational damage by state agents or surrogates, and public allegations without substance.
3. Smear campaigns, often on a massive scale, against critical voices and watchdog forms of investigative journalism.

1.2. Definitions and Practices of PSM: From Principles to Variations

In the European context, in particular, public service broadcasting and its variant public service media are traditionally central to the media landscape in many societies. The normative characteristics assigned to PSB and PSM by key stakeholders seem quite uniform: The European Broadcasting Union (EBU),³⁶ the global advocacy organization for public media, the Public Media Alliance (PMA), as well as the Council of Europe³⁷ and UNESCO³⁸ all note the following:

1. Public service broadcasting and public service media refer to broadcasting and related services made, financed and controlled by the public, for the public. They are often established by law but are nonpartisan, independent and run for the benefit of society as a whole.
2. They are neither commercial nor state-owned, free from political interference and pressure from commercial forces.
3. Their output is designed to inform, educate, and entertain all audiences.
4. They have universality in terms of content and access.
5. They maintain accuracy and high standards of journalism; excellence in broadcasting.
6. They enhance social, political and cultural citizenship and promote diversity as well as social cohesion, and ultimately, support an informed democracy.
7. In addition, the EBU lists as one of its core PSM values innovation, including creativity in terms of formats and technologies, as well as connectivity with audiences.³⁹

³⁴ https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/news/-/asset_publisher/thFVuWFiT2Lk/content/tackling-disinformation-in-the-global-media-environment-new-council-of-europe-report?_101_INSTANCE_thFVuWFiT2Lk_viewMode=view/&desktop=false.

³⁵ <http://aej-belgium.eu/fake-news-undermines-democratic-freedoms-aejs-road-map-right-responses/>.

³⁶ https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Empowering-Society_EN.pdf.

³⁷ <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17177&lang=en>.

³⁸ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/media-development/public-service-broadcasting/>;
<https://www.ebu.ch/about/public-service-media>.

³⁹ https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Empowering-Society_EN.pdf.

In reality, PSB/PSM organizations in Europe – in terms of their role in their respective societies – are enormously varied in terms of institutional arrangements, reach, and budgets.⁴⁰ PSB/PSM are national projects and a recent study highlights this: For instance, in Switzerland, Germany and the United Kingdom, public media services dominate the audio-visual market. As a counter example, in Portugal and Italy, strong competition has resulted in a minor market share for both public television and public radio.⁴¹

Institutional configurations in Europe range from the globally present multi-channel, multi-platform, multi-project BBC – often considered as the benchmark model for public service broadcasting – to the multiple independent organizations, defined by political-religious history, that make up the public broadcasting system in the Netherlands, to the (relatively) newly established public broadcasters in the Balkans that have not each necessarily shed the challenges of their predecessors, state media.⁴² The trend of growing preference in taxpayer-generated funding by numerous governments has given governments more budgetary influence that, in many cases in Europe and beyond, can and has led to more state-controlled content or weakened possibilities to counter challenges such as disinformation and propaganda.⁴³ Some evidence seems to point to the fact that public service media *de jure* may also be used to spread content bordering disinformation.⁴⁴

Another challenge is the relationship between public service broadcasting and the multi-platform public service media. For instance, the Council of Europe has endorsed a broad view of PSM in relation to both programming and platforms. It has concluded that PSBs should be able to diversify their services through on-demand and Internet-based services, and has called for PSM to respond positively to audience expectations of enhanced choice and control stemming from digital developments. The EU has similarly accepted a broad view of PSM.⁴⁵ Yet, already during the early stages of digitalization different European countries responded in a variety of ways,⁴⁶ and a global review of state-administered and public service broadcasters showcases a broad range of different developments all around the world.⁴⁷ Still today, due to commercial pressures in media markets, even in established public service media countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden, PSM organizations are facing

⁴⁰ E.g., <https://en.ejo.ch/media-economics/europes-public-service-media-no-common-strategy>.

⁴¹ <https://en.ejo.ch/media-economics/accountable-and-or-responsible-public-service-media-in-europe>.

⁴² See, e.g., Psychogiopoulou, E., Anagnostou, D., Craufurd Smith, R., & Stolte, Y. (2017). Mediadem| The Freedom and Independence of Public Service Media in Europe: International Standards and Their Domestic Implementation. *International Journal Of Communication*, 11, 20. <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5965/2017>; as well as the recent thorough reviews of the Balkan situation by the Analitika Center for Social Research; <http://www.analitika.ba/publications>. Also, see the upcoming report by MEMO98 on trends related to “fake news” in ten Central and Eastern European countries.

⁴³ See, e.g., <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/public-media-loss-of-journalistic-integrity-by-marius-dragomir-2018-03> and <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-denmark-media/denmark-to-scrap-mandatory-public-service-broadcasting-fee-idUSKCN1HC1TR>.

⁴⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/13/hungary-journalists-state-tv-network-migrants-viktor-orban-government>.

⁴⁵ Psychogiopoulou, E., Anagnostou, D., Craufurd Smith, R., & Stolte, Y. (2017). Mediadem| The Freedom and Independence of Public Service Media in Europe: International Standards and Their Domestic Implementation. *International Journal Of Communication*, 11, 20. <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5965/2017>.

⁴⁶ Aslama, M. and Syvertsen, T. (2007). Public Service Broadcasting and New Technologies: Marginalization or Remonopolization?, in E. de Bens (ed.) *Media Between Culture and Commerce*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

⁴⁷ Tambini, D. Public Service Media| Five Theses on Public Media and Digitization: From a 56-Country Study. *International Journal of Communication*, 9,25. <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/2795/1370>.

