



European University Institute



**CMPF**  
Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom

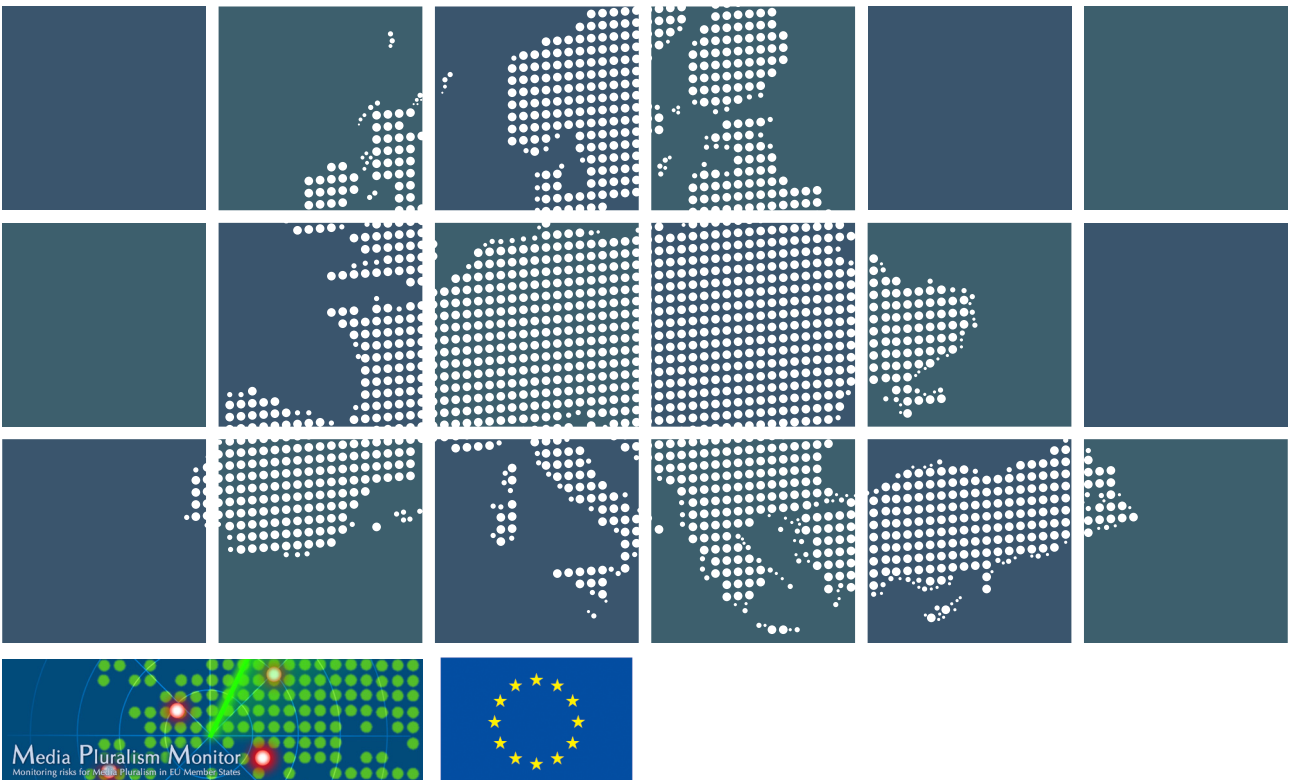
ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES



# Monitoring Media Pluralism in Europe: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor 2017 in the European Union, FYROM, Serbia & Turkey

## Country Report: Cyprus

Author: Christophoros Christophorou





# TABLE OF CONTENT

1.	About the Project	1
2.	Introduction	2
3.	Results from the data collection: assessment of the risks to media pluralism	3
3.1.	Basic Protection (29% - low risk)	5
3.2.	Market Plurality (36% - medium risk)	6
3.3.	Political Independence (45% - medium risk)	7
3.4.	Social Inclusiveness (70% - high risk)	9
4.	Conclusions	11
	Annexe 1. Country Team	12
	Annexe 2. Group of Experts	12

# 1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

## 1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) is a research tool that was designed to identify potential risks to media pluralism in the Member States of the European Union. This narrative report has been produced within the framework of the second EU-wide implementation of the MPM, carried out in 2017. The implementation was conducted in 28 EU Member States, Serbia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM) and Turkey with the support of a grant awarded by the European Union to the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) at the European University Institute.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The CMPF cooperated with experienced, independent national researchers to carry out the data collection and to author the narrative reports, except in the cases of Malta and Italy where data collection was carried out centrally by the CMPF team. The research is based on a standardised questionnaire and apposite guidelines that were developed by the CMPF. The data collection was carried out between June and December 2017.

In Cyprus, the CMPF partnered with Christophoros Christophorou, who conducted the data collection and annotated the variables in the questionnaire and interviewed relevant experts. The scores assessing the risks for media pluralism were provided by the CMPF and calculated according to the algorithm developed by the Centre itself. The national report was reviewed by CMPF staff. Moreover, to ensure accurate and reliable findings, a group of national experts in each country reviewed the answers to particularly evaluative questions (see Annexe II for the list of experts).

Risks to media pluralism are examined in four main thematic areas, which are considered to capture the main areas of risk for media pluralism and media freedom: Basic Protection, Market Plurality, Political Independence and Social Inclusiveness. The results are based on the assessment of a number of indicators for each thematic area (see Figure 1 below).

