

EPRA CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2018

Assessing progress against EPRA's strategic goals and objectives

29 March 2019

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Introduction

2018 was another very busy but productive year for EPRA. In addition to implementing our regular annual activities, the Executive Board endeavoured to progress other aspects of our work towards the achievement of its strategic objectives and deliverables as set out in its Statement of Strategy 2017-2019. As with the Chairperson's Report 2017, the structure of this report aligns with EPRA's objectives as set out in the Strategy Statement 2017-2019.

1. Objective 1: Continuing to Serve our Members

1.1 EPRA as an Informed and Relevant Source for our Members

At the core of being an informed and relevant source for our members is the hosting of two plenary meetings annually. In 2018, the first of our plenary meetings was held in [Luxembourg](#) in May (23-25 May), at the invitation of our colleagues of ALIA, the first such occasion that a meeting was held in Luxembourg. Our autumn meeting took place in [Bratislava](#) (10-12 October) at the invitation of the Slovak Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission.

An enduring objective of EPRA is to be a rich and relevant source of knowledge for our membership. It is our goal not only to address topics of current interest to our members but to also include in our annual work programme future-focussed considerations. In 2018, we were very pleased to deliver on this objective and would flag particularly some highly relevant forward-looking contributions to our deliberations that supported the achievement of our goal in this regard. A number of highlights were as follows:

- **Challenges of the regulation of political communication in the era of social media:** in Luxembourg, [Damian Tambini](#), Associate Professor and Research Director at the Department of Media and Communications of the London School of Economics, stated that there was something broken in the regulatory environment for free and fair elections and it was the responsibility of AV regulators to foster an evidence-based debate on what is to be done about it. At the autumn Plenary, [Frédéric Bokobza](#), of the French CSA, illustrated the complex regulatory issues at stake by presenting a case study of the proposed legislation in France to combat "false news" during the electoral period and the role that the CSA would play in the new legislative framework.
- **Public Service and Public Interest Content in the Digital Age:** the findings of an [EPRA online survey](#) highlighted common challenges across Europe. The purported "legitimacy crisis" in public service media was addressed at the spring Plenary by a selection of key stakeholders, while the autumn session focused on the regulatory and organisational responses to the political and social pressures faced by PSM. In Bratislava, [Mari Velsand](#), Director General of the NMA, and [Aurēlija Ieva Druviete](#), Member of

the NEPLP, each provided valuable insights into developments in PSM accountability in Norway and in Latvia respectively.

In parallel, the EPRA Secretariat continued to serve EPRA members by compiling and disseminating timely and relevant information. Over 100 news items and announcements were uploaded on EPRA's website and shared on social media in 2018. The list of members' contact details, as well as the factsheets on EPRA members (Regulator's Profile), were also regularly updated.

Facilitating requests from individual NRAs and providing easy access to members' responses remained a key element of the Secretariat's day-to-day work in 2018: 10 questionnaires have been posted on the [survey section of our website](#). In addition to surveys, the Secretariat also frequently responded to individual requests for information from members.

1.2 *Growing the Participation and Involvement of our Members*

Participation in our plenary meetings in 2018 remained strong:

- Luxembourg in May: **157 participants**, representing 50 of our 52 members
EPRA was delighted to welcome a new member on that occasion, the Office for Communication of Liechtenstein;
- Bratislava in October: **142 participants**, representing 49 of our 53 members.

Strong engagement – both formal in terms of contributions to the sessions and informal in terms of active participation in debates – was evident during both meetings. Nonetheless, maintaining momentum in this regard remains an ongoing issue for the EPRA Board, particularly in terms of sourcing content producers for our sessions. In view of the level of involvement of many of our regulators in the transposition of the AVMS Directive, we expect that this situation may continue for the immediate future. However, we remain committed to finding ways of continuing to serve our members while meeting such challenges.

In Bratislava, Board addressed the organisational objective of consulting with members on tools and processes to achieve greater participation. This was combined with a strategic commitment to [review the structure of plenary meetings](#). Overall, the rationale for the twice-yearly meetings continues to be held relevant. In recognising the resource constraints of our member regulatory bodies, and following a lively discussion, a “small-steps” approach was endorsed to future changes that could help in making the meetings more efficient and effective.