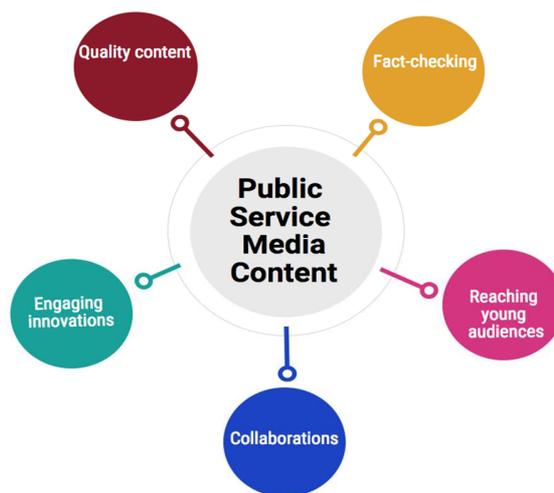
criticism from commercial competitors for allegedly creating market distortion, especially in the digital news marketplace.⁴⁸

In sum, European institutional guidelines for PSM are broad and European realizations of public service media are varied, in terms of the reach, resources as well as political and commercial pressures, and the extent of digital content and services. In particular, challenges posed by political interests seem to be on the rise.

⁴⁸ https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_o.pdf;
<http://mediapowermonitor.com/content/danish-public-media-loved-people-hated-politicians-o>.

2. Public Service Media and Information Disorder: Strategies and Tactics

The challenges of information disorder have been widely noted and addressed by news organizations, and public service media organizations broadcasters in particular. The aftermath of the UK Brexit vote, the US presidential elections of 2016, and the related questions of interferences and (mis)use of data have kept newsrooms reporting of the phenomena, and of European cases and policy responses. Besides producing related news reports, public service media organizations have countered disinformation and related phenomena in several ways. According to the 2017 survey of 21 members of the European Broadcasting Union, all participants considered tackling “fake news” a high or medium priority; over half of them were planning activities, and half of them were taking part in a global or local fact-checking initiative partnership or were considering joining one. Over half of the organizations were in favour of EBU launching a fact-checking initiative of some sort.⁴⁹ This section highlights fact-checking but also other activities countering disinformation, ranging from quality content to reaching young audiences via a variety of ways and platforms:



2.1. Quality and Innovation

Quality Programming

Quality news and journalism is a brand of many PSM organizations and an often mentioned antidote to information disorder. The European Broadcasting Union has addressed this with its *Vision 2020* that was created in 2014.⁵⁰ The Vision focuses on the changes that digital is bringing in various fields of the audio-visual and broadcasting industry: from distribution to fruition, from production to consumption,

⁴⁹ ARD, BBC, BR, CT, Channel 4, DR, DW, France Televisions, HRT, MTVA, NOS, NRK, ORF, RAI, RTP, RTS, SRF, TF1, VRT, YLE, ZDF + ERNO.

⁵⁰ https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Vision2020-Full_report_EN.pdf.

with the shift of paradigm from linear habits to on demand. Based on this global picture, and on further research on the challenges of digitalization and journalism,⁵¹ the EBU has defined “quality journalism” as one of the strategic 2017/2018 priorities. An initiative led by the EBU Media Department has been launched in order to reposition PSM news as the most trusted news source, and to bring news in various formats and to all audiences.⁵²

Many PSM organizations follow this strategy. A recent multi-stakeholder conference *Public Service Media today and tomorrow, and how they will situation of RTV Slovenia*, organized by the public broadcaster, highlighted the special relevance of public service media in smaller nations: PSM is one of the few stable media institutions that should fight manipulation and offer citizens credible information. The newly established (2018) *Journalism in akademia* (Journalism academy) of the Finnish Yle is specifically focused on quality journalism and its potential in countering information disorder. One of its current main activities is, together with different Yle units, to go through a major strategic process of defining quality principles: The characteristics of Yle journalism as well as quality criteria specific to different units.

In addition, other forms of content can foster quality and engagement. The “Heute show” by German ZDF, an online daily news satire, broadcast on TV weekly, engages its audiences on Instagram.⁵³ Also in “younger” public broadcasting contexts, editorial integrity is the key. The political talk show *Nedeljom u 2* is a highly popular program by the Croatian public broadcaster as it manages to stay independent from political pressures. Serbia launched its experimental digital channel RTS Digital (now renamed in RTS 3) reporting on culture and arts already in 2009. While the channel was not popular, it was important for the internal development of RTS: it provided a space in the air for the missing topics, such as culture and high arts. An experiment of added value through audience engagement was featured in the Swiss “Hallo SRF!” audience week in October 2017, during which 50 ordinary citizens were invited to partake in programme production.⁵⁴

Platforms, Apps, and Other Tech Solutions

Versioning for online and mobile presence is another key part of innovation; an evident solution while not without some challenges. A recent (2018) study of Yle (Finland), France Télévisions and Radio France (France), ARD and ZDF (Germany), Rai (Italy), Polskie Radio (Poland), and the BBC (United Kingdom) indicates that public service media organizations observe some tensions between their strategic priorities, remit, and organisational imperatives – and those of commercial platform companies.⁵⁵ This is understandable and especially challenging in the situation where a great deal of blame and responsibility of information disorder is directed to platforms.⁵⁶ But PSM organizations also

⁵¹ https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Perfect-Storm_EN.pdf.

⁵² <https://www.ebu.ch/digital-media/fake-news>.

⁵³ <https://www.zdf.de/comedy/heute-show>.

⁵⁴ <http://www.srf.ch/medien/chronik?v=chronik&c=2017&l=123&pID=97984>.

⁵⁵ https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-03/sehl_et_al_1803_FINAL_o.pdf.

⁵⁶ This is the case with all policy / position briefs cited in this paper.

see social media as an important opportunity for increasing their reach, especially amongst young people and other hard-to-reach audiences.⁵⁷

A typical response to engagement is to include social and mobile media services to news broadcasts. For instance, in Germany, the main newscast *Tagesschau* by ARD has its own app.⁵⁸ The program is also using Instagram for innovative and high quality video communication on news stories.⁵⁹ And, the App summarizes the news in 100 seconds.⁶⁰ In addition, “#kurzerklärt” (#explainedbriefly) is video series on ARD Tagesschau website explaining background information on complex topics in a compact manner.⁶¹ Another example is the Croatian app HRTi for all HRT’s (public broadcaster) production. Also, RTK from Kosovo has developed a popular web page (rtklive.com), that many Albanians living outside the Kosovo are following as a primary source of information.

