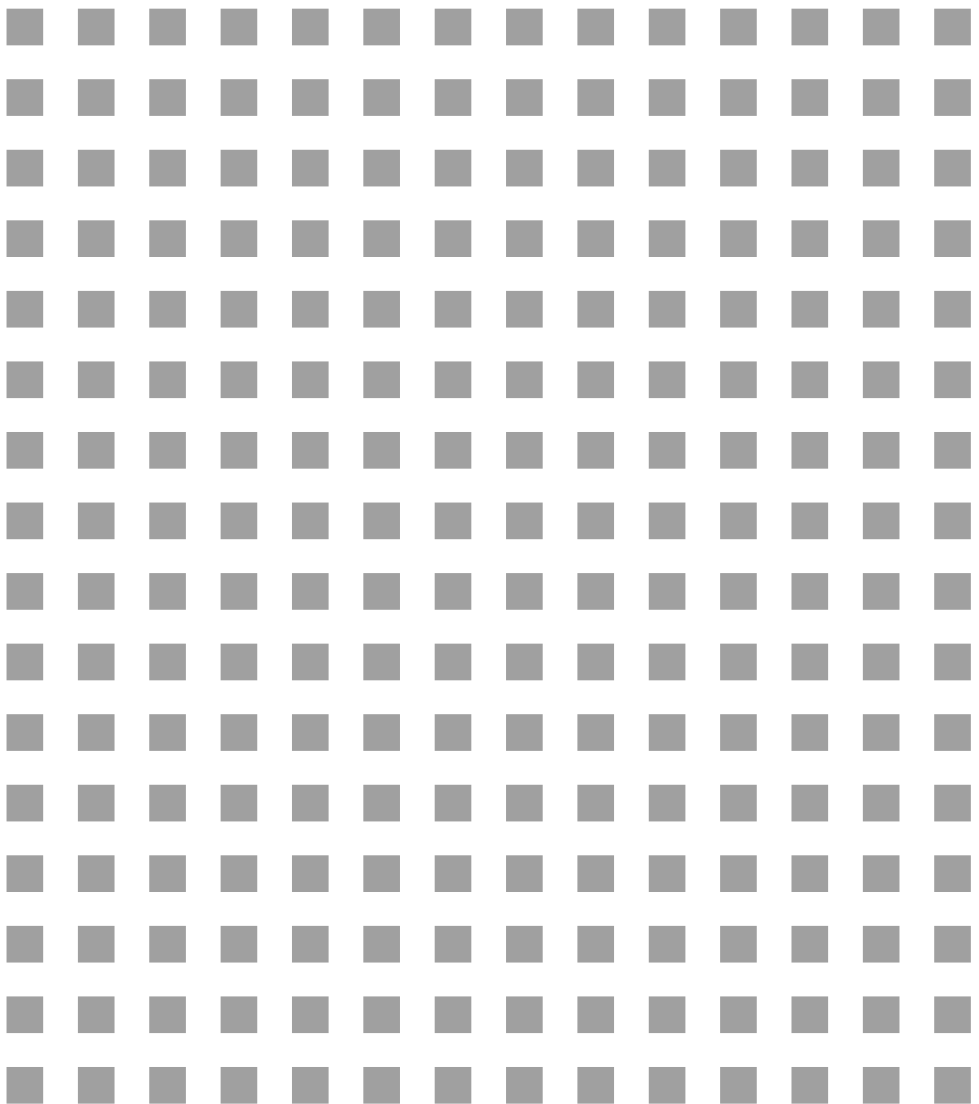# Public Service Media on the Baltic: The Role of the State in Central and Northern European Media Systems

Editors' introduction:
Public Service Media in Central and Northern Europe.
Does the State still matter?

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In 2009, when the Polish government presented a new draft of the Broadcasting Act and a plan to abandon the licence fee system, "What kind of public service media do we need?" became not only the title of an academic conference, but also one of the most popular questions in contemporary political debates. Further, Poland is not the only European country where the concept of public service media is currently being discussed. The future of broadcasting fees is also the subject of discussions in Finland and in Lithuania, which failed to introduce that particular system a couple of years ago. In an era of competition, convergence, technological development and global financial crisis, most public service media in Europe face problems related to their funding as well as identity, governance and relations with audiences. There is no single model of European public service and differences among national media regulations need to be analysed in a wider social and political context.

