Working Group 2: Local & Community Media
35th EPRA Meeting, Portorož, 30 May – 1 June 2012

Summary of the working session of 31 May 2012
by WG coordinator Bernard Dubuisson (CSA BE)

Participants:
Belgium (FR), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Netherlands, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, EPRA Secretariat
Registered participants: http://www.epra.org/attachments/portoroz-wg2-local-and-community-media-participants
Guest: Sally Galiana and Francesco Diasio, AMARC Europe
WG Chairman: Jean-François Furnémont
WG Coordinator: Bernard Dubuisson (CSA BE)

1. Introduction

The WG coordinator introduces the WG (see introduction note and his presentation at http://www.epra.org/attachments/1912)

He insists on the fact that the WG has in fact four dimensions (Local TV, Local Radio, Community TV and Community Radio). The questions should be answered from these 4 perspectives, from each of which specific issues can be raised. This makes the work rather complex.

He points out that there are two types of participants to the WG: those who have a regulatory framework that integrates Local and Community Media, and those whose regulatory framework is not aimed or developed towards such actors. He stresses that the latter can equally contribute to the WG by explaining needs and raising relevant questions on ways of developing the sector in their respective jurisdictions.

He also points to choices that have to be made regarding the deliverables of the WG. Five propositions were made in the introduction paper, but it is unlikely that we can achieve all of them.

2. Guest speakers : Sally Galiana and Francesco Diasio, AMARC Europe

Sally Galiana and *Francesco Diasio* introduce the activities of AMARC, The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters: A network of over 4000 community media in the world with headquarters based in Montreal, CA. In Europe, AMARC is present in 20 countries, with some 130 active members.

They emphasized the importance of a third sector of non-profit media in order to achieve a truly pluralistic media environment. They explained how Community Media can bring social and societal benefits in a great diversity of ways, while highlighting the challenges due to restrictive legislation and regulation.
They explained the benefits of Community Media (CM) as such:
- CM are accessible and open while keeping free of interferences form interest groups (political and religious);
- CM provide media literacy to their members and listeners as well as training on audiovisual techniques;
- CM ensure pluralism and diversity;
- CM are multilingual and provide spaces of expression for cultural minorities;
- CM create social cohesion and inclusion, they bring people together;
- CM contribute to cultural diversity and innovation, they experiment.

As such, they stressed the need to address the specificities of community media by giving them a proper definition, which reflects the diversity among the sector as well as the key importance of the notion of "non-profit". While the level of recognition of community media at European level is good (with a European Parliament resolution and report, a Council of Europe declaration, etc.) the situation is quite contrasted at the national level. Most interesting recent developments took place in Eastern Europe.

The translation of the concept into all national jurisdictions is far from homogenous and reflects a diversity of approaches at national level. Their own research show that acknowledgement of community

media in the law is very tied with high level of activity: legislation and regulation drive the development of Community Media. However, they also observed that the most effective legislation and regulation for the sector emerges out of collaboration with the sector. Regulators need to engage with the sector and vice-versa, but regulation is only as good as underlying legislation. In that sense, the CM sector has high expectations towards regulatory and law-making bodies.

National situations can be classified in 3 groups:
- Group A with high recognition, good interaction between CM and NRAs, direct financial support and reserved frequencies for community radios;
- Group B with good recognition, some issues with interaction and dialogue between CM and NRA's, reserved frequencies but issues can arise from unclear status of CR and insufficient financial support;
- Group C with issues of recognition, independence and financial support.

The main current challenges for Community Media are identified by AMARC Europe as such:
1. The setting of a European standard for the acknowledgement of the third media sector
2. The integration of Community Media into Digital Switch-Over policies
3. Achieving social sustainability: the need for support to Community Media from civil society
4. Achieving technical sustainability: the need for access to broadcast resources as public goods, based on the right to communicate
5. Achieving financial sustainability: the need for public support on the ground of public interest.

3.   Roundtable discussion

The roundtable discussion focused mainly on the distinctive nature of Community Media compared to Local Media, and the key notion of "social value". These examples stress that it would be valuable for the WG to develop a tool or models to measure social value.

- In **Ireland**, the first legislation did not make a distinction between local and community media. The non-profit perspective and the democratic ownership structure are necessary conditions but not sufficient as criteria. To identify and define Community Media, the criteria of "social gain" is key. A Community Media must provide added social value. But social value is not always clearly and efficiently asserted.
- In the **UK**, "delivery of social gain" is the key concept but it is complex to assert. "Community benefit" is difficult to measure as it depends on each community. Most of the time, though, the regulation will tend to work in favour of a large interpretation of social gain that is seldom used against service providers.
- In the **Netherlands**, this issue of relative social gain has been addressed by establishing local policy programme boards with representation of civil society. These boards set pre-requisites to be met by the "public local radio" that benefit from a must-carry status and financial support counted per household (the financial support is likely to be reduced in the future).
- In **Belgium** (French speaking), regulation is required to draw a clear line between Community radio and other local services. It does so by measuring social gain through programmes, asserting the volume and nature of specific types of programmes (information, education, cultural development and citizen participation).
- In **Switzerland**, there are differences between Local and Community Media: both are non-profit associations, but local media are allowed to broadcast advertising in order to finance local information programmes that can be expensive for small actors. Community radios have no local information mandate as such. Both get financial support (4% of the PSB fee) and separate frequencies are reserved. The DSO plans support simulcast for Local and Community Radio in FM and DAB+.
- In the Dutch Antilles (Caribbean islands part of the **Netherlands** jurisdiction with a specific media act), 9 small private broadcasters are catering for community needs, while being commercial actors. In remote or scarcely populated areas, it is frequent to find several types of media mixed together (local commercial and community).

Other relevant issues regarding national situations, especially in Central and Eastern European countries:

- In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, specific licences exist for Community Radio. There are no reserved frequencies but spectrum is still widely available. Community Radios are exempted from paying a licence fee but commercial communications is prohibited.. Complete prohibition of commercial communications raises the issue of a clear definition of advertising: a current case under investigation features a complex system of fund raising.
- In **Croatia**, Community Radio is only non-profit. Licensed stations are mostly student and religious stations. A pluralism fund (3% of PSB fund) exists to support local, regional and non

profit broadcasting.

- In **Poland**, KRRiT currently consults about the notion of Community Media. The current law is not completely satisfactory as it contains an article about Christian values which is specifically tailored for Radio Maria.
- In **Denmark**, DSO is already ongoing for radio, but raises issues for local media. The planned coverage architecture is not adapted to local stations. The proposed coverage is too large while content is meant for local audiences. Hence, those stations have very low audience (1,3% share of total viewing divided in more than 200 outlets), leading to sustainability issues. In some cases, licences had to be withdrawn due to a lack of sufficient funding.

4. Concluding remarks

- Both AMARC Europe and the Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE) are currently conducting surveys and mapping inquiries of the situation of Community Media in Europe. Participants are encouraged to cooperate when solicited for these surveys.
- AMARC Europe will hold its next meeting on "Public Policies and Media Pluralism: The future of Community Radio in Central and East Europe" at the Central European University in Budapest the 8th and 9th of November 2012. NRAs from Central and Eastern Europe are warmly invited.
- **WG work continues throughout the year, members are encouraged to interact online**

(Report: Bernard Dubuisson with help of Lawrie Hallett and Emmanuelle Machet)