2.2. Critical Thinking and Literacy

There are a multitude of examples of public service media organizations reporting, and educating, their viewers about the dimensions of information disorder. An example from Spain (RTVE) is the documentary *Guerra a la Mentira*⁶² that features the use of the technology to combat war propaganda. It also has an interactive version on the RTVE Lab.⁶³ Deutsche Welle provides a special webpage on “fake news”, addressing the issue extensively.⁶⁴ At Yle, a young reporter created a crowdsourced series on Russian online trolling activities in Finland.⁶⁵

Fact-checking initiatives both verify information and foster awareness. The BBC *Reality Check* is a permanent team to debunk deliberately misleading and false stories masquerading as real news. The plans also include establishing an expertise network drawing on staff across the BBC, creating an “intelligence unit” within the World Service, and putting more resources into data journalism. German public service broadcasting units host numerous initiatives. BR has a team called *BR Verifikation*. #ZDFcheck17 is a cross-media fact-checking initiative combating fake news on social media.⁶⁶ ARD’s *Faktenfinder* is a fact-checking site hosted by ARD, providing specialized content informing about various forms of disinformation, discussing how to handle them, and offering tutorials for how to recognize them.⁶⁷ The example below features a dispute between the Austrian political party FPÖ and ORF, the Austrian public broadcaster. The controversy started when the leader of the party satirically labeled ORF as the disseminator of lies and “fake news” on his Facebook status update.⁶⁸

⁵⁷ https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-03/sehl_et_al_1803_FINAL_o.pdf.

⁵⁸ <https://www.tagesschau.de/app/>.

⁵⁹ <https://www.instagram.com/tagesschau/>.

⁶⁰ <http://www.tagesschau.de/100sekunden/index.html>.

⁶¹ <http://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/kurzerklaert/index.html>.

⁶² <http://www.rtve.es/television/en-portada/guerra-mentira/>.

⁶³ <http://lab.rtve.es/webdocs/guerra-mentira/es/>.

⁶⁴ <http://www.dw.com/de/themen/fake-news-krise-der-fakten-krieg-der-meinungen/s-36840487>.

⁶⁵ <http://kioski.yle.fi/omat/my-year-as-a-pro-russia-troll-magnet>.

⁶⁶ <https://presseportal.zdf.de/pressemitteilung/mitteilung/zdf-startet-crossmedialen-zdfcheck17-zur-bundestagswahl/>.

⁶⁷ <http://faktenfinder.tagesschau.de/index.html>.

⁶⁸ <https://faktenfinder.tagesschau.de/ausland/fpoe-orf-strache-101.html>.



2.3. Online: For and With Young People

Understanding Media

Media literacy and media education for young people is a staple of many public service broadcasters. Some broadcasters, such as Belgium’s RTBF, have a special policy on media literacy: The objective of their official strategy, in place since 2014, is to help audiences access any kind of platform, use it, and be able to analyse and sort all kinds of information they get through the press, radio, television, movies, Internet and social media. The strategy has given birth to RTBF Inside and RTBF Lab. RTBF Inside offers the public different thematic tracks that highlight the stages of the production of radio, TV and web content, the known and less well-known professions in the audio-visual sector.⁶⁹ RTBF Lab offers experimental activities around the production of news, radio, TV and web.⁷⁰ In terms of understanding the current information disorder, some PSM organizations have responded with toolkits. For instance, France Télévisions Education has a collection of videos on the phenomenon⁷¹ and the Swiss SRF My School has published an educational teaching module specifically on “fake news”.⁷²

Some PSM organizations focus on the nature of quality journalism, fact-finding, and trust, with a comprehensive approach to media and information literacy: The BBC has offered a thousand schools mentoring in person, online, or at group events from BBC journalists. All schools have free access to online materials including classroom activities, video tutorials, and an interactive game called *BBC iReporter*. The game gives the player the chance to take on the role of a journalist in the BBC newsroom and addresses the issues around quality reporting and disinformation.⁷³ In addition, a *Reality Check*

⁶⁹ https://www.rtbef.be/auvio/emissions/detail_rtbef-inside?id=2291.

⁷⁰ https://www.rtbef.be/entreprise/article_rtbef-lab?id=8231120.

⁷¹ <https://education.francetv.fr/tag/fake-news>.

⁷² <https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/myschool/fake-news-2>.

⁷³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/en/articles/art20180305143328629>.

Roadshow toured the country over the spring of 2018 and local schools were able to nominate their own students to attend one of a dozen regional events.⁷⁴

The *Uutisluokka* (News Classroom) project in Finland allows students to make their own news with Yle's professionals. The mentors are Yle's journalists and they help students to come up with ideas for news stories, assist students with the production of their own news, and teach principles of good journalism. The project also conducts video workshops at schools.⁷⁵

Content That Matters, via Multi-Platform Delivery

Online, and especially mobile social presence seems to be the key for reaching younger audiences – a challenge for many public service media organizations.⁷⁶ For instance, *Yle Kioski*, the Finnish public broadcaster's content hub for younger audiences, offers comprehensive social media content on its website, on Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, as well as streaming via Yle's platform Areena.