Public service in the field of mass media in Europe has always been connected to media policy and the development of broadcasting. However, its relation to the state has varied during the different eras of monopoly, dualistic competition and digitalisation. From the very beginning, radio and television were believed to have great power, and therefore were highly regulated by the state. During the old broadcasting order, the state had a monopoly on broadcasting in most Western European countries until the beginning of the 1980s. In that particular period, broadcasting mostly referred to accountability and tasks in the field of culture and information. Thus, radio and television channels were expected to protect national language and culture. Their performance was non-commercial and highly politicised (see: McQuail, de Mateo & Tapper, 1992, pp. 9–10; Blumler, 1992, pp. 7–19). The introduction of commercial radio and television stations changed perspectives that de-

fined broadcasting in Europe. Besides accountability, public finance, cultural values and universal service, new elements were added, such as the ability to compete and the need to perform differently than commercial broadcasters by serving the civil society and treating the audience as citizens rather than consumers (Siune & Hultén, 1998; Jakubowicz, 2007). These public service principles became an issue in post-communist countries during the period of political and social transformation in which the communist policy of censorship was replaced by the introduction of a free press and the adaptation of new broadcasting legislation. The concept of public service broadcasting in Europe was challenged again due to technological developments starting in the 1990s. The notion of public service was thus extended to new media and new multimedia markets to such extent that the classic term of public service broadcasting was replaced by that of public service media more broadly.

Without a doubt, social and political changes coupled with technological development, increased competition, convergence and the transnationalisation of communications have had a huge impact on traditional public service principles. All of those determinants have influenced programme schedules and styles of production, as well as previous national perspectives and levels of program quality. Media pluralism and public service values are nowadays defined by supranational media regulations from the Council of Europe and the European Union. However, one of the most important roles in the process of shaping electronic media structures is still national media policy and regulations coming from the state.

ANALYSING STATE INTERVENTION: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The introduction of a dual television system, followed by the evolution from traditional and centralised media policy towards new forms of governance, changed the role of public service dramatically in the period known as deregulation, re-regulation or liberal re-regulation (Hoffman-Reim, 1996, p. 3; Humphreys, 1996, p. 305). The end of state monopoly for broadcasting resulted in new types of regulations, setting limits on the number of competing channels, creating new regulatory authorities, as well as redefining cultural and social goals. The policy started to evolve towards new communications policy paradigms, where "governments are retreating from regulation where it interferes with market development and giving relatively more priority to economic over social-cultural and political welfare when priorities have to be set" (van Cuilenburg & McQuail, 2003, p. 198). At the same time, liberalisation, together with the growing level of journalistic professionalisation raised many expectations for the process of depoliticisation. Thus, the role of the state should be analysed observing the extent of the intervention and forms it takes.

From that particular perspective, the role of the state might be defined as high or low regarding activities in the sector of public service media in the era of commercialisation, technological development and re-regulation. That includes regulation

and the protection of public service values in connection with maintaining pluralism, satisfactory content, the development of civil society and preserving regional and local mass media. The state may assert its responsibility and authority by means of strict regulations, where market mechanisms play only a secondary role. On the other hand, it may also accept the logic of market economics and competition within the limits of certain legal constraints.

The levels of public service media regulation are often regarded as one of the most important measures of state intervention in the media system. This approach is exhibited by Hallin and Mancini in their three-model conceptualisation of media and politics (2004), where differences between contemporary media systems were examined in the context of the development of media markets, political parallelism, the level of journalism professionalisation and the role of the state. Hallin and Mancini define state intervention in relation to media ownership, funding, regulation and most important news sources (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 41–44). Kees Brants and Karen Siune offer a different concept with four main factors in their state interference analysis: control of finance, programming and access, control of media organisations, and media law (Brants & Siune, 1992, pp. 112–114). Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch use another approach and analyse the relations between mass media and politics with regard to mass media partisanship, media-political elite integration, the nature of the legitimisation of media institutions and degree of state control over mass media organisation. By explaining the dimensions of state control, the authors highlight the process of media personnel appointments, the control of the finance and the control of mass media content as the most important factors involving state intervention in the media system (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, pp. 62–64).

