Preface

This new textbook is a follow-up of the *Media in Europe Today* book by the Euromedia Research Group (Intellect 2011), which turned out to be especially relevant for graduate and post-graduate media policy university courses across Europe. However, due to fast changes in the media ecosystem, the previous *Media in Europe Today* needed rethinking and an update. Being a collective project, this new book was discussed in several group meetings (Copenhagen, Cambridge and Budapest) and has gained coherence and consistency over time.

Like the previous *Media in Europe Today*, this new peer-reviewed book provides a comprehensive overview of the current European media in a period of more or less disruptive transformation. It maps the full scope of contemporary media policy and industry activities while also assessing the implications of new technologies and radical changes in distribution and consumption on media practices as well as organizations and strategies.

Bringing together contributions from media scholars in the Euromedia Research Group teaming up with invited authors, this book represents the continuation and further development of a long tradition of media policy books written by the group (Sage 1986, 1992, 1999; Nomos 2007; Intellect 2011; Routledge 2015). Focusing on the development of media structures and media policy within Europe, this volume benefits from 25 years of experience in the observation and critical analysis of trends within European media. This book is truly comparative in scope, combining the study of media systems with a thematic approach. Particular attention is paid to the state of affairs at the level of media platforms, approaching these from a functional perspective (i.e. news provision, opinion and debate, entertainment). The book tackles critical issues in comparative media policy, regulation and governance.

This new volume is first and foremost designed for teaching. Each of the chapters provides lecturers with the necessary input for weekly teaching on media policy and media systems in Europe. In addition to courses and modules that deal specifically with media policy, the book is also suitable for courses or modules that deal with media management, international media industry, media policy and institutions, global media and media economics. Despite the success of the previous book (sold out in 2015) amongst university students, this is not only an academic book or a textbook. The book provides relevant insights for steering media policy and active citizen participation.

More than ever, media policy initiatives and decisions have a fundamental impact on citizens and on their mediated lives. Legacy media and social media, accessible through multiple online and mobile platforms, are ingrained in citizens' lives and they do matter in terms of social representations and visions of society. Media policy and regulation are relevant matters for all committed citizens and not merely for scholars.

In different ways, this book attempts to unpack the complexities and paradoxes of decision-making processes with impact on the media, public spheres and, more in general, on the wider symbolic environments. Contrary to common assumptions, there is no such thing as a clear-cut policy cycle comprising a linear chain of agenda-setting (definition of issues to be handled), policy formulation (setting objectives and selecting policy instruments), legitimation (ensuring support for policies), implementation (use of the necessary resources to carry out the policy) and, finally, evaluation (assessing the impact of the policy). Going through this book, it becomes clear that media policy and media regulation do not follow a fluid, bottom-up or top-down process. Pressures, interests and social actors interact continuously, thus providing a fast-changing, at times opaque and always challenging research object.

Structure and Contents

The book is divided into twelve chapters taking into consideration an average of taught weeks in European countries during a semester course. In spite of the difficulties in defining European borders, European contents or European policies or markets, the book chapters represent an effort to decipher the 'European' dimension of media policies. The book also articulates the national levels to highlight the bottom-up and top-down reciprocal influences. The comparative dimension is transversally relevant as comparing cross-border data helps to read the differences and similarities between countries and to develop a complex and comprehensive overview of the European media.

The very first chapter of this book by Hannu Nieminen provides an overview of the underlying concerns of the entire book. With a chapter called 'Why Study Media Policy and Regulation?', the author makes it explicit and deepens the core concerns of the entire book. In a detailed manner, Hannu Nieminen explains that all European countries make policy choices concerning the media that have impact on people's lives (PSM, Internet, media subsidies, diversity, harmful content, etc.). The reasons for studying the media as presented in the chapter are the fundamental justification for bringing this book to the attention of the readers: media policy and regulation affect media systems, and their contents have a pervasive and gradual impact in the ways societies are shaped and reconfigured.

Chapter 2, 'Is Content still King? Trends and Challenges in the Production and Distribution of Television Content in Europe', authored by Tim Raats, Jeanette Steemers and Karen Donders, provides an overview of recent trends in the television industry and related policy challenges. The authors stress the different origins and histories of television production in Europe and concentrate on present-day production challenges in an era of multiple platforms, global abundance of outlets, shifts towards personalized viewing on-demand and the rise of transnational formats and cross-border content circulation. This chapter clarifies the very different policy responses at national and European levels supporting content production such as drama, animation, documentaries and minority programmes.