German public broadcasters are creating an especially wide variety of content for young audiences. The digital Deutschlandfunk Nova, directed at young audiences, expanded its editorial offerings with a new late-night program: *Ab 21* (21+). This program seeks to make more creative space for topics that interest young target audiences, but with content that is created and presented with the quality standards of Deutschlandradio.⁷⁷ Also, Deutschlandfunk Nova addressed political news literacy and created an unconventional interview series *Ich würde nie* (I would never) during the German elections in 2017, that targeted young voters, addressing political topics that are particularly relevant within this age group.⁷⁸ *Funk* is a relatively new German digital video content platform by ARD and ZDF. The project publishes both entertaining and informative, critical videos on over 60 different channels. The channels can be watched on Youtube, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, but they are all available together on funk.net, the home platform. One of the main purposes of Funk is to not only provide content but also drive audience participation: Viewers are invited to discuss content and develop ideas; to raise criticism or questions.⁷⁹ Finally, DAS DING Radio station, operated by SWR, focuses on local news and young audiences aiming to increase participation by commenting or voting via Whatsapp on program aspects.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/en/articles/RNMAILINGLIST>.

⁷⁵ <https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/uutisluokka/>.

⁷⁶ E.g., van Dijk, J, & Poell, T. (2015). Making Public Television Social? Public Service Broadcasting and the Challenges of Social Media. *Television & New Media*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476414527136>.

⁷⁷ http://www.deutschlandradio.de/ab-21-deutschlandfunk-nova-sendet-ab-1-maerz-neues.2174.de.html?dram:article_id=411725.

⁷⁸ <https://www.deutschlandfunknova.de/serien/ich-wuerde-nie-1>.

⁷⁹ <https://www.funk.net/>.

⁸⁰ <https://www.dasding.de/>.

Attracting Youth with Fiction

Public service media has some successes in creating original content for young audiences. Radio-television of Vojvodina, from northern Serbian province, has produced a satirical show *Državni posao* (State job), which is very popular especially on social media, and its YouTube channel has more subscribers than any other single public broadcaster in the region. In 2016, Yle collaborated with civil society organizations working on mental health and created *#sekasin* (*#messedup*)⁸¹ drama series for young people. It became a success, greatly due to the related service: a live chat with mental health professionals that generated significant audience participation.

Profiler SKAM



Sana Bakkoush f. 24. desember 1999
Gikk på: Uranienborg skole, Oslo

 @therealsanabakkoush

 facebook.com/sana.bakkoush



Noora Sætre f. 06. april 1999
Gikk på: Torrejon High school, Madrid

 @loglady99

 facebook.com/noora.saetre

The web series *Skam* (Shame, 2015-2017) by NRK of Norway may be the most well-known and successful current program by a public service broadcaster for young audiences. It follows a group of friends attending the Hartvig Nissen School in the capital city of Oslo. Each season corresponds to one school semester of about 12 weeks and focuses on a different character in the group, following their particular struggles with peer pressure, sexual abuse, mental illness, homosexuality, and religion. Each (fictional) character has a social media account that facilitates further conversation and dialogue between the episodes. A major international following emerged, including fan-run YouTube and

Twitter accounts.⁸² The series, “built for social”, has been bought for an English-language remake on Facebook Watch and is now being broadcast from Austin, Texas, for the world.⁸³

2.4. Collaborations

Collaborations with other news providers and/or well as independent fact-checkers are a strategy for several public broadcasters. In Austria, ORF has joined efforts in awareness-raising with a variety of partners through the Austrian Press Agency (APA), of which it and most daily newspapers are shareholders.⁸⁴ Some public broadcasting companies, such as Germany’s BR and Italy’s RAI, use the browser extension *FactFox*, a product that supports management of and replying to user comments.

⁸¹ <https://yle.fi/aihe/sekasin>.

⁸² <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/06/the-norwegian-teen-drama-series-loved-around-the-world/532008/>.

⁸³ See: <http://deadline.com/2017/10/facebook-watch-skam-shame-remake-simon-fuller-mipcom-1202190370/> and <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/06/18/skam-the-radical-teen-drama-that-unfolds-one-post-at-a-time>.

⁸⁴ <http://orf.at/stories/2386889/2386925/>.

BR uses the tool to identify false information.⁸⁵ Some RAI news programs host regular external fact-checking organizations to show investigations and data on given facts.⁸⁶

In Norway, Faktisk.no is an independent fact-checking organization, owned by the media companies VG, Dagbladet, TV 2, and public broadcaster NRK.⁸⁷ Following this model, Swedish Television (SVT) and Swedish Radio (SR), as well as the two largest daily newspapers Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet, have started a project to collaborate on fact-checking methods and news spreading during the electoral movement. The project is expected to last until December 2018. The stakeholders have already conducted a joint training programme for journalists. The participants collaborate on the fact-checking method that is based on the guidelines from the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN).

Perhaps the most well-known multi-stakeholder collaboration is First Draft, hosted at Harvard University. The project has over 40 members including commercial as well as public service media around the world (e.g., ADF, BBC, France Télévisions, ZDF, Deutsche Welle, as well as Eurovision), not-for-profit journalism organizations such as Global Voices and ProPublica, and platforms from Facebook to Twitter.⁸⁸ In addition to its collaborative fact-checking efforts (most notably around the French elections, with a project called *CrossCheck*), and its contributions to analyses of the complex phenomena around information disorder (including the aforementioned report for research and policy, commissioned by the Council of Europe), its latest contribution is a free online course for journalists and the general public on identifying misinformation.⁸⁹

The EBU efforts in the realm of quality programming, innovation, and media literacy⁹⁰ are, by nature of the organization, collaborations. They range from its core activities such as the Eurovision News Exchange,⁹¹ to business innovation including big data,⁹² to journalism training and toolkits, to workshops and other events, to research, and to specific policy advocacy for support of quality media to counter disinformation.⁹³ Recent projects include innovative collaborative fact-checking and a collaborative governance initiative. In 2017, the EBU created a co-operative system of verification of user generated contents that works in a networked way with various members' newsrooms but also with other quality news partners, decentralising fact-checking process.⁹⁴ A new collaborative initiative to combat disinformation online is the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI), launched in April by the European Broadcasting Union, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Agence France Presse (AFP), and the Global Editors Network (GEN). The JTI is designed to promote journalism by adherence to an agreed set of trust and transparency standards to be developed and implemented. This will happen by means of the so-called Workshop Agreement of the European Centre of Standardization (CEN), which was opened in April 2018, for the participation of media outlets, professional associations and unions, self-

⁸⁵ <https://factfox-staging.herokuapp.com/>.

