

CMFE

Community Media Forum Europe

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CMFE - Who we are:

The CMFE was founded to strengthen the participation of the Third Audio Visual Sector in European discussion and decision processes at a moment where freedom of expression and free access to information seems to be more and more endangered by the consequences of concentration in the media field. The CMFE builds a common platform for discussion and formulation of positions of European and International concerns for the participating networks, national federations and projects within the European Third Audio Visual Sector. CMFE enables the participating organisations to bring their concerns to European and international level with a common voice but CMFE also offers European institutions to spread and feedback information and arising questions among the participant of CMFE information network.

CMFE was founded 5th November 2004 in Halle (Germany) after a series of European and international conferences during the last two years which had made clear that there is a lack of information and participation of third Audio Visual Sector in European discussion and decision processes. As a first step on the way to concrete founding CMFE can be seen the initiative to take part in the consultation process of Council of Europe for the Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy in Kiev 10th – 11th March 2005. The proposal of the Community Media Sector has meanwhile been endorsed by more than 50 national federations, networks or single media initiatives from whole across Europe.

What the CMFE stands for:

- To put through recognition of 3rd Audio Visual Sector on EU and Council of Europe level as a point of reference for national culture and media policy.
- Set up of a Framework Convention on Community Media to assure the basic needs on national level.
- To bring about funding possibilities for Community Media within the future MEDIA 2007 program and other media related EU budget lines.
- Raising the awareness about the large field of social and cultural issues which are transported and supported by the activities of Community Media in the Third Audio Visual Sector
- Building up a platform for continuous dialog and discussion on how to ensure media plurality and freedom of expression and access to information at a European level.
- To strengthen cooperation with and give support to new free civil media initiatives in transition countries as a principal condition for democratic participation and development in their society.

What means Third Audio Visual Sector?

Since the late 1970s in Europe emergences thousands of community media initiatives, involving tens of thousands of people. In the beginning especially Community Radios but also community based TV-projects appeared which are melting meanwhile more and more with internet based community media projects due to digital convergence. They are all not for profit and they represent the Third Audio Visual Sector alongside national public service media and private commercial media. More and more Community Media are fulfilling public service duties which are neglected by national public service broadcasters getting under the pressure of commercial competition.

Due to very different national media legislation and regulatory policy traditions a huge number of different forms and a multitude of approaches to Community Media have developed. All these Media are building the Third Audio Visual Sector, with shared interests and common principles:

- Freedom of speech & media plurality
- Public and gender balanced access
- Promoting cultural diversity
- Not for profit
- Self-determination
- Transparency in structure and work
- Promotion of media literacy

The Third Audio Visual sector is taking an alternative role to profit-oriented corporate, as well to national public service media, by offering an open and public access to the media, guaranteeing freedom and pluralism of expression are for all to the most extent. Community media are committed to contribute to the full participation of all members of communities and civil society in their country of residence, aware of their potential to support their audiences and determined to develop their own media as an effective means of communication to inform the mainstream society and to increase citizens' participation in public life.

Community media are integral parts of community life and provide the means for cultural expression and communication among communities and civil society, which are often ignored by corporate media and the traditional public service media. The right to communicate requires sustainable access to means of communication for citizens and communities, access to content production and to reception and distribution. In the ongoing processes of convergence and commercialization of media, there is a need for the implementation of measures guaranteeing media equal access. And as freedom of speech nowadays especially means access to all communication platforms, this has to be legally protected and provided.

Further proposed measures of a Community Media Action Plan:

- Community Media should be recognised as a basic Public Service and as such it should get a 'must carry' status on all relevant actual and future communication platforms. (DAB, DRM, DTTV,...)
- Based on a statutory framework national governments and European institutions should create a Community Media Fund, to provide start-up and continuing funding on a structural basis.
- Support should be assured for media which provide a means for expression of minority and regional languages to contributing to a plural and civic oriented communication.
- Support should be given to Europe wide actions, aiming on the reduction of the digital and communications divide between European countries, as a precondition for a sustainable and balanced development of community media
- Support for free, independent, community media especially where freedom of speech is threatened or in countries where these media are weak or non-existent.
- The radio-frequency spectrum must be recognised as a natural resource belonging to all humanity and it should be managed in the public interest as a publicly owned asset through transparent and accountable regulatory frameworks.
- Take measures to ensure that in all European countries peoples have a right on free basic access to internet services irrespective of their economic status and where they are living.

To obtain a clear impression of the 3rd Media Sector and the associated working conditions CMFE suggests carrying out a **European study** on the legal/technical/financial frame of the 3rd Audio Visual Media Sector in Europe.

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