Basic Protection	Market Plurality	Political Independence	Social Inclusiveness
Protection of freedom of expression	Transparency of media ownership	Political control over media outlets	Access to media for minorities
Protection of right to information	Media ownership concentration (horizontal)	Editorial autonomy	Access to media for local/regional communities and for community media
Journalistic profession, standards and protection	Cross-media concentration of ownership and competition enforcement	Media and democratic electoral process	Access to media for people with disabilities
Independence and effectiveness of the media authority	Commercial & owner influence over editorial content	State regulation of resources and support to media sector	Access to media for women
Universal reach of traditional media and access to the Internet	Media viability	Independence of PSM governance and funding	Media literacy

The results for each domain and indicator are presented on a scale from 0 to 100%. Scores between 0 and 33% are considered low risk, 34 to 66% are medium risk, while those between 67 and 100% are high risk. On the level of indicators, scores of 0 were rated 3% and scores of 100 were rated 97% by default, to avoid an assessment of total absence or certainty of risk. For more information on MPM methodology, see the CMPF report “Monitoring Media Pluralism in Europe: Application of the Media Pluralism Monitor 2016 in EU-28, Montenegro and Turkey”, <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/46786>

**Disclaimer:** The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the views of the CMPF or the EC, but represents the views of the national country team that carried out the data collection and authored the report. Due to updates and refinements in the questionnaire, the MPM2017 scores may not be fully comparable with MPM2016 ones. For more details, see the CMPF report on MPM2017, soon available on <http://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>



## 2. INTRODUCTION

Cyprus has an area of 9,251 km<sup>2</sup> with a de jure population of 854,800 (2016), of whom about 20% are non-Cypriots. The official languages are Greek and Turkish. The 1960 constitution of Cyprus recognises two power-sharing communities, the Greek and the Turkish communities. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots live segregated since the collapse of bi-communality (1964) and the summer 1974 Turkish Army invasion that divided the island. The invasion followed a coup by the Greek Junta in Athens against President Makarios. Armenians, Maronites and Latins, recognised as religious groups, were given the option to 'join' the Greek or the Turkish community; they chose the Greek community. They total about 7,500 persons. EU and non-EU foreign citizens living in Cyprus represented 12.3% and 7.2% of the employed labour respectively (2016 rev.). Greek Cypriots dominate the power, society and cultural life.

The Republic is since March 2016 under a post-memorandum surveillance by the European Stability Mechanism, after it exited a bailout program. The aid programme agreement was signed in March 2013 as a result of a serious economic crisis that excluded Cyprus from the markets since 2011. Despite the crisis, the growth rate in Cyprus was 3.8% in 2017, higher than the rate forecast by the EU Commission and others.

Strong trade unions and a strong left-right cleavage have dominated social and political life since the 1940s. The resulting polarisation has recently shown signs of weakening, while the political alienation of citizens is on the rise. Thus, only 20-25% of new voters register to electoral rolls, while abstention rates in parliamentary elections reached 33.5% in 2016. A polarising effect is also observed in political debates, coupled with a coverage bias in news and current affairs programmes. The main cause is diverging views on the Cyprus Problem and its resolution, on how to end the island's division.

The media landscape in 2017 Q3 featured an increasing shift in consumption towards online media and a further shrinking of the press. The total readership of the dailies declined to 11.5% from 14.1% (2016) on weekdays, and to 18% from 24.2% on Sundays. The shift to the papers' online versions continued, with weekdays rate at 25.9% and a significantly lower online readership on Sundays (12.9%). The latter may indicate that special offers and supplements with the print editions help resist the decline of hardcopy readership. During 2017, the English language Cyprus Weekly (f. 1979) closed down and Σήμερινή [Simerini - Today's] was turned into a weekly (May 2017). The new television channel, Alpha (linked to Alpha Greece) that started operation in spring 2016 seems to have established its position in the market with an audience rate of 10%. This broadened the audience share of the big channels from 60% to near 70%. Competition for the top market share is fierce and ANT1 alternate with Sigma based on the success of reality shows and series. The public service RIK's main news bulletin alternated with ANT1 on top of ratings, between 15.6 and 19% during the summer 2017 months. Television reception via digital free-to-air transmission is receding as IPTV and cable TV are rapidly gaining ground. The shift is due to the expansion of broadband and the offering of exclusive transmissions of sports events, along with a variety of thematic content. Broadband penetration reached 89% in 2016, gaining 6 points compared to 2015, in a market of 313,000. Three players share the market of Internet, IPTV/Cable TV and telephony. They are, CYTA (62%), Cablenet – the only cable provider (27.6%) and Primetel (10.1%)<sup>2</sup>. Broadband penetration and speeds remain lower than the EU28 average.

The last amendment of the media regulatory framework was made prior to the digital switch-over (2011); digital television licences are still temporary, renewed annually. This leads to media operating in an environment governed by a legal framework that is obsolete in many respects.

1 Audience and readership data: Gnora report, 2017 Q3, available at, [http://gnora.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/mediaGNO-SIS\\_July\\_Sep\\_2017\\_en.pdf](http://gnora.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/mediaGNO-SIS_July_Sep_2017_en.pdf)

2 Data for Q 2 2017, by OCECPR, available at [http://www.ocecpr.org.cy/sites/default/files/ec\\_report\\_fixedtelephonybroadbandtele-combulletin\\_gr\\_11-10-2017\\_pk\\_mn\\_final\\_3\\_0.pdf](http://www.ocecpr.org.cy/sites/default/files/ec_report_fixedtelephonybroadbandtele-combulletin_gr_11-10-2017_pk_mn_final_3_0.pdf)



# 3. RESULTS FROM THE DATA COLLECTION: ASSESSMENT OF THE RISKS TO MEDIA PLURALISM

The state of freedom of expression and media pluralism in Cyprus remains overall positive with some changes in specific indicators as compared to 2016. The Basic Protection area exhibits low risk, while Market Plurality is facing medium risk (at the lower end of the spectrum). Political control and interference with the media appear as a medium risk to pluralism, while the continuing limited importance given by the media to social inclusiveness has crossed the line from medium risk, in 2016, to high risk. However, as detailed below, four indicators point to high risks to media pluralism.