⁸⁶ <https://pagellapolitica.it/progetto/index>, also https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/national/from-rai-fact-checking-politicians/2017/07/13/038a4a6a-67f4-11e7-94ab-5b1f0ff459df_video.html?utm_term=.ae10ce3ce8a0.

⁸⁷ <https://www.faktisk.no/>.

⁸⁸ <https://de.firstdraftnews.org/partners-network/>.

⁸⁹ <https://firstdraftnews.org/free-online-course-on-identifying-misinformation/>.

⁹⁰ The EBU coordinates the efforts of its members in digital and media literacy initiatives:

<https://www.ebu.ch/fr/contents/news/2012/03/empowering-citizenship-through-m.html>.

⁹¹ <https://www.ebu.ch/news-exchange>.

⁹² <https://www.ebu.ch/events/2018/02/big-data-conference-2018>.

⁹³ <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2018/03/ebu-urges-european-policy-makers-to-improve-conditions-for-quality-media-to-fight-fake-news-and-disinformation>.

⁹⁴ <https://www.ebu.ch/social-newswire-extending-your-newsrooms-reach>.

regulatory entities like press councils and regulatory bodies, as well as digital platforms, advertisers and consumer interest representatives.⁹⁵ In late April 2018, the EBU published its own *Position Paper: 'Fake News' and the Information Disorder*, advocating for a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to the phenomenon.⁹⁶

2.5. Case Study: Sweden

A case study of a situation where public service media is a significant, well-funded player in the media ecosystem, trusted by audiences, as well as technologically forward-looking, provides a comprehensive outlook on different strategies and tactics for public service media to combat disinformation and systemic information disorder. Sweden serves a case par excellence: The country, with a population of approximately 10 million, is a mature public service media market that hosts three public service media companies: Sveriges Radio AB (SR), Sveriges Television AB (SVT) and Sveriges Utbildningsradio AB (UR; educational broadcaster broadcasting on SR and SVT). In terms of budget, public service is relatively well-resourced. For example, in 2016 the budget of SVT was 345 million euros.⁹⁷ SVT also gained the largest TV audience share (36%)⁹⁸, and the same year SR channels amounted to approximately three quarters of the radio market.⁹⁹ According to the national Media Barometer of 2018, SVT and SR are on the top of the rankings regarding trust in media outlets.¹⁰⁰

SWEDEN – SVT, SR, UR

By: Helene Diyabanza Peterson

Interviewed for the case study:

- Therese Amneus, journalist, TV- and radio producer, UR
- Peter Larsson, Head of Analysis Unit, SR
- Fredrik Laurin, journalist, SVT, member of the new team (March 2018) for collaboration on fake news
- Kristian Lindquist, Head of Digital, news, SVT
- Victoria Nordansjö, communications department, SVT
- Olle Zachrisson, Head of News and Current Affairs Department, SR.

Other contacts:

- Beatrice Janzon, Foreign News Reporter, SR
- Jack Werner, freelance journalist at SR and co-founder of the fact-checking initiative *Viralgranskaren*; lecturer and writer on fact-checking and critical thinking on social media.

⁹⁵ <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2018/04/ebu-partners-with-rsf-on-journalism-trust-initiative-to-combat-disinformation>.

⁹⁶ https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/Position%20papers/EBU-Position-EN-Fake_News_Disinformation-18.04.2018.pdf.

⁹⁷ https://vipatv.svt.se/download/18.18efb8dc15a60e54b23babce/1488363425528/170301_PSR+2017+webb.pdf.

⁹⁸ http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/medieforskning-statistik/5532_tvfamiljes_2016_graph.pdf.

⁹⁹

https://www.kantarsifo.se/sites/default/files/reports/documents/kantar_sifo_radiolyssnandet_arsrapport_2016_nationell_radio.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.svt.se/omoss/post/svt-kommenterar-fortroendebarmetern-2018/>.

Attracting audience through quality and innovative practices

The Swedish public media organizations are early adopters of technological innovations, Sweden being one of the first countries to switch from analog to digital television in 2007. According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017, SVT and SR rank in the first, and third, place respectively in terms of the weekly use of news.¹⁰¹ They cover both regional and national news and utilize websites and apps as well as non-proprietary platforms in social media, for the widest possible access to their content, but are repeatedly criticised for doing this by members of the Swedish Media Publishers' Association.

In addition to a number of apps, one of the current innovative solutions is Swedish Radio's project *NXG - Next Generation Radio House*. NXG is a smart remote control that transports audio in standard networks by using only a smartphone or a tablet. The goal for SR is to get closer to its audience by leaving the radio studio and broadcast from where the action is, and by using this powerful remote control protocol, NXG allows a complete radio show to be made from anywhere with a sufficient network connection. The NXG remote production solution won The EBU Technology & Innovation Award in 2017.¹⁰²

With the unit *Publikdialog* (Public Dialogue), SVT is working towards a new and more innovative direction, going from mails and emails to connecting and interacting via social media in a way to keep up with the audience of today's demands and expectations. Another example of innovative practices is the *DUO* app, a joint venture of different SVT programs to enhance interactivity: The viewers can play and compete via the app.

Critical outlooks

The term "fake news" is not a preferred term for Swedish PSM organizations, due to its political connotations. An array of radio programming showcases the variety of approaches to critically examine the phenomenon:

Vetandets värld (Knowledge world) is a program about science, research and new technology. It has looked into the issue of filter bubbles. *Medierna* (the Media) is a media criticism and literacy programme that already in 2014 reported on the epidemic of "fake news". Culture news on SR has broadcast several programmes addressing the issue. Two journalists, freelancer Jack Werner, co-founder of the fact-checking initiative *Viralgranskaren* and and foreign news reporter Beatrice Janzon, have explored the phenomena of today's disinformation, e.g., in stories such as "Source criticism – more important than ever" and "To fight fake news and trolls". One topic has been the disinformation targeting Sweden, especially the relating to the issue of migration. The local radio channel P4 investigated fake news, filter bubbles and disinformation. UR also has programs directed to a more broader audience like the series *UR Samtiden – Konsten att hantera en föränderlig framtid* (UR Contemporary – the art of dealing with a changing future) with programs like *Alternativa fakta - om kunskapen och dess fiender* (Alternative facts - about the knowledge and its enemies).