In Chapter 3, Tom Evens addresses 'Media Economics and Transformation in a Digital Europe'. The author examines the paradox of increasing concentration of ownership whilst the total amount of media outlets in Europe continues to grow and to fragment audiences and advertising revenues. This article pays particular attention to the omnipresence of digital intermediaries and shows how the online and mobile technologies are disrupting the economic base of legacy media. Advertising revenues are migrating to digital platforms and traditional media organizations have no alternative but to rethink their business models.

'Media Governance – More than a Buzz Word' is the topic of Chapter 4 by Werner A. Meier, acknowledging the conceptual relevance, limitations and dilemmas of the umbrella term media governance. The chapter is focused on the key question of who should regulate both social media and mass media and how should regulators be monitored or controlled. In line with the technological and market developments presented in the previous chapters, this text brings to the fore the massive failures of media policy and its traditional regime. Media governance, often described as a process of power shifting in policy-making from government to a network of multiple stakeholders, offers new dangers, namely the prevalence of private algorithmic governance based on big data, but it might also bring about new opportunities for better interaction between citizens, economic interests and the State in the digital age.

Moving from more comprehensive approaches to more specific topics, Chapter 5 by Josef Trappel examines the role of media support instruments. In 'Subsidies – Fuel for the Media', the author uses the engine metaphor to explain how States refuel when engines run dry. For different reasons (social identities, collective self-esteem, fundamental human rights), States across Europe have been using media subsidies among a variety of media policy utensils to shape the structure and behaviour of media systems. In this chapter, Josef Trappel explains in detail the financial and non-financial media subsidies provided by both States and private corporations. Moreover, it clarifies the value-related rationales for media subsidies such as maintaining diversity, holding power to account, educating journalists, establishing public spheres and encouraging alternative voices.

Written by Hilde Van den Bulck, Leen d'Haenens and Tim Raats, Chapter 6 examines the 'Public Service Media in Western Europe Today: Ten Countries Compared'. This chapter compares PSM institutions in terms of remit, organization and service provision, added value and audience reach. Paying attention to recent changes in Public Service Media (PSM), this chapter helps in understanding the present-day relevance of PSM in the European media landscape whilst putting forward fundamental challenges in terms of financing, legitimacy, content balance and holistic framing. Innovation and creativity in face of new technological developments will continue to be indispensable if PSM is to continue to play its critical role in the European public spheres.

Chapter 7 by Stylianos Papathanassopoulos is on 'The Europeanization of the European Media: The Incremental Cultivation of the EU Media Policy'. Although the EU did not rise to borderless television, and despite its ambiguous role regarding PSB and more recently PSM, the author explains the gradual relevance of the EU in terms of the development

of a transnational media policy with particular attention to broadcasting content and digital infrastructures. Paying particular attention to some policy areas (open markets, advertising, production subsidies, ownership), the author explains the EU difficulties in the 'Europeanization' process of media policies. The EU has been attempting to develop a more competitive European media sector, both internally and in the global market. The results of these efforts are mixed.

Moving from the European Union to the Council of Europe, Chapter 8, written by Tarlach McGonagle, elaborates on 'The Council of Europe: Ensuring the Freedom and Independence of Europe's Media'. Basically this chapter explains the complex systemic functioning of the Council of this intergovernmental organization composed of 47 countries and concentrates on freedom of expression and the PSM remit. The author demonstrates how the Council of Europe system sets out to create an enabling environment for freedom of the media by promoting robust public debate, pluralism in the media sector, independent media, journalistic freedoms and other values, principles and freedoms. Differently from the EU, the focus of the Council of Europe is not in the opening up of media markets and competition. It is focused on principles and standards that are difficult to implement for a non-binding organization if no goodwill exists at the Member States' level.

As the Internet has become ubiquitous in people's daily lives in Europe, one chapter is dedicated to 'Europe's Internet Policies: The Challenge of Maintaining an Open Internet'. As the authors Christian Möller and Tarlach McGonagle state in Chapter 9, the Internet offers unprecedented information resources and opportunities for expression and exchange. The Internet is not free by nature but by design and enlightened decisions. However, this chapter shows that maintaining the Internet open and as a setting where human rights can be upheld is not guaranteed. Above all, this chapter reveals the complexity and diversity of Europe's Internet rules.