Constitutional and legal provisions, and the application of the ECHR case-law by courts offer citizens safeguards and effective protection of their rights connected to freedom of expression. This applies also to freedom of information and media and journalists' rights, which are protected by an independent media authority too. Issues of concern is the relatively limited penetration and low speed of broadband, while access to information is curbed by limited responsiveness of the administration.

Law enforcement ensures transparency in media ownership and effective avoidance of cross media concentrations. When considering factors affecting the actual horizontal ownership we observe an improvement from high to medium risk in media market plurality. Conversely, the effects of the economic crisis and competition by new media increased threats against media viability. Some extraordinary schemes of state aids appear insufficient to reduce media vulnerability and exposure to external influences.

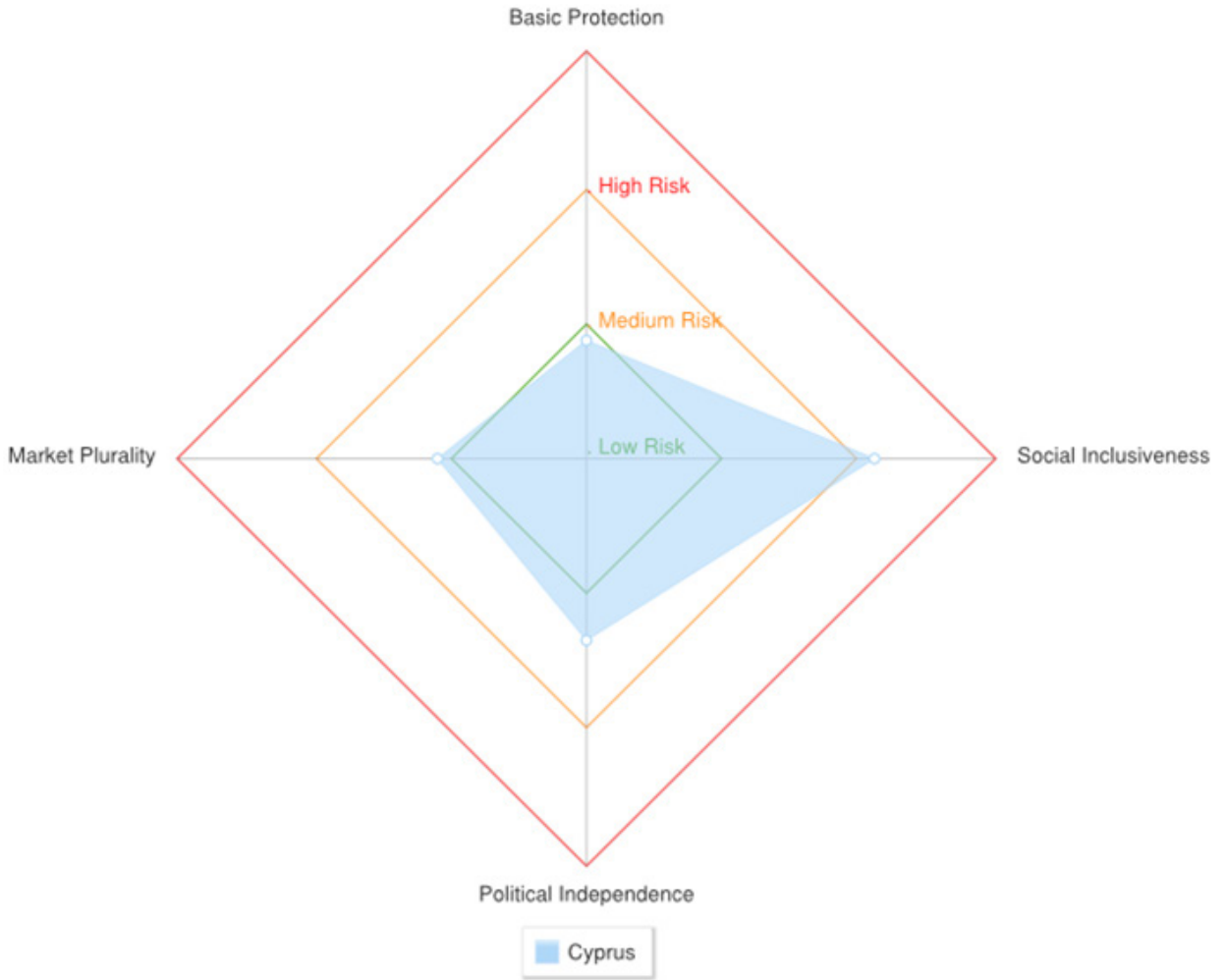
Fairness in media coverage of elections and extensive media access by political actors coexist with political interferences, in particular with the governance of the PSM, its funding and operation. These interferences and state funding of the only existing news agency pose major threats and a high risk to pluralism. The distribution of state advertising, is also problematic, seemingly fair though, because the lack of transparency renders scrutiny impossible.

Access to the media is mostly reserved to mainstream groups, which damages social inclusiveness. This is the area with three indicators posing high risks to pluralism, namely access to media for minorities and persisting limited access for women. Also, failure to adopt a long pending policy framework in an increasingly demanding media environment increases the risk to high level for media literacy. Other issues, such as the almost complete absence of community media, limited policies of media access for persons with disabilities and for local/regional communities pose medium risks.