Targeted online communication with young people

¹⁰¹ https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202017%20web_o.pdf.

¹⁰² <https://tech.ebu.ch/news/2017/06/sveriges-radios-nxg-remote-production-solution-wins-technology-innovation-award>.

The educational broadcaster UR has made significant efforts for schools in critical thinking and learning how to reveal and handle fake news and disinformation. The programs also teach about reporting and storytelling. In the series *Källkritik* (Source criticism), each program is directed to the teachers and is followed by student material and tutorial. *Är det sant?* (Is it true?) features a play the idea of which is to engage the students in a playful, easy-to-understand, way in thinking how to be critical and how to do fact checking. In *Fejkade sidor* (Fake pages) the audience follows two journalists of a group called *Viralgranskaren* (the Viral reviewer) on one of their assignments to discover the source of disinformation. *Tid och rum* (Time and space), features students who investigate a story from a suspicious organization known for spreading fake stories.

Collaborations



The two public service broadcasters SVT and SR have joined forces with the two biggest daily newspapers Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet: They will collaborate on fact-checking methods and news spreading during the electoral movement.¹⁰³ The four stakeholders have already conducted a joint training programme for journalists. They have sought inspiration and expertise especially from the Norwegian

collaboration project *faktisk.no*, as well as from the *CrossCheck* project of First Draft.¹⁰⁴ The project will use a five-grade rating scale for assessing factuality of each examined news item. The method is based on the guidelines of the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN)¹⁰⁵ and is meant to enhance fact-checking transparency.

In March 2018, SVT has also founded a special editorial office with four journalists especially assigned to work on the collaborative effort. The task of the office is to follow up both political debates and public discussions.

¹⁰³ <https://www.faktiskt.se/>.

¹⁰⁴ <https://crosscheck.firstdraftnews.org/france-en/>.

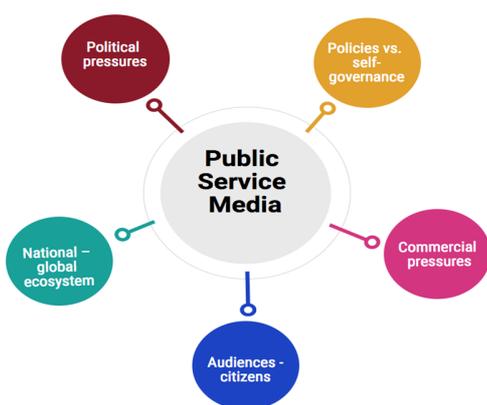
¹⁰⁵ <https://www.poynter.org/tags/international-fact-checking-network>.

3. PSM and Challenges of Information Disorder

Section 1 of this white paper showcased the complexity of the phenomena labelled under “fake news”. In October 2017, the PEW Research Center canvassed over one thousand technology professionals, researchers, and other experts around the world about their opinions on the trend of increasing disinformation.¹⁰⁶ The experts were perfectly divided between those trusting in technological solutions and the human nature to come up with some solutions, and those sceptical of improvement. The most dystopian visions included a possibility that we simply give up news and civic life, participation as citizens, due to distrust. In addition, some thinkers note that combating information disorder is practically a mission impossible, due to a set of factors: The widening gap between volume and processing capabilities; technology-enabled tools such as “deep fake” video altering and hyper-targeting; coupled with ample resources supporting purposefully created disinformation as well as weak leadership taken by the EU and the US in combating these problems.¹⁰⁷

Section 2 describes examples of good practices by over 20 organizations do, and these cases, in fact, demonstrate that PSB/PSM can be central in combating information disorder. The diverse manifestations of what public service media organizations can be, and what kind of reach and resources they have, poses an evident question of whether we can even talk about public service media as one category, one tool. And the factors that hinder combating the phenomena are also factors that may weaken PSM as an institution. Can public service media institutions survive these tumultuous times?

Information disorder showcases the broader disruptions in the media landscape that have profound impact in public service media: The new roles of audiences as users, customers, producers and citizens; commercial and political pressures on public service; national-global media ecosystems; and related questions of regulation and governance.



¹⁰⁶ <http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/10/19/the-future-of-truth-and-misinformation-online/>.

¹⁰⁷ <https://mondaynote.com/fighting-fake-news-is-a-losing-battle-but-there-are-other-ways-to-win-the-war-1991ed877478>.

3.1. Audiences – Citizens

According to Eurobarometer, most Europeans perceive traditional media as the most trusted source of news: radio (70%), television (66%) and printed newspapers and news magazines (63%).¹⁰⁸ While the result varies greatly within Europe the countries where public service media organizations are strong they also fare well in terms of trust. This echoes the study by the EBU that also notes the “trust gap” between traditional media and online media is widening across Europe.¹⁰⁹ Almost three thirds of Europeans feel confident on identifying “fake news”.¹¹⁰ Can they? One view is that the current situation is essentially a crisis of news, for features mainly related to user behavior. First, the addictive nature of social media may be precisely the environment in which misinformation and mob behavior spreads. Second, we need not only quality journalism but audiences for it in our discovery engines/attention markets. Third, bad actors are finding ways to inject ideas into the conversation by targeting vulnerable points in the system. Fourth, Even when all participants in a system are acting in good faith, filter bubbles emerge.¹¹¹ Some experts point out to faster news cycles and increasing consumer demand for shorter-form content as increasing demand for “fake news”.¹¹² The impact of disinformation has not been widely researched. It is not necessarily as drastic as feared, neither in the U.S.¹¹³ nor in some European countries.¹¹⁴ But more nuanced understandings of generations, and audiences as citizens in the current ecosystem are needed.

