

CMFE

COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE

To: Council of Europe
Mr J. Malinowski, Head of the Media and
Information Society Division

Subject: *Submission by the Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE)
for the 1st Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible
for Media and New Communication Services: A new notion of
media?*

Nijmegen, 11 May 2009

Community Media Forum Europe

CMFE is a network of policy experts, organizations and federations, which aim to support the role of Community Media on the European level. Its members include many national federations of Community Media in Europe, as well as networks, projects and experts that support the development of Community Media. CMFE works closely together with AMARC-Europe, the European branch of the worldwide community radio organization.

Since 2007, the CMFE has been working as an observer with the Group of Specialists on Media Diversity (MC-S-MD) of the Steering Committee on the Media and New Communication Services (CDMC) of the Council of Europe. It has provided extensive input and expertise on the work of the CDMC, including the Declaration on the role of Community Media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, as adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 11 February 2009.

The role of Community Media

Community Media are non profit-making media serving a local community or a community of interest and allowing public participation in media production. As such they constitute the "Third Media Sector" with a clearly distinct identity alongside the national public service sector and private commercial media.

Community Media are providing media access for a vast range of communities, including minorities, and they are thus a vital force in promoting freedom of speech, cultural diversity and media literacy.

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In its Declaration on the role of Community Media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue from 11 February 2009, the Council of Europe recognized Community Media as a distinct media sector and acknowledged its role in fostering public debate, political pluralism and media literacy, promoting social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and tolerance, and strengthening community engagement and democratic participation. The Council recognized that Community Media perform functions that neither commercial nor public service media can meet or undertake fully and adequately.

On 25 September 2008, the European Parliament had adopted a Resolution on Community Media in Europe (INI/2008/2011), in which it stresses that Community Media are an effective means of strengthening cultural and linguistic diversity, social inclusion and local identity, as well as media pluralism.

The Declaration, Resolution and Action Plan on 'A New Notion of Media'

The proposed documents represent a crucial step towards rethinking notions of 'media', considering increased practices of participation and interactivity. They pose the important question of what public service means in a changing media environment, and proposes policies to safeguard public interest values, including media access, freedom of expression, and media pluralism.

However they fail to adequately recognize the role of community media, particularly community broadcasting, and thus the 'Third Media Sector' in providing access and means of public participation. A 'new notion of media' should not only refer to new technologies but also to emerging participatory media practices that exist across different media platforms, both 'new' and 'old'.

The **Political Declaration** rightfully highlights the important roles of Public Service Broadcasting (Art. 4) and the Internet (Art. 5) but it fails to recognize the Third Media Sector. *Therefore we propose an amendment under 4 that highlights Community Media as an effective means of strengthening cultural and linguistic diversity, social inclusion and cohesion, as well as media pluralism, and for promoting intercultural dialogue, community engagement and democratic participation (in accordance with the Council of Europe Declaration from 11 February 2009).*

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The **Resolution**, similarly, highlights Public Service Broadcasting (Art. 11) in ensuring access to sources of information but should be amended to *recognize the crucial role of Community Media in fostering media access, particularly with regards to minorities and marginalized communities.*

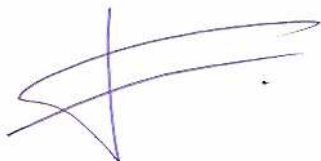
Art. 12 should reaffirm the Council of Europe's support for Community Media as a distinct media sector providing significant contributions to core objectives such as media pluralism, intercultural dialogue, media literacy and social cohesion.

In order to be consistent with the Council of Europe's recent work and declarations, the **Action Plan** should equally recognize the need to support Community Media as media of general public interest, with the concrete need to: *Develop an enabling policy environment at the local, national and regional level, including legal recognition, allocation of frequencies, access to digital broadcasting networks and public funding, in order to allow it to fulfill its function as a non-profit service that fosters access to information, citizen participation and media literacy.*

CMFE's engagement in the future

The CMFE offers its support for the future work of the Council of Europe on media and communications issues, and to find solutions for the important questions that surround the development of a 'new notion of media'. The CMFE and its constituency have extensive experience and expertise in areas such as democratic participation and citizen empowerment, intercultural dialogue, cultural and media pluralism, media literacy, and the convergence (and integrated use) of new and old media platforms.

Yours sincerely,



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