A further initiative in growing the participation of our members is a proposal to introduce a simple evaluation framework with a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods including satisfaction surveys. The first such satisfaction survey, designed to test participants' immediate reactions to the content of the meeting, was tabled in Bratislava. The Board was pleased with the initial response rate and found the feedback very helpful in reviewing the deliberations.

Under this strategic objective, a second key deliverable for EPRA over the period of its strategy is to consider the potential for expansion of the EPRA membership, given a number of expressions of interest it has received from interested parties outside of the European area. It had been intended to introduce a discussion paper for consideration and debate during 2018. Due to the delay in the implementation of the revised Secretariat arrangements, the discussion paper has been deferred but will be presented to members at our spring plenary meeting in Sarajevo.

2. Objective 2: Strengthening EPRA's Support Structures

2.1 Strengthening EPRA's Secretariat

A key objective in our strategy of continuing to serve our members was to strengthen EPRA's support structures. Having secured (during 2017) the approval of our members to an expansion of the Secretariat, together with an adjustment to the EPRA budget to accommodate such a development, the key focus of our work in 2018 in pursuit of this objective was to progress the recruitment process for a second, permanent, full-time member of staff for the EPRA Secretariat. EPRA was greatly supported in the task by the commitment of Susanne Nikoltchev, Director of the European Audiovisual Observatory, and I extend a warm thanks to Susanne on behalf of all our members for her enduring commitment in this regard. Although the procedure was not concluded in 2018, the recruitment process was sufficiently advanced to leave us confident by the year end that our new member of staff would be in place in early 2019.

2.2 New Executive Board member

The EPRA Executive Board is also a key resource in supporting the EPRA membership by providing guidance and overall strategic direction for the EPRA Secretariat. In 2018, the Board was delighted to fill a vacancy that had existed since 2017 (on the retirement of Mónica Ariño). [Maria Donde](#), Head of International Content Policy, Ofcom UK, took up the position of Vice Chairperson on the EPRA Board, having been duly elected by the members at the Plenary Meeting held in Luxembourg in May.

Maria has readily embraced her role thus far and has been active, not only in terms of the Board's activities, but also in representing EPRA since taking up office.

It is now the practice of the Board to hold five Board meetings during the year. In 2018, two meetings took place in conjunction with the plenary meetings held in Luxembourg and Bratislava, and three planning and review meetings took place in January (Munich), June (Brussels) and November (Brussels).

3. Objective 3: Communicate and Participate: actively engage at the European level to share EPRA's learning and expertise

Each year members of the Executive Board and Secretariat actively engage on behalf of EPRA with a range of European stakeholders, sharing EPRA's experience and expertise and, in turn, building our own institutional knowledge which we endeavour to bring back to the benefit of our members. These interactions take the form of representation, co-operation and engagement.

Details of all such engagement are provided in the Chairperson Reports that are presented at the plenary meetings. However, a number of highlights from 2018 are presented below:

3.1. Engagement with organisations

- *ERGA*

ERGA as a key network of media regulators in the EU is an important stakeholder for EPRA, given the significant overlap in membership of both organisations and its role in the implementation of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive over the coming years – a key focus not only for our EU members but which is also of significance for many of our members beyond the boundaries of the European Union.

The Chairperson and Secretary participated as observer at ERGA Plenary Meetings held in Brussels in March and November. There were helpful exchanges on the respective work programmes of EPRA and ERGA for 2019 to ensure complementarity in the content of both organisations.

At a DLM/ERGA-organised meeting in April, EPRA shared its [experience on the co-operation of regulators on matters of jurisdiction](#).

In the first half of the year, co-operation took place with ERGA and the European Commission on the design and dissemination of EPRA's questionnaire on Gender Diversity – the focus of EPRA's WG at the Luxembourg meeting. Subsequently, the outcomes were shared at the EC's [Digital4Her](#) Event held in Brussels in June, which promoted a strategy for growth and equality in the European digital and audiovisual industries. On September 18 last, the Chairperson and Secretary presented EPRA's report on [Achieving Greater Diversity in Broadcasting – Special Focus on Gender](#) to the Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, Mariya Gabriel.

- *Council of Europe*

EPRA Vice Chairpersons, Helena Mandić and Maria Donde, and the Secretary participated in meetings of the Committee of Experts on Quality Journalism in the Digital Age [MSI-JOQ](#) in June and September. The Secretary also took the opportunity of briefing members of the CDMSI on key EPRA developments relevant to their work. Given the growing regulatory concerns regarding online information disorder, participation in such fora will assist EPRA in staying abreast of key developments and thinking as Europe attempts to find ways of addressing such issues.