Nevertheless, a more accurate assessment of the above requires that we also consider contextual and other factors. They often have mitigating effects on the negative impact of specific indicators, not reversing, though, the situation.

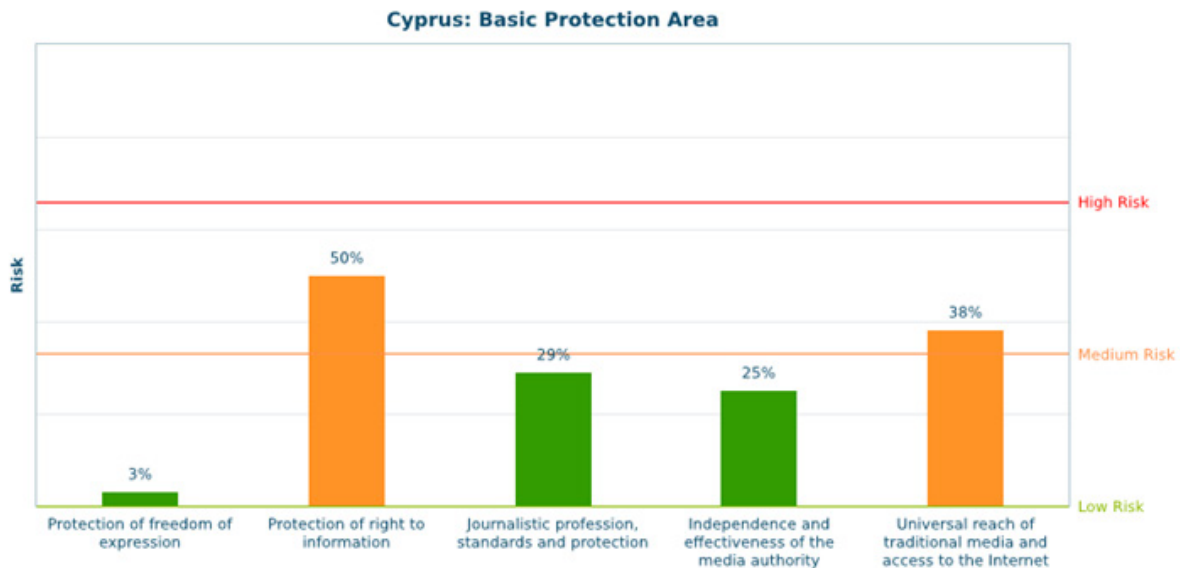


### Cyprus: Media Pluralism Risk Areas



### 3.1 BASIC PROTECTION (29% - LOW RISK)

The Basic Protection indicators represent the regulatory backbone of the media sector in every contemporary democracy. They measure a number of potential areas of risk, including the existence and effectiveness of the implementation of regulatory safeguards for freedom of expression and the right to information; the status of journalists in each country, including their protection and ability to work; the independence and effectiveness of the national regulatory bodies that have competence to regulate the media sector; and the reach of traditional media and access to the Internet.



Freedom of expression and the related rights enjoy an overall effective protection, posing a low risk in respect of this area. However, weaknesses or gaps exist. They are related to policies and measures enabling broader access to digital communications, to more effective protection of media professionals and access to information. Cyprus is a signatory member State of all major human rights international instruments. The guarantees offered by its constitution and legal framework abide with the relevant rules and principles of international law. The courts offer protection and remedies that are founded among other on the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights.

Cyprus is among the few EU countries that have decriminalised defamation, even though the Attorney General can authorise criminal prosecution in very specific cases. They relate to protection of the army, religious symbols and foreign officials. We note the absence of any recent incident of surveillance or interferences with online communication; and there was a Supreme Court decision that seizure of computers may be a disproportionate measure. These positive developments led to a revision of the overall threat against freedom of expression, rated at only 3%, down from 21% in 2016.

While the right to information is recognised as a component of free expression, access to information has not been regulated yet. Policies applied when requests of information reach the authorities still remain highly inconsistent and frequently result in no response. Moreover, remedies, such as a recourse to the office of the Ombudsman or to the courts are deemed not satisfactory; they are time-consuming and entail costs for interested persons, which are not affordable by most people. Furthermore, the lack of adequate response to regulating the issue and of a legal protection of whistle-blowers led to revising the risk from low (13%) in 2016 to medium at 50%.

Access to and exercise of journalism are free, not hindered by any obstacles. Labour and other laws protect journalists' rights and benefits, and ensure access to sources of information, requiring in some cases a professional card. However, the present conjecture makes the economic crisis a factor or a pretext for undue pressures on media professionals. In 2017, membership to the sole trade union that was near 50% increased slightly. The low rate of professional representation poses a medium risk to pluralism. A number of other variables also score medium risk; they include a weakened Union's capacity to defend the profession's rights and work conditions leading more professionals to unemployment. The economic crisis appears to negatively affect the journalists' will or power to consistently claim editorial independence or to defend salaries and benefits against arbitrary cuts. Overall, journalistic profession standards and protection face a low risk (29%), at the limit of medium risk.