Inspired by all these concepts, we first seek to analyse the role of the state in shaping the current structures of public service media in four main fields: control of organisation, control of funding, control of the content, and control of new media and technologies (Fig. 1). The first dimension includes control of access, organisation and ownership. This level concerns the structure of national and local radio and television, the role of the government and its impact on the processes of appointing members of regulatory authorities and supervising bodies of public service broadcasters. Control of public service media funding affects the main source of financial income. It includes the system of licence and state aid as well as grants to support public service activities. State intervention also impacts the content of public service media. The analysis of this dimension includes the protection of democracy and national culture and is connected to public service remits, regulation of advertising, protection of minors and monitoring of mass media content. The last dimension underlines the role of the state in the control of new technology and regulation of public service media activities *via* new platforms such as the Internet, mobile phones or digital radio and television platforms. All these proposed determinants are closely related to national media law. Their analysis should include both political influence and pressure coming from the market.

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│ORGANISATION│    │  FUNDING  │    │  CONTENT  │    │ TECHNOLOGY│
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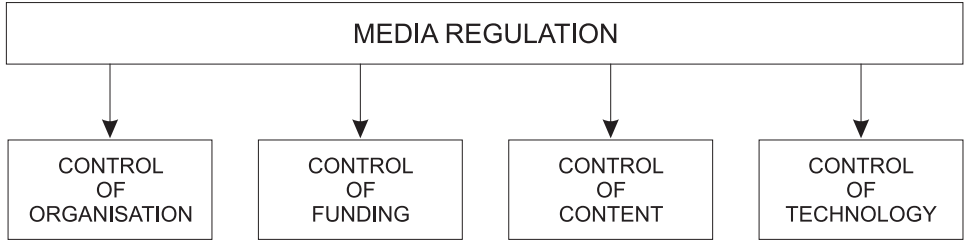
Fig. 1. Levels of state intervention in public service media
Source: Authors.

Public service media cannot be understood outside of the social and political structures of society. As argued by Peter Humphreys: "political factors are highly relevant for explaining why some broadcasting systems were prone to executive dominance, while in others influence over broadcasting was shared between parties and 'socially significant' group, and it yet others the broadcasters enjoyed relative autonomy" (Humphreys, 1996, p. 299).

Taking into account the remaining key elements regarding different concepts of relations between mass media and politics (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, pp. 62–64; Hallin & Mancini, 2004), we propose to include journalistic professionalisation, political parallelism, as well as the dimension of systemic parallelism, which was defined by Karol Jakubowicz as a principle where "a country's system of government is translated into a corresponding system of public service governance." The acceptance of that perspective underscores the importance of the quality of this involvement (Jakubowicz, 2008a, p. 108).

With respect to many features of political systems, including rational-legal authority, political culture, as well as models of democracies and party systems, Hallin and Mancini (2004) analysed sixteen Western European countries together with Canada and United States. In this group, they observed three models of media and politics: the Polarized Pluralist Model (Mediterranean), the Democratic Corporatist Model (Northern European) and the Liberal Model (North Atlantic). By underlying differences between national variations they concluded that in most European countries the level of state intervention was high but differed in accordance to political parallelism and professionalisation. This was mainly observed in their comparative study of countries in Northern and Southern Europe. A high level of state intervention in the North coexisted together with strong political parallelism and a high level of journalistic professionalisation, while in the South the level of professionalisation was defined as low. This may help to explain further differences in state activities with regard to public service media, where they can be defined as politically independent or politically accountable.