- *European Audiovisual Observatory*

Regular interaction and coordination took place during the year to make use of the natural synergies between the two organisations. Maja Cappello, Head of the Department for Legal Information, acted as facilitator and rapporteur of the World café session on new challenges for privacy in Luxembourg. Agnes Schneeberger, Analyst in the Department for Market Information, reported in Bratislava during the working group on cooperation between regulators on the status of the cooperation with EPRA members to feed the MAVISE database. The system is based on interaction with “MAVISE contact persons” within EPRA members, and for the second year of this cooperation, the return rate has been very good. The key findings of the EPRA report on gender and media were presented during an Observatory workshop on gender imbalances in the media which took place in December in Strasbourg.

- *EBU*

Given the increasing number of our members that have a role in the regulation of public service media, our co-operation with the EBU provides valuable insights into the current challenges faced by such organisations in the evolving media environment. In 2018, the EBU shared [relevant documents](#), primarily focused on the funding and commercial environment for European PSM, including helpful comparative information for our members who have a role in the oversight of public funding of PSBs. [Florence Hartmann](#), from the EBU-MIS, reported on the relevance, robustness and flexibility of PSM in Europe with a focal point on current financing challenges during our session of the Future of Public Service and Public Interest Content in the Digital Age, at our plenary meeting in Luxembourg in May.

3.2 *Media Literacy as a key area of engagement*

Media literacy has been a key area of activity for EPRA over the past number of years – through its working groups and [MIL Task Force](#) – and will continue to be a focus in 2019, reflecting the huge appetite of our members for information and networking in this regard. Co-operation and representation by the EPRA Secretary and Board members continues to support our work in this regard and this took place in a number of fora.

EPRA Vice-Chairperson, Maria Donde represented EPRA at a number of meetings of the EC's Media Literacy Expert Group in the course of the year. Maria's participation and involvement in the Expert Group complements the work of EPRA in this field and helped to inform the deliberations of EPRA's MIL Task Force during the year.

At the invitation of the IIC, the Chairperson addressed a [Symposium on Audiovisual Regulatory Developments in Digital Literacy in Europe](#) which took place in Thailand, in September. It was evident that the appetite for activity by audiovisual regulators in the field of media literacy is not confined to Europe alone.

4. Vision, Mission and Values: Board Commentary on EPRA's Performance in 2018

4.1 Have we pursued our vision, mission and values as set out in our Strategy?

It is the view of the Board that the Work Programme for 2018 reflected very strongly EPRA's vision of promoting freedom of expression, as well as a culturally-diverse, sustainable and pluralistic media environment. It also reflected EPRA's desire of addressing issues in the current media environment affecting regulators, as well as our overarching goal of being future-focussed and responsive to change.

The plenary theme of *Public Service and Public Interest Content in the Digital Age* highlighted the continued relevance of PSM in Europe and emphasised the importance of their role in contributing positively to diversity of content as well as being an important source of support to the European creative sector in a fast-evolving digital environment. The role of PSM as trusted providers of news and opportunities for public debate on issues affecting democratic discourse went very much to the heart of issues of plurality and freedom of expression.

The second bi-annual plenary theme, *The Regulation of Political Communication and the Challenge of Social Media*, also strongly reflected issues impacting freedom of expression and pluralism in Europe. The plenary sessions took stock of the ability of social media to influence the outcome of elections and referenda and focussed on the challenges facing regulators and their role in ensuring fair and balanced representation of parties and political opinions in the online environment. It continued EPRA's engagement with themes of information disorder.

The Diversity theme found a particular focus in Working Group 2, with the focus on gender diversity in spring and a focus on improving diversity more generally in the audiovisual sector both on-screen and off-screen in autumn. The sharing of approaches to data-gathering and regulatory strategies more generally for increasing diversity was a helpful and practical focus for regulators wishing to focus their strategies in this area.

The deliberations of EPRA's Task Force on Media and Information Literacy continued to align with EPRA's vision of fostering cultural diversity and media pluralism. The approach to provide [informal support and practical guidance](#) to our members was an excellent example of EPRA's core mission in practice i.e. sharing best practice and experience.