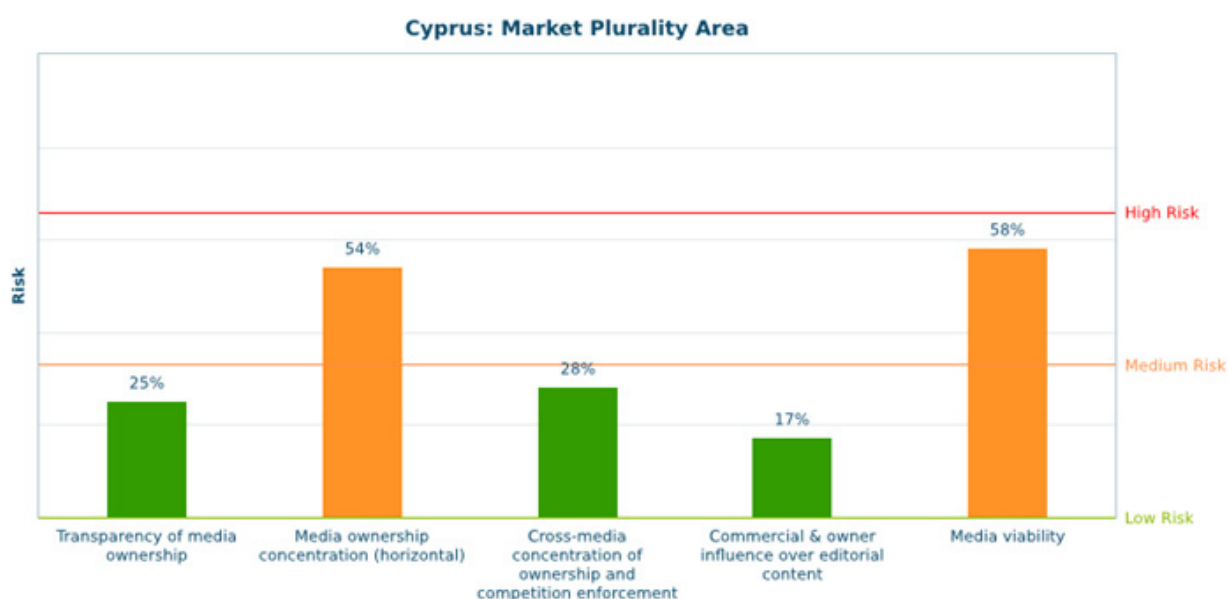


The media regulatory system ensures a legally independent authority with its own budget and adequate powers to conduct its mandate. Its decisions are published regularly and are subject to judicial review only, with no room for government interference. However, other parameters are considered as posing medium risks: problems relate to the authority's members appointment by the government, deficient selection criteria, doubts about independent/efficient operation in practice, along with some transparency issues. Scrutiny is affected by the absence of any obligation of the regulator to draft a strategic plan or a target-specific activity or to present an activity report. The chairman of a new governing body appointed in July 2016 resigned in 2017. Thus, pending an assessment of the work of the new body, the risk rate remains the same, low, albeit at 25%.

A problematic area in respect of basic protection relates to access to new media, in particular online. Limited penetration and low speeds of broadband place Cyprus below the EU average, and pose a medium risk. The overall risk for media access is at a medium level (38%). A mitigating factor is universal coverage of both public and commercial radio and television.

### 3.2 MARKET PLURALITY (36% - MEDIUM RISK)

The Market Plurality indicators examine the existence and effectiveness of the implementation of transparency and disclosure provisions with regard to media ownership. In addition, they assess the existence and effectiveness of regulatory safeguards to prevent horizontal and cross-media concentration of ownership and the role of competition enforcement and State aid control in protecting media pluralism. Moreover, they seek to evaluate the viability of the media market under examination as well as whether and if so, to what extent commercial forces, including media owners and advertisers, influence editorial decision-making.



The situation in respect of actual market plurality remains overall unchanged, with medium risk at 36% against 38% in 2016. Specific strict legal provisions on transparency of media ownership and competition, on cross media ownership concentration and on limiting arbitrary dismissals place these indicators at low, albeit not negligible, risk. However, market plurality in practice is suffering with a shrinking press and media concentrations, disguised by compromises. In fact, professionals opt for compromise instead of claiming rights and full benefits guaranteed by laws or securing full editorial independence. This makes less visible eventual influences by owners and commercial interests on editorial content, and the impact on media professionals' status.

Transparency in radio and television ownership vis-a-vis the authorities is almost absolute due to the licenses' obligation to fully disclose the state of and changes in ownership. Failure to inform the regulator or ensure its approval prior to any change may be punished. Publication of this type of information is limited to the names of those holding over 5% of capital-shares, with no more details. Newspapers have no relevant obligations. Overall, the indicator on transparency is at low risk (25% against 31% in 2016), yet not negligible.





Audiovisual media ownership and control are also strictly regulated. Rules provide for a 25% share-holding ceiling and constraints related to management and other factors. All changes need prior approval by the regulator. No relevant rules exist for newspapers. The implementation of the formula of “the Top4” for measuring eventual threats from media ownership concentrations points to a high-risk situation. In all types of media there are only four or five major actors, with their total audience and market share rates rising beyond 60% (radio, television) or beyond 88% (newspapers). Further concentration hit the newspaper market in 2017, with the closing down of a weekly and a daily turning into a weekly. Also, circulation figures of one daily are higher than the sum of the other three dailies. All the above limit media plurality. However, a provision in the mergers and concentrations law of 2014 makes media pluralism a value to defend. This led us to revise the risk from high level (67%) in 2016 to upper medium level (54%).