In Northern European media systems, where media policy is based on a long tradition of democracy, a well-developed civil society and a high level of political

culture, public service media are often defined as public goods. Despite high levels of political parallelism, state intervention is based there on principles of non-interference by the government with respect to media autonomy. In contrast to that model, the period of democracy in Mediterranean media system is relatively shorter. Due to the lower level of political culture, but vigorous party loyalties, and the slower development of the public sphere, media was perceived mainly as a battlefield between different political forces. Thus, the processes of governing and funding often depend on particular party interests, and programs offered by public service media are usually defined as biased or trivial. Therefore the state may support media autonomy and journalistic professionalisation, while in some countries it often ends with further stages of politicisation. A high level of media autonomy and media self-regulation may reduce levels of state intervention, while a low level of media autonomy may cause further levels of state interference.

Hallin and Mancini's three models of media and politics have been already criticised by some political scientists, who argue that it might be dangerous to build conclusions based on such selective political dimensions. In fact, most of contemporary democracies are hybrid constructs and may mix features from both consensual and majoritan types of democracy, as well as different types of pluralism.

Our aim is not to go into details while analysing different political systems. We rather concentrate our study on democratic development and levels of political culture, which are important to understand differences in levels of state intervention. Hallin and Mancini later stressed that role of the state in the field of corruption, nepotism or biased information flow was underestimated in their original research (Hallin & Mancini, 2010). This factor is highly relevant, especially when analysing different concepts of public service media in Central and Northern Europe.

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR,... TOWARDS A SCHEMA FOR UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA IN CENTRAL AND NORTHERN EUROPE

By using a term Central and Northern Europe we mean several European countries placed geographically around the Baltic Sea. The analysis of public service media in this region includes Germany, Poland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Because of some important similarities in the concept of public service media in Northern Europe, we decided to extend our research to Norway. The analysis of this region also includes current trends in the development of state broadcasting in Russia. Our objective is to discuss some distinctive national variations and factors that may be decisive when explaining differences in patterns of state intervention.

The countries around the Baltic differ with regard to regulation, organisation and number of national, regional and local radio and television channels. In most cases electronic mass media have been united within one single organisation, while Poland still distinguishes performances on public radio and television as well as

Sweden, where there are three different public service companies responsible for radio, television and educational broadcasting. In some cases, such as Denmark and Norway, the state plays an important role as an owner of electronic media. State authorities are active in the process of appointing regulatory authorities and members of the supervising and governing bodies of public radio and television. This appears, for example, in the case of Lithuania, where members of the Lithuanian Radio and Television Council are appointed by the president, parliament, and nongovernmental organisations.

There is no universal funding mechanism for public service media in Central and Northern Europe. Public television in the Nordic countries represent a public model of funding, which is mainly based on the revenues from the licence fee (although sponsorship is allowed). Finland has had commercials on public service television (private TV windows on public channels) for decades and Norway allows commercials in new media. A mixed revenue model, based on both licence fee and advertising has been accepted in Germany and Poland. The three Baltic states are financed by subsidies and revenues from the state budgets, and in Latvia and Lithuania advertising is allowed. The amount of public funds in the budgets of public service television differs from more than 90 percent in Denmark, Finland and Sweden to only 25 percent in Poland. Generally, the amount of the licence fee is determined by the state authorities.

Furthermore, there is strong state support for public service media in the area of defining programming tasks. Public service commitments are laid down in broadcasting acts (Poland) or in more specific public service contracts (Denmark). In Germany those remits are defined according to Article 5 of the German Constitution as interpreted by the German Federal Constitutional Court. State control over public service media performance usually includes contributions to democracy, national culture and language, and provision of high quality programs. Control over the fulfilment of programme content requirements is often given to a regulatory authority, such as the Swedish Broadcasting Commission and Norwegian Media Authority. In Norway and Denmark control of media content includes programming performances of two commercial 'hybrid' TV channels, obliged to public service activities, but financed by advertising. In most mixed revenue models, broadcasters need to abide by restrictions on the content of advertising.

Finally, the countries around the Baltic differ in the field of public service regarding new multimedia platforms. Swedish and Danish broadcasters have been more traditional in their approach to new multimedia markets, while some countries, including Latvia, still suffer from a lack of public service media development.

The distinctive national variations in funding sources, exhibited in Tab. 1, confirm that there is no such thing as a single model of public service media around the Baltic Sea. More differences appear when looking at the region and taking into account factors pertaining to political and social order as well as levels of democratic development.