Also reflecting the innovative aspects of our Mission, the deliberations of Working Group 3 tested a new form of interaction for EPRA – the "World Café" format of discussion, to encourage the participation of delegates in a collaborative dialogue. The response of participants was very positive, and an increased level of participation was evident in the process.

The view of the Executive Board and Secretary is that EPRA continues to reflect its values in our regular practices and activities, and our values are to the forefront in reaching both strategic and day-to-day decisions.

Independence:

2018 was the first year of implementation of a tiered membership fee (with the primary aim of strengthening our independence) and no issues arose as to the treatment of, or participation by, those members who pay a reduced fee.

Informality:

Testing new formats of discussion in order to stimulate informal and frank discussions on relevant issues between EPRA members was a key feature in 2018. The level of interactivity between members during both ad hoc working groups using the World café format and the MIL Task Force was extremely encouraging. The debate in Bratislava on EPRA's strategic objectives demonstrated the wish of EPRA members for increased interaction with the audience during Plenary sessions and regular Working groups.

Transparency and Accountability:

We constantly look to ways of improving our transparency and accountability to our members. Following what was a lively debate on the increase and restructuring of our approach to charging membership fees, I am delighted to report that we came in under budget in 2018 and we will off-set any surplus against fees due in 2019.

The format of our End-of-year Reports (and this 2018 Report) is designed to further improve the accountability of the Board and Secretariat in terms of the implementation of our three-year strategy and the performance by the organisation against the strategic objectives and key deliverables.

EPRA as an Expert, Informed and Learning Organisation:

Having considered the nature and quality of inputs to our plenary meetings, as highlighted in section 1.1 above, and also the range of stakeholders with whom the organisation has co-operated and interacted with over the past year, the Board believes that it has faithfully reflected the value of being an expert, informed and learning organisation. In 2018, EPRA meetings involved this year no less than 14 carefully selected guest speakers from academia, commercial media service providers, PSM, community media, self-regulatory bodies, consumers association as well as external consultants.

Collaborative:

The breadth and depth of our representation and co-operation activities – some of which have been set out above – reflect our aspiration of being collaborative in our approach. It is particularly pleasing to note our collaboration with the European Commission and ERGA throughout 2018 on the issue of gender diversity in the audiovisual sector. We believe that this collaborative endeavour is a good example of constructive co-operation which furthers the interests and aspirations of both organisations as two key European networks in the audiovisual field.

4.2 *Achievement of our strategic and annual goals in 2018*

Reflecting on all of the above, the Executive Board is satisfied that it has achieved its strategic goal of providing EPRA members with appropriate tools to increase their understanding of the changing nature of regulation by giving clues to better grasp the complexity of the new media environment. This view was formulated having undertaken an honest and detailed review of the work programme for the year as implemented. The feedback of our members – both formal (satisfaction survey) and informal also helped us in forming this view. It is important to point out however, that the process of formally examining the achievement of our strategic objectives and deliverables over the three-year period (2017-2019) will

formally commence later this year and members will be offered a formal opportunity to share their own views, both positive and negative.

We are pleased with the achievement of our more specific objectives for 2018, particularly in light of the fact that we had not secured the additional resources for the Secretariat by the year end. Only one key action was outstanding – that of consulting with our members on the possible expansion of the EPRA membership. However, we are on track to fulfil our commitment in this regard at the spring plenary meeting in Sarajevo.

Looking to future challenges – this is an exceptionally busy time for audiovisual regulators. As well as ongoing challenges, it seems that new issues arise almost on a monthly basis. These are prompted by developments in the online environment and which are not only significant in and of themselves, but regulators are also having to deal with the impact on traditional broadcasting players also. As a consequence, growing the participation and involvement of our members will remain a challenge as resources get diverted to more urgent and pressing tasks.

Environmental pressures on our regulatory members are likely to intensify, and be added to, during the transposition period of the AVMS Directive. It is EPRA's wish that it can continue to support its members by whatever means are possible having regard to its remit.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to extend my thanks to you, our members, for your contributions, cooperation and support throughout this past year. Particular thanks are due to my colleagues on the Executive Board – Maria Donde, Johanna Fell, Helena Mandić and Oliver Gerber. Finally, a special thanks to Emmanuelle Machet, EPRA Secretary, for her outstanding commitment to sustaining our organisation and to the realisation of the EPRA vision.

I look forward to another satisfying and fruitful year in the life of EPRA!



Celene Craig