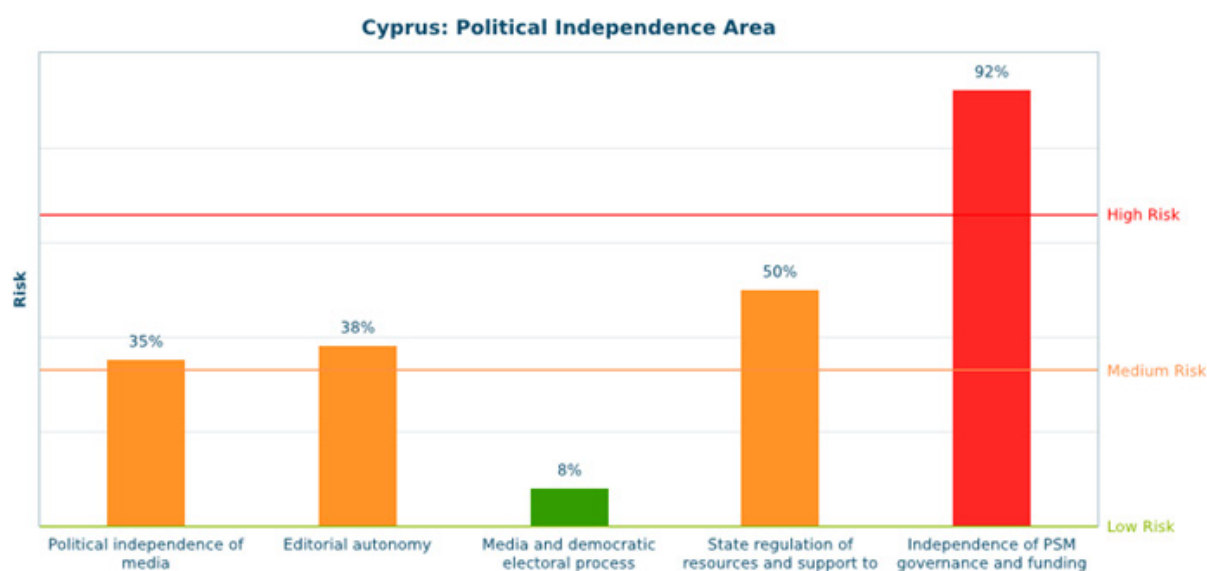
On a general note, however, a crucial question is whether the small size of the market can sustain more media outlets, thus a lower top4 share without compromising independence and viability. Cross media ownership concentration and protection of a competitive media environment emerges as the most guarded area against risks. The strict rules on horizontal audiovisual media ownership thresholds, combined with the rules on cross media ownership – both to be found in law 7(I)/1998, leave little margin for breaches. Concentration is limited in the online media market, and aids to the PSM do not seem to critically affect competition. All the above diminish the need for the competition commission to intervene.

The role and influence of owners and commercial interests upon editorial content have been growing in recent years. Media professionals avow what is generally agreed, that pressures caused by the economic crisis and problems arising from competition from the new media have increased dependence on commercial interests. The latter are disguised as editorial content, in both print media and their online editions. Additionally, employment insecurity facing the profession makes journalists and media outlets reluctant to claim editorial independence. This limits also investigative media work on businesses. Thus, the better picture in 2017, of 17% and low risk - down from medium risk at 38% in 2016, is the result of compromises that disguise unwanted influences. While influences exist, the absence of any complaints and reluctance to openly claim and insist on editorial independence make them ‘invisible’.

Advertising income for all types of media shows increases in 2016 and 2017. This derives from both survey data, providing nominative sums, and accounts data submitted to the Radio Television Authority. However, this increase appears neither sufficient to maintain jobs nor adequate to address financial pressures due to competition by new media, shrinking audiences, the economic crisis and other factors. Also, despite extraordinary state media support schemes decided in 2017 the situation has not changed and the risk level to media viability remains the same, medium, at 45%.

### 3.3 POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE (45% - MEDIUM RISK)

The Political Independence indicators assess the existence and effectiveness of regulatory safeguards against political bias and control over the media outlets, news agencies and distribution networks. They are also concerned with the existence and effectiveness of self-regulation in ensuring editorial independence. Moreover, they seek to evaluate the influence of the State (and, more generally, of political power) over the functioning of the media market and the independence of public service media.



Strict clauses regulating radio and television warrant pluralism in audiovisual media against ownership concentration or control, requiring also content impartiality. The relevant ownership thresholds and other constraints cover all persons, including politicians, and are efficiently enforced by regulators. There is no explicit exclusion of politicians from ownership and /or control of radio and television, as well as of the various types of media distribution networks in the respective media laws. However, a law on incompatibilities for persons occupying public offices (2008) prohibits participation or control in media companies, addressing the issue to some extent. In practice, political presence or control remain isolated phenomena, with only one radio and one newspaper politically affiliated. The situation is different regarding the only existing news agency, governed by media professionals. Its budget relies almost exclusively on state funding, which makes it a case of high risk. We took note of the law on incompatibilities, which reduced the risk for the indicator Political independence of media from 50% in 2016 to 35%.

Editorial independence is in theory warranted by both regulatory and self-regulatory provisions. However, the rules make no further or very limited provisions for mechanisms or procedures for the effective protection of journalists and avoidance of political interference with their work. No reference or connection exists in rules to appointments and dismissal of editors in chief. In reality labour laws address dismissals in general, which we took into account and revised in 2017 downwards the relevant risk. Thus, the revised rating for this indicator remains as medium risk, at 38% compared to 63% in 2016. Nevertheless, there is a real issue here, media owners pursuing their own political agendas, while no external political interferences are visible.<sup>3</sup>

Political actors, parties and politicians have ample opportunities to access the media and present their views and positions in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. Both PSM and commercial media are legally bound to cover daily political communication and electoral campaigns alike. Equal opportunities apply to political advertising that has to be clearly identified as such. Compliance with the rules in practice reduces risks of the indicator Media and democratic electoral process to a very low 8%.