Table 1. Selected national variations of public service television in the Baltic Sea region

State	Broadcaster	Ownership	Main source of funding
Denmark	DR	State	Licence fee
Estonia	ETV	State	State budget
Finland	YLE	State	Licence fee
Germany	ARD ZDF	State State	Licence fee Licence fee
Latvia	LTV	State	State budget
Lithuania	LTR	State	State budget
Norway	NRK	State	Licence fee
Poland	TVP	State	Advertising
Sweden	SVT	State*	Licence fee

* Owned by Foundation, members of foundation appointed by government.
Source: Authors.

The long tradition of democracy in that particular region is represented by the Nordic countries, where public service broadcasting has been linked to the ideas of the welfare state and the dominance of Social Democrats in politics, from the pre-war era through the post-World War II period and on up to the early 1980s. Media systems in Northern Europe developed within an interplay between civil society, commercial actors, and the state, where the state took a number of proactive measures supporting civil society. Public service broadcasting was to a large extent influenced by paternalistic model of the British BBC, while after some time Nordic Countries accepted a model of politics-in-broadcasting with high participation of political parties and social groups in the way of public service governance (Brants & Siune, 1998, p. 129). The same model was recognised in Germany, where democratic values were set up in Western Germany only after the World War II. There, the introduction of public service broadcasting was a part of broader political change after the fall of the totalitarian system (Jakubowicz, 2008a, p. 103).

Different paths to democracy might be observed in the case of Poland and the Baltic States. There, throughout much of the last century, radio and television were influenced by communist ideas and usually treated instrumentally by ruling governments, and a clear model of a public service mission was missing since the idealised Western European model had either vanished or become inaccessible (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2003, p. 33). State broadcasting in Poland was transformed into public broadcasting only in the early 1990s and the main ideas of public service governance, funding and performance were introduced in a time of political crisis, when almost every political faction had different concepts of the future. Despite the introduction of democratic institutions and the concept of the public sphere, Poland is still struggling with many issues, which are typical to new democracies. The leg-

acy of communist times, together with colonisation of public administration by ruling parties, and the level of political culture have a huge impact on the state intervention in accordance to politics-over-broadcasting. Political elites still want to control public service media at many different levels and the process of politicisation in both organisation and content can be observed (Dobek-Ostrowska, Głowacki, 2008, pp. 12–16). The same problems are shared by some Baltic states, where democracy was introduced in the process of Soviet dissolution.

Today, post-communist countries in Central and Northern Europe are usually defined as competitive democracies, which differentiate them from Russia, analysed from the perspective of a concentrated political regime (Jakubowicz, 2008b, p. 49).

Despite changes following the collapse of the USSR, events in Russia have shown that the old system of state-owned, state-funded and state-controlled broadcasting is still one of the most important features of radio and television in that country (see: Vartanova, Zassoursky, 2003, pp. 97–102; de Smaele, 2010).

BALTIC, MEDITERRANEAN OR ATLANTIC OCEAN? WHAT KIND OF ROLE FOR THE STATE?

The concept of Hallin and Mancini has had an impact on several studies trying to examine different national media systems. The role of the state, levels of political parallelism, development of media markets and professionalisation have already been used to examine relations between media and politics in different regions of the world, including Egypt, Japan, South Africa and Turkey. Most of these studies have underlined difficulties when applying Hallin and Mancini's dimensions to developed democracies, or pointed out further differences between countries included in the original research.

Nordic countries, which were defined by Hallin and Mancini within the Northern European model of media system, have been further examined by Anker Brink Lund. In research dedicated to development of media markets in Scandinavia he points out some common features relevant for this region, including the relatively high audience reach of public service radio and television, the professional and competitive production of news and views, as well as regulated market conditions based on political compromises. Moreover, Lund stressed that Nordic media systems are not only influenced by politics but also by routine practices and business considerations "within an institutionalised framework of self-regulated enterprises serving the public opinion on competitive media markets." According to him, the role of the state in the Nordic countries may still place them in the corner of Northern European media system as democratic-corporativistic states, while, at the same time, increased market competition may potentially drive them towards a more liberal tradition (Lund, 2007, pp. 122–124). The level of intervention diminished after the collapse of state monopolies for broadcasting and the wider acceptance of market rules. In order to survive, public service media needed to adopt their performances to growing competition, and therefore, some of them have started to ac-

