

Promotion of online media in different countries: supplementary report

Report for the attention of the Federal Office of Communications

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Executive Summary

With the media industry currently undergoing structural changes, media promotion is increasingly being discussed in academia and politics. This report is a supplement to the study *Ländervergleich Onlinemedienförderung* (Puppis & Bürdel, 2019b); it explores how media are promoted six media systems. The results of this report could provide important input for the future of online media promotion in Switzerland.

This study examines both direct and indirect online media promotion and examines how media promotion is structured, regulated, and how its effectiveness is measured (see chapter 2). To this end, media systems in Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Luxembourg and the Netherlands were compared by analysing various documents and by consulting with experts on the countries examined (see chapter 3).

The report includes detailed descriptions of the various media systems that were studied (see chapter 4). This is followed by a comparative analysis that shows online media promotion is widespread today (see chapter 5):

- **Direct promotion:** Direct funding is granted in Denmark, Italy, Canada, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden to support text-based online journalism, in Finland for publications in minority languages, and in France for local media. So far, direct production funding for different kinds of media (audio, video and text; online and offline) remains the exception (applies to Sweden and, to a degree, Canada). In addition to direct funding for the operation of media outlets, direct project funding (to support innovation and digital transformation, start-ups or journalistic research) features in all of the media systems studied.
- **Indirect promotion:** Print and online media outlets benefit from a VAT reduction or exemption in all of the countries examined, and there are numerous other indirect support measures in place (e.g. tax deductions, support for education and training, self-regulation and/or news agencies).

Based on the comparison of online media promotion strategies followed in the 13 media systems studied, several **recommendations for Switzerland** can be made (see chapter 6):

- **Promoting journalistic content in online media in a way that is direct and selective appears to be an obvious solution.** By defining funding criteria, funds could be allocated, for the most part, automatically. In addition, selective funding strengthens diversity and competition.
- **Project funding to support start-ups and innovation is an important complement to direct and selective production funding.** It facilitates market entry for new companies and helps kick off innovation projects in existing and new media (through a combination of financial support and coaching activities).
- **An independent fund for investigative research would make it possible to support individual journalistic projects.** In addition to private donors such as foundations, the public sector could also participate in the financing of such a fund.
- **Indirect funding measures could also benefit (online) media.** In addition to financial support for the training of media professionals, the press council, news agencies or media literacy projects, we should also consider tax deductions for media organisations, donations or subscription costs.