Spectrum was until 2016 the only state resource allocated in a transparent and fair manner. Two extraordinary schemes of direct support to media were introduced in 2017, suffering to some extent from limited transparency or selection criteria. Risks to the survival of traditional media, affected by both the economic crisis and competition by new media have not been curbed. In addition, the absence of rules for the distribution of state advertising, even though it appears to be fairly done in practice, poses also a medium risk. The indicator State regulation of resources and support to the media sector remains at a medium risk, higher than 2016 (50% against 38%).

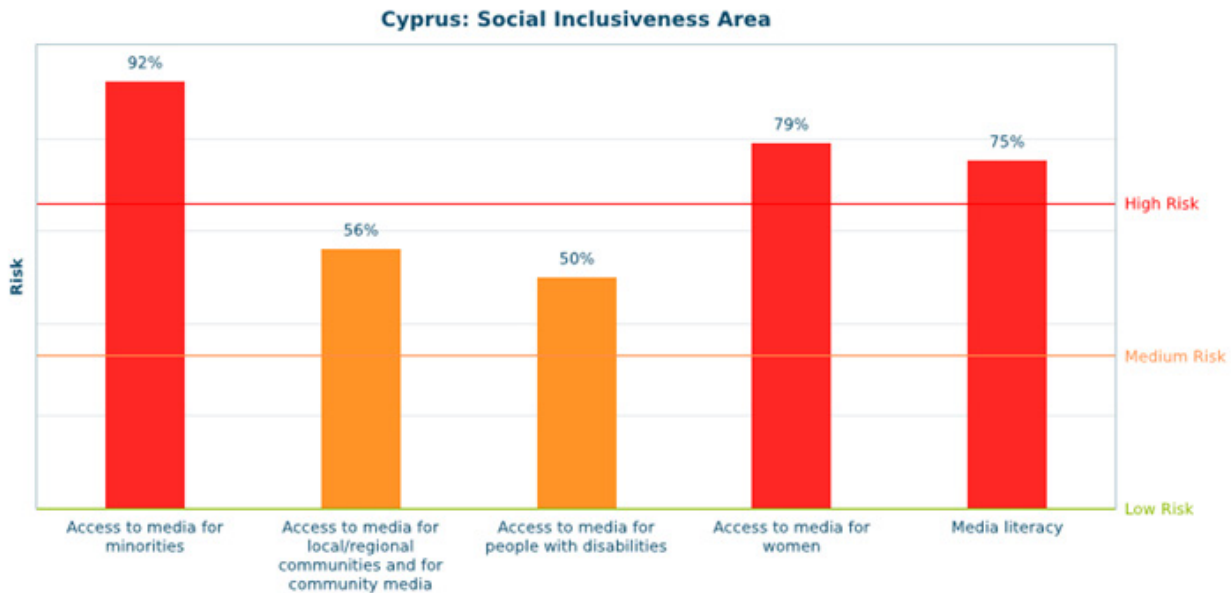
The most problematic issue for pluralism among all indicators in this monitor relates to the PSM, in particular interferences that gravely compromise its smooth functioning and independence. Adequate rules and criteria for the selection and appointment/dismissal of the governing council are absent, while the state decides unilaterally on funding and budget issues. In addition, parties interfere on political grounds with the budget and the daily operation of the PSM. Rules that ensure fair and transparent procedure in the appointment of the Director General remain an empty letter. As a result, risks against the PSM's independence remain very high, at 92%.

<sup>3</sup> Political interference or politically biased content may be curbed by contextual or regulatory factors. For example, the Cyprus public is not very receptive of politically 'coloured' content, while laws impose on both public and commercial electronic media equitable treatment of political parties, of social and other actors, as well as impartiality in news and current affairs programmes.



### 3.4 SOCIAL INCLUSIVENESS (70% - HIGH RISK)

The Social Inclusiveness indicators are concerned with access to media by various groups in society. The indicators assess regulatory and policy safeguards for community media, and for access to media by minorities, local and regional communities, women and people with disabilities. In addition to access to media by specific groups, the media literacy context is important for the state of media pluralism. The Social Inclusiveness area therefore also examines the country's media literacy environment, as well as the digital skills of the overall population.



Access to media for various groups remains the most problematic area for media pluralism with three indicators rated high risk. Access for minorities in Cyprus is a complex issue with multiple aspects: It refers to small numbers of Cyprus citizens that belong to 'religious groups', as labelled in the Constitution, and an inflow of diverse groups of immigrants into the country, starting in 1990. They have long-term and short-term visas and represent 20% of the total population (2011 census and recent estimates). The PSM law requires that programmes be impartial and respect the interests and sensitivities of minorities, with no further provisions on access or other rights. In practice, programmes addressed to 'religious groups' recognised by law, and in other languages as well, exist on radio but not on television; no dedicated newspapers exist except in one or two other languages (ex. Russian). Rating access to media for minorities as a high-risk area (92% up from 75% in 2016) points to the indisputable need for explicit recognition of the right of minorities to access media, but also to critical questions: How to sustain media and programmes for citizens' groups numbering in the hundreds or 3-4,000? Similar questions emerge in connection to responding to media access for diverse immigrant populations, given their diverse origin, recent establishment on the island and, in many cases, allowed for short-stay periods? Crucial are the issues of availability of financial and other resources and ensuring sustainability.