cept strategies, typical for commercial broadcasters, without becoming completely adapted to the logic of the free market (Roppen, 2008, pp. 79–94). Political parallelism and regulation of public service activities remain high, while the level of their independence from politics has not decreased. That is shown by well-developed funding systems of licence fees and the manner of media governance, influenced by mixed features of the professional model and politics-in-broadcasting. Due to strong traditions and high level of professionalisation, public service media in the Nordic countries maintain their market positions by utilising their institutional reputation and company brands as reliable news content and entertainment providers, rather than referring to political associations (Nord, 2008, p. 109). In contrast, political ties still seem to matter in some Central European democracies.

The dimensions introduced in the concept of three models of media and politics have already encouraged studies on the development of media systems in post-communist Europe. Most media scholars, including Karol Jakubowicz (Jakubowicz, 2008b, pp. 41–54) and Angelika Wyka (Wyka, 2008, pp. 55–69), have emphasised some similarities between media systems of Central Europe and the Mediterranean model defined by Hallin and Mancini. That perspective may prove to some point Slavko Spichal's concept of media Italianisation, defining Central European media systems by the main features of the Italian media system in the 1980s with regard to a high degree of state intervention into public service broadcasting (Spichal, 1994; Spichal, 1996). However, Katrin Voltmer argues that these similarities might be misleading, since they are related only to a few characteristics of Western European countries, both on the level of media and political systems. According to her, analysis of the role of the state in new democracies should include many national differences, since it is one of the main legacies of the past regime (Voltmer, 2008, p. 37). In fact, most media systems in post-communist Europe mix different levels of political parallelism with both the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic model. As noticed by Aukse Balčytienė, liberal regulation of media markets in three Baltic States might be a good way to define them in a category of liberal corporatism (Balčytienė, 2005, p. 56). This kind of shift was evident in a study by Andres Jõesaar, who defined Estonia mainly within the North Atlantic model, since Estonian mass media are independent of political parties, "existing state regulation is rationalistic and the professional level of journalism can be considered as satisfactory" (Jõesaar, 2009, p. 46). On the other hand, current analysis of media policy in Russia shows a low level of professionalisation, heavy political control, and an additional role for the state in the field of censorship (de Smaele, 2010). Still, in some post-communist countries public service media tend to follow the model of politics-over-broadcasting and may be defined as politically attached.

Does the state still matter? Analysis of Central and Northern European public service media should include both the level of state regulation and the level of media autonomy. Despite general tendencies towards a decreased role of the state in the area of deregulation in countries where media autonomy is low, the state mat-

ters as long as political parties defend their particular interests and have a high level of political influence. On the other hand, some of the political parties in Norway and Poland present from time to time proposals to privatise the sector of public service media. That could result in a lower level of state intervention, but public service media would then become more dependent on further stage of commercialisation. In the same time new forms of media, and the content provided by non-professional media creators (bloggers) are growing the need to develop new policy and regulatory frameworks, which may have potential impact on public service media governance and the level of self- and co-regulation. The future of public service media in Central and Northern European media systems in accordance with relations between state, market and audiences is rather unclear. Thus, the simple question: "What kind of public service media do we need?" is still relevant for academic and policy debates in all the countries analysed here.

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In this special issue of the *Central European Journal of Communication*, entitled "Public Service Media on the Baltic: The Role of the State in Central and Northern European Media Systems," we are interested in the concept of public service media in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and state broadcasting in Russia. Taking into account Blumler and Gurevitch's dimensions of the state intervention to the media systems we are discussing legal and institutional frameworks, ownership, governance, funding, technology, and the presence of public service activities in new media platforms. By doing so, we are also trying to find answers regarding the role of the state, as well as the links between public service media and politics in the era of globalisation, commercialisation, convergence and digitalisation.

We begin with detailed analyses of two biggest media markets in the region of the Baltic Sea: Germany and Russia. Research in this area helps to define many crucial differences concerning electronic mass media, based on history, political culture and development of democracy.