3.2. National – Global Ecosystem

The role of national public broadcasters is a complicated one in the current global media ecosystem. Many see the intermediaries, platforms, as the core of the challenge to the current information disorder: “The main leverage to limit the distribution and monetization of falsehoods, propaganda and disinformation rests with platforms in their exclusive role as information intermediaries.”¹¹⁵ At the same time, some posit that social network media, because of its participatory possibilities and importance as distributors of publicly relevant information and fora for public engagement “makes it vital to subject them to public service obligations to ensure public interest benefits for societies” and “can be considered immediate, contemporary tasks that have essential importance for the role of PSM in the networked society;”¹¹⁶ essentially that search engines and social networking could be

¹⁰⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/first-findings-eurobarometer-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2017/05/trust-gap-between-traditional-and-new-media-widening-across-europe>.

¹¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/first-findings-eurobarometer-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

¹¹¹ <https://medium.com/trust-media-and-democracy/we-know-the-news-is-in-crisis-5d1c4fbf7691>.

¹¹² https://law.yale.edu/system/files/area/center/lisp/documents/fighting_fake_news_-_workshop_report.pdf

¹¹³ <https://www.dartmouth.edu/~nyhan/fake-news-2016.pdf>.

¹¹⁴ <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-02/Measuring%20the%20reach%20of%20fake%20news%20and%20online%20distribution%20in%20Europe%20CORRECT%20FLAG.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ <https://rsf.org/en/news/europe-tackles-disinformation-attention-good-political-will-makes-difference>.

¹¹⁶ Hjarvard, S. (2018). Public Service in the Age of Social Network Media. In Van den Bulck, H., Donders, K., Lowe, G.F. (eds.). Public Service Media in the Networked Society, RIPE@2017. http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/04_hjarvard.pdf.

considered as public service.¹¹⁷ The “beyond national” approach can not only be seen in the spread of dis- and malinformation across borders but also in multi-stakeholder solutions, First Draft as a prominent example. In addition, good practices could be discovered beyond Europe, e.g., in Canada’s CBC Fact Checker¹¹⁸ or in Argentina’s Chequeado (an independent non-partisan fact-checking operation that has recently employed a bot that automatically identifies claims in the media and matches them with existing fact checks).¹¹⁹

3.3. Remits and Resources vs. Political and Commercial Challenges

The urgency of finding new strategies is relevant to mature PSM organizations in globalizing marketplaces; as well as to contexts where state media are being transformed into public service media (e.g., former Eastern Europe); or to where public interest media (including PSB, community, and local media) face severe commercial competition and/or need to be revitalized. This is echoed in a 2017 statement by the Council of Europe: There exists an emerging trend of threats to the independence of public broadcasters or to their regulatory bodies, including political interference in the editorial line of public broadcasters, insufficient safeguards in the legislation against political bias, and the lack of appropriate funding to guarantee the independence of the public broadcasters. In addition, there are concerns about the legislation and practices with regard to the appointment, composition and dismissal of the regulatory bodies or of the management of public broadcasters.¹²⁰

Some critics note that powerful normative evocation of journalism as a fourth estate depicts news organizations free from commercial considerations and partisan affiliations; yet most public service institutions are not “outsiders” but embedded in the mainstream structures and practices of a society.¹²¹ Commercial competitors have for decades challenged the role of public broadcasting. Resentment for multiplatform, publicly supported content, especially news, has grown, due to the financial problems digitalization has brought to news organizations.¹²² Yet, recently, public service media organizations all around the world are threatened by not only commercial competitors but also governmental pressures, and they need to find new ways to ensure their independence and inclusivity. Increasing political pressures have emerged in many countries: In Eastern Europe, as well as in more “mature” public service countries such as Austria, Denmark, and Switzerland. The challenge is real: A review of international standards and PSM notes that international guidelines identify areas for attention, not only for PSM but for all bodies that make strategic decisions affecting their operation.

¹¹⁷ Andrejevic, M. (2013). Public Service Media Utilities: Rethinking Search Engines and Social Networking as Public Goods. Vol. 146 issue: 1]: 123-132 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X1314600116>.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/programs/edmontonam/fact-checker-%20dry-%20cold-1.4533169>.

¹¹⁹ <http://chequeado.com/>.

¹²⁰ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/public-service-broadcasting-under-threat-in-europe>.

¹²¹ Freedman, D. (2018). “Public Service” and the Journalism Crisis: Is the BBC the Answer? *Television & New Media* <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476418760985>.

¹²² E.g., Lowe, G.F & Martin F. (2014). The Value of Public Service Media. In Lowe, G.F & Martin F. (eds.) *The Value of Public Service Media RIPE@2013*.

The review concludes: “If PSM are to realize their full potential in the future, then renewed attention needs to be given to these foundational principles established in the past.”¹²³

3.4. Disagreements About Remedies

Given the roles of audiences, global-local contexts, and a multitude of pressure on PSM, today’s situation is seen by many as a watershed for media and communication policies and regulation: Can policies reframe media audiences and communication technology users as citizens, with rights? Can they help to restore citizens’ trust in media and potential of free speech?