The question of media access for regional/local communities and for community media require answers. After taking into account all the factors affecting this area we revised the level of risk from high at 79% in 2016 to medium at 56%. Tens of radios and two television channels operate locally, with television received national-wide since the digital switch-over (2011). The law ensures access to carry platforms, but not the separation of local and national programmes and news, or the obligation to have local correspondents. However, in practice, all operators have local correspondents and cover local affairs. Support schemes decided in 2017 assisted mostly locally operating television channels. Thus, while not all issues related to local/regional media are addressed in the law, local news and affairs are part of national programmes. A possible solution to better address questions of inclusiveness may lie on recognising and promoting community media, which would connect media with local communities and minorities.

Media access for persons with disabilities is promoted by recently introduced policies that are still developing. The relevant provisions apply also to VOD services, so that persons with hearing impairment or sight deficient are not fully excluded. Despite law obligations since 2011, AVMS providers have failed so far to develop policies, which points to medium level risks, revised upwards from 38% in 2016 to 50%.



Promotion of gender equality and respect for women's rights is the subject of a variety of laws, some very detailed ones. They are binding for all, including the PSM. However, neither the PSM nor commercial providers have developed any gender equality policy. Moreover, the presence of women in governing councils or the management remains very low. Overall, this indicator presents a high risk at 79%, up from 69% in 2016. While the absence of a PSM comprehensive gender equality policy is a serious failure, we should note that rating may disguise an important positive aspect; existing regulatory and normative frameworks are mitigating factors with regard to certain aspects of the issue. They warrant benefits and rights, such as financial, labour, social, training and education.

A draft policy framework on media literacy submitted in 2012 is still awaiting approval. However, the Pedagogical Institute of the ministry of Education has been promoting various actions in the primary and secondary education sectors. Many initiatives are undertaken in cooperation with the Radio Television Authority. Particular focus is on awareness and on safety on the Internet. Some activities target also non-formal education. These initiatives seem insufficient to address problems of low rate of basic digital usage skills (43%) and digital human capital ratings that place Cyprus very low among the EU28.<sup>4</sup> Initiatives by the Pedagogical Institute and the CRTA are commendable. We note, however, the lack of any progress in adopting a media literacy policy in an environment increasingly demanding. Thus, we revised the rating of the Media literacy indicator from medium risk (50%) in 2016 to high risk at 75%.

---

4 See DESI report 2017, Cyprus, [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/document.cfm?doc\\_id=42997](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/document.cfm?doc_id=42997)



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Freedom of expression and media pluralism in Cyprus present an overall positive picture. This is mainly true in respect of basic protection and the framework for the preservation of market plurality. However, gaps and problematic aspects do exist. While media are generally independent from political control, they frequently reflect the owners' political agendas. They are also vulnerable to increasing influences by commercial interests. Despite privileged media access, political actors interfere with the funding and operation of the PSM. Non-mainstream and other minorities groups, as well as women enjoy limited media access.

Challenges for authorities and the media sector aiming at enhancing media pluralism remain almost the same as in 2016.

### Basic Protection:

- The main challenge for authorities is to promote a universal penetration of broadband with higher speeds as a means to bridge the existing digital gap.
- The media and media professionals need to reaffirm and redeem their role and status. Raising awareness on and defending journalists' full rights and editorial independence are key to pluralism, serving the public interest and re-gain the public's trust.

### Market Plurality:

- The media should take action towards clearing content from external influences and redeem media's social role.
- The media should also experiment with new business models and revenue streams.
- The schemes decided by the State in 2017 to assist print media and some television channels need a comprehensive policy framework. Also, aids and transparency in indirect subsidies would help media role for social inclusiveness too.

### Political Independence:

- Government and political parties should revise their approach to media, mainly PSM. This, and adequate law amendments should warrant unhindered public service operation by an independent in all respects PSM governing body, consultation in budget design and provision of resources.
- Mechanisms for ensuring editorial independence can only be efficient when media professionals are well aware of and claim this right. This may be achieved through strengthening their Union and effectively defending their labour rights, which is key for journalists' editorial independence.

### Social Inclusiveness:

- The legal framework of PSM needs ample revision, in particular the definition of public service. Extensive rules should warrant inclusiveness and the obligation to design comprehensive policy frameworks on gender equality in media and for minority groups.
- There is need for expanding the general provisions on inclusiveness in the law on commercial media so that they explicitly warrant access to the media for broad numbers of social groups.
- Community media must find a place in the law, with provisions for their development, including sources of funding, the means to support their operation and an effective long-term plan.
- Media literacy is of primary importance and is urgent for authorities to adopt long pending policy proposals, with provision of resources and concrete implementation programmes.



## ANNEXE 1. COUNTRY TEAM

First name	Last name	Position	Institution	MPM2017 CT Leader (please indicate with X)
Christophoros	CHRISTOPHOROU	Media Expert		X

## ANNEXE 2. GROUP OF EXPERTS

The Group of Experts is composed of specialists with a substantial knowledge and experience in the field of media. The role of the Group of Experts was to review especially sensitive/subjective evaluations drafted by the Country Team in order to maximize the objectivity of the replies given, ensuring the accuracy of the final results.

First name	Last name	Position	Institution
Panos	Panayiotou	Member Governing Council CYBC (PSM)	Representative of a broadcaster organisation
Orestis	Triggides	Cyprus Community Media Center (CCMC)	NGO researcher related to the media
Costas	Stratilatis	University of Nicosia	Academic – Law /Media Law
Giorgos	Frangos	Cyprus Union of Journalists	Representative of a journalists organisation
Antigoni	Themistokleous	Cyprus Radio Television Authority	Representative of media regulator
Stamatis	Rossides	Cyprus Consumers Association	Representative of a consumers organisation