Research on public service media in Germany is provided by Olexiy Khabyuk, who concentrates his study on a historical overview, institutional and legal frameworks, as well as current developments in programming. By describing the manner of governance and supervision he underlines the strong relations between public service media and politics in one of the biggest European media market. The analysis of the funding dimension helps him to put Germany in a triangle, showing the relations between broadcasters and three alternative ways to provide goods: market, voluntary and the state.

Another experience in the Baltic Sea region is analysed by Ilya Kiriya and Elena Degtereva, who address the current situation of state broadcasting in Russia in the context of social structure and the role of the state in society. By highlighting three types of political control among different channels, they point out some important

features of Russian television, which include state ownership, informal affiliations of television companies with political power, and supervisory, rather than regulatory roles of the state.

In contrast to two biggest media markets in the region, the next group of articles are focused on the concept of public service in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia – the Baltic states that were previously part of the Soviet Union.

A historical contextualisation from the Latvian perspective is offered by Sergei Kruk and Janis Chakars. Their study explores the history of broadcasting and developments of electronic mass media during the period of political change ("awakening") and the movement towards independence. A detailed analysis on the content of the television program *Labvakar* ("Good Evening") shows the level of change in the broadcast communication formula and the role of traditional broadcasting in the process of generating public service communication.

The developments of Latvian broadcasting from the monopolistic resource of Soviet-era to current trends of commercialisation are discussed by Inta Brikše. By doing an in-depth study in the field of regulation she points out some important features of the current situation of public service media in Latvia. These include financial problems, decline in number of viewers, unprofessional management in terms of public service performance on new multimedia platforms and a lack of independence from politics.

The crucial question of media autonomy returns during the debate about history and development of radio and television in neighbouring Lithuania. Žygintas Pečiulis addresses the period of National Revival, the first steps towards public service and the process of politicisation. According to him, Lithuanian politicians try to demonstrate power and seek to preserve the level of their influence, which were observed during advertising wars and debates about possibility of a licence fee.

Research on the role of the state in the field of legislation, organisation, funding and the development of new technologies in Estonia is provided by Maarja Lõhmus, Helle Tiikmaa and Andres Jõesaar. By presenting four different phases of Estonian broadcasting development in the period of 1990–2009, the authors highlight changes in structure, programming policy as well as in relations with audiences and try to identify some prospects for the future.

The last group of papers is dedicated to distinctive national variations of public service media in the Nordic countries. We begin here with two transformations of public service broadcasting in Denmark analysed by Poul Erik Nielsen. Transition from paternalistic public service monopoly to Danish model with two dominating non-profit public service organisations is followed by research on the development of public service media. The study includes general trends in the transformation of media policy, as well as social, cultural and political background which help to understand current changes.

The development of public service media in the Nordic countries is also discussed in a comparative study by Johann Roppen, Anker Brink Lund and Lars Nord. Detailed analysis in the field of public service performances on multimedia markets

in Denmark, Norway and Sweden help them to point out many crucial differences. These include the level of regulation, political governance and different commercial activities of traditional broadcasters in the sector of new media.

The future of local media in Norway is discussed by Ilona Biernacka-Ligięza. The study is focused on the process of legislation, media usage, profitability and development of commercial and non-commercial radio and television stations. The research is set in a wider perspective, underlying the relations between global and local, and the process of globalisation and glocalisation. The paper ends with some important questions about the role of local television and radio stations in supporting local identity and democracy.

Finally, the issue ends with two shorter articles discussing public service media conditions (Appendix).

In the first one, Christina Jutterström, former General Director of the Swedish Television, SVT, analyses public frames for broadcasting in Sweden from her personal point of view and experience.

The second analysis, provided by Taisto Hujanen, is related to history and current discussions about funding for public service broadcasting in Finland, where some groups have just presented their plans to substitute the traditional system of a television fee with a public service media fee.

To conclude, we believe that all the articles presented in this issue will help to further understanding of significant and important differences between Central and Northern European media systems. We also hope that this issue will encourage further studies on public service media and its development, not only in this part of Europe, but also in other parts of the continent and in other parts of the world.

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