At the same time, there is a great fear of overreach by policy-making that would open doors to censorship, or, at the minimum, diminish journalistic integrity and autonomy. Strong journalistic self-governance codes exist, and consequently, some fear that pan-European efforts such as the Code of Conduct suggested in the EU HLEG report are potentially harmful: “An EU-sponsored ‘Code of Codes’ for the whole media universe is not only unnecessary and in large parts redundant, at best, but can distract attention away from the real causes of the problem, while putting additional burden on those who are already fighting it.”¹²⁴

Many citizens, however, seem to expect governments to implement some governance measures. The responsibility for information disorder, according to most respondents of the Reuters Digital News Report, rests with both publishers and platforms. There is some public appetite for government intervention to stop fake news, especially in Europe (60%) and Asia. Those with higher levels of news literacy tend to prefer newspapers brands over TV, and use social media for news very differently from the wider population. They are also more cautious about interventions by governments to deal with misinformation.¹²⁵ Similar views emerge from the recent Eurobarometer. In respondents’ view, journalists, national authorities, and the press and broadcasting management should be those mainly responsible for stopping the spreading of fake news.¹²⁶

Based on the overview of this white paper, many public service media organizations are engaging in awareness-raising and media literacy. Some are actively using tools for fact-checking and creating related collaborations. While PSB/PSM organizations are a part of the diversity of the European media ecosystem, many have faced challenges in their respective countries, or are being used for political rather than public communication tools. While the multi-stakeholder policy documents highlighted in this paper mention public service media, they do not give specific recommendations for PSB/PSM. The core five actions of the EU High-level Expert Group are about enhancing transparency of online news, promoting media and information literacy to counter disinformation; developing tools for empowering users and journalists; tackling disinformation and fostering a positive engagement with fast-evolving information technologies; safeguarding the diversity and sustainability of the European

¹²³ Psychogiopoulou, E., Anagnostou, D., Craufurd Smith, R., & Stolte, Y. (2017). Mediadem| The Freedom and Independence of Public Service Media in Europe: International Standards and Their Domestic Implementation. *International Journal Of Communication*, 11, 20. <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5965/2017>.

¹²⁴ <https://rsf.org/en/news/europe-tackles-disinformation-attention-good-political-will-makes-difference>.

¹²⁵ <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2018/overview-key-findings-2018/>.

¹²⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/flash/surveyky/2183>.

news media ecosystem, and promoting continued research on the impact of disinformation in Europe to evaluate the measures taken.¹²⁷

As stressed in a review of scientific literature on research on “Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation”, it seems clear that sorting out the relative impact of different manifestations of information disorder “ought to be a crucial prerequisite for anyone hoping to design policies to mitigate potential pernicious effects on politics from social media usage, as different problems prompt different solutions.”¹²⁸ Regarding PSM, policy-makers would have to be interested in preserving a mixed ecosystem that is unique and that has allowed a plurality of media to exist, in the impact of the various efforts by PSM, and in the possible kinds of support PSM might need to, in its part, remedy information disorder.

3.5. Beyond Information Disorder: Continuing Value in Turbulent Times

This white paper has highlighted good practices that, in many ways, seem like ordinary activities public service media organizations: quality and innovation; analysis and commentary stimulating critical thinking among audiences; and targeted, educational online communication for young people. These practices, and the broader challenges of PSM discussed above, are relevant to several themes of the lecture series *Public Media Institutions at a Crossroads: Visions, Strategies, Tactics*.

Core Task: Serving the Public? Structural-Societal Relationships

As Karen Donders noted in her lecture, today’s public service media exists in a complex web of relationships. While its remit – ideologically and often legally – is to serve the public, in practice it negotiates its position in terms of politicians. The latter may legitimize PSM and act as its spokespersons, they may be scrutinized by PSM, put increasingly, political will is critical of public service media. Similarly, PSM has paradoxically different relationships with its commercial competitors: Consensus, polarization, collaboration, or distortion. For instance, while newspapers have often been vocal critics of PSM (online) news, fact-checking has brought together these adversaries.¹²⁹

Core Value: Pluralism

Several speakers of the series discussed media pluralism and the special role of public service media in contributing to it. There is a concrete, empirical threat to media pluralism in Europe especially with government media capture.¹³⁰ At the same time, as Monroe Price posited, we are witnessing the challenge of hyper-pluralism, due to the infinite digital content offerings. To understand the role of PSM in media pluralism, we need to define the latter. One of the core elements is the diversity of voices. The question is: How many voices are needed for diversity? Who decides this? Can PSM also

¹²⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>.

¹²⁸ <https://poseidon01.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=288029089119124079066077016007020091103043056088031004087020093093070125089007105068017098101006051012034021072003124067022004122090028033029008084125000097074125081064019002108113009107021102069087120099087065071125096074068069076104126008031114096&EXT=pdf>.

¹²⁹ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2017-04-11/looking-practice-find-theory-public-service-media>.

¹³⁰ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/events/2018-01-16/between-market-and-human-rights-media-pluralism-and-democracy-under-threat-eu>.

unite, with a unifying voice, polarized, fragmented audiences? Can its trusted brand and quality journalism win over a cacophony of content from all kinds of sources?¹³¹

Key Role: Harbinger of Democracy

In today's Europe, a vicious cycle harms media freedom – and public service media organizations are particularly vulnerable. The cycle begins with state interference, resulting in the critical role of the media to diminish. This, in turn, reduces free information and debate necessary for decision-making and that development hampers free elections. The result is increased strength of those in power.¹³²

At the same time, as Sally-Ann Wilson argued:

Public service media retains the core ethos of public service broadcasting, while enabling public service broadcasters to engage with audiences via new media platforms. Some organisations have more strength in one aspect of public media but are lacking in others. Independence will always be under negotiation but it is the critical characteristic on which public trust fundamentally rests.¹³³

It may seem like a mission impossible: To combat disinformation and to overcome turbulent times that, in part, have created the current state of information disorder and so many more challenges for public service media. But, unless we want to let go of institutions that are mandated to create solutions such as those discussed in this paper, we have to admit to yet another paradox: PSM, in some form, and in all kinds of variations, is needed more than ever:

[I]f we say that public media is no longer of use, if we let it just slip away unremarked... then we may also be saying farewell to democracy.¹³⁴

¹³¹ <https://cmds.ceu.edu/article/2017-05-05/public-service-media-age-hyper-pluralism>.

¹³² <https://cmds.ceu.edu/events/2018-01-16/between-market-and-human-rights-media-pluralism-and-democracy-under-threat-eu>.

¹³³ <https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/72015-2/>.

¹³⁴ <https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/72015-2/>.