Chapter 10, 'Media and Democracy: A Couple Walking Hand in Hand' by Hannu Nieminen and Josef Trappel, brings us back to the longstanding but still much needed debate about the relationship between media contents and democratic systems. In this chapter the authors analyse how media relate to democracy while suggesting that media need democracy as much as democracy needs the media for well-functioning. Basically, it is argued that, despite the 'all-digital future', democracy still needs media's accountability to the public at large. This requires, among other requirements, a high degree of political and economic independence, respect and sufficient resources for journalistic practice, clear and predictable media regulation and a well-balanced composition of commercial and not-for-profit media.

Still in the critical domain of media diversity is Chapter 11, authored by Leen d'Haenens, Elke Ichau, Hanne Vandenberghe and Pascal Verhoest, with the title 'Media Diversity and Pluriformity: Hybrid "Regimes" across Europe'. Recognizing that most European broadcasters made a significant effort in implementing diversity policies, this chapter points out that the increasing supply of content diversity does not automatically contribute to the increase of diversity of consumption. The authors argue that the opposite might actually be

the case as strategies of audience fragmentation are being applied in the production and distribution of content.

The last chapter, 'Testing the Boundaries: Evolving Norms and Troubling Trends for Journalism' by Auksé Balčytiené, Karin Raeymaeckers and Elena Vartanova, debates the fluctuating boundaries of journalism. The chapter makes clear the ongoing societal changes as well as rapid restructuring in the media industry, which are affecting journalistic performance. Particular attention is given to market-inspired imperatives that might jeopardize normative ideals, principles and visions of democracy. The chapter argues that increasing competition and financialization have led to societal changes that have impacted on journalism in unprecedented and still unclear ways.

Future Directions

Despite fast changes, old concerns are far from gone. The very fundamental question revolving around the quality of symbolic content citizens have access to – either as producers or consumers – remains as critical as ever, if not even more. Whatever the platforms or the timing of informative or fictional fruition, the quality of political and social life is still very much depending on the way media contents contribute to people's understanding of the world.

In times of political and social fragmentation, embarrassing inequalities, fear of refugees, xenophobia, religious intolerance and disrespect for fundamental human rights, it is essential that policy-makers, media owners and media professionals face the challenge of guaranteeing accessible quality content for all citizens. This challenge must be responded with continuous and systemic efforts from those who worry about collective futures. This book stresses some of the media and policy fragilities that need to be urgently addressed. Massive changes are taking place in media markets in Europe. Intermediaries such as Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon are now dominant service platforms that have altered the power relations in terms of distribution, business models and content consumption. The lethal combination of concentration of power in distribution with audience and revenue fragmentation is bound to endanger what is often known as legacy media, being public or private broadcasters.

Quality journalism and quality fiction need support from policy-makers and citizens concerned with the quality of the symbolic environment we live in. This book clearly shows the many challenges quality journalism faces today. If traditional media organizations do not transform themselves and collapse, the damage would not only be economic. The erosion of quality journalism is a major societal problem and it should be taken seriously. The quality of political information and cultural diversity are key pillars of any democratic system. The importance of the PSM in the face of new non-European intermediaries could not also be more pressing if a quality and diverse cultural provision is to be sustained. PSM needs to be cherished so it ensures the necessary social base, and not just thin segments, to be a source of quality content. This book recognizes the difficulties PSM faces today, but it also clearly demonstrates that public broadcasters and/or Public Service Media still play a

critical role in the overall media ecology in Europe. PSM still reaches important segments of national audiences and continues to be highly valuable in terms of quality journalism and content diversity. The quality of cultural provision by the media has a short, medium and long-term impact so PSM systems across Europe should continue to fight for public support and for societal inclusiveness.

Quality production (journalism and fiction in both private and public institutions) is extremely difficult to maintain. As the public becomes more accustomed to an 'anything, anytime and anywhere' mode of consumption, traditional media in general and quality content producers in particular struggle with financial uncertainties, micro-segmentation and dilution of nation/territorial frameworks for product circulation. Yet, the reconfiguration of market forces and the recognition of massive difficulties cannot lead to resignation. At different levels of action, different societal actors should develop the necessary efforts to ensure constitutional provisions of information and cultural rights to all European citizens. Media policy and regulation face indeed tremendous challenges today. Using basically traditional tools, national and European policy tool kits seem unable to respond to the global circulation of content and the erosion of national borders and identities. Despite the difficulties, it is clear that old problems did not evaporate. The new highly complex digital world has only made the regulatory task even more difficult but certainly not dispensable. Hence, promoting the public interest and the provision of common goods is a never-ending struggle that needs to be addressed by every generation.

The editors
Leen d'Haenens, Helena Sousa and Josef Trappel