



FJÖLMIÐLANEFND

Iceland Country Report

EPRA meeting Bucharest 2023

A. Media Regulation

1. AVMS Directive 2018 still not transposed into national law

The Icelandic Parliament, the Althing, has still not transposed the provisions of the AVMS Directive 2018 into the Media Act No 38/2011. A draft bill on the implementation of the AVMSD was submitted before the Icelandic Parliament in May 2021 and again in May 2023 but not deliberated. The bill will be submitted again in the fall. EFTA incorporated the AVMS Directive 2018 into the EEA Agreement with the decision of the EEA Joint Committee on 9 December 2022.

2. The Media Commission's report on the implementation of the Act on the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service 2013-2023

On 6 June 2023 the Icelandic Media Commission submitted a report to the Minister of Culture and Business Affairs on the implementation of the Act on the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, a public-service medium No 23/2013. The report covered a ten-year period, 2013-2023 and was submitted on the basis of a legal obligation. It will be presented to the parliament in the fall. In January 2023 the Icelandic Media Commission also submitted its annual assessment of the public service remit of RÚV, the public service broadcaster, for the year of 2022.

3. The Media Commission's report on public access to television broadcasts

In March 2023, the Media Commission published a report on public access to television broadcasts with recommendations on possible amendments to the provisions of the Media Act regarding 'must-carry' and 'must-offer' obligations.

4. A working group to reassess the public service broadcaster's activities on the advertising market

The Minister of Culture and Business Affairs wants to study how the presence of the public service broadcaster, RÚV, on the advertising market affects the commercial actors and the profitability of commercial media. RÚV is financed partly through public funds and partly through advertising revenue. In April 2023 the Minister established a working group, e.g. to look at possible ways to change the nature and extent of RÚV's advertising department in order to reduce RÚV's activities on the advertising market. The working group is supposed to finish its work by 15 November 2023.

5. A working group to assess financial obligations of global players

The Minister of Culture and Business Affairs has appointed a Governmental Working Group to assess the possible financial obligations and contributions of global players on the media market, including investment obligations of VOD services under Article 13(2) of the AVMSD. The domestic media have

called for taxation of streaming services and other global players on the media market. The working group will assess what actions can be taken in this regard, taking into account Iceland's obligations in this area, both legal obligations and at the OECD level. The working group is supposed to finish its work by 15 December 2023.

6. Prime Minister proposes an action plan against hate speech

The Prime Minister of Iceland has proposed a parliamentary resolution on an action-plan against hate speech for the years 2023-2026. The proposals for the action-plan include:

1. Establishing a *special fund* for projects aimed at combating hate speech.
2. an *awareness campaign* aimed at the general public and
3. an *online educational course* for combating hate speech.

A draft bill on the action plan was submitted before the Icelandic Parliament in spring 2023 and but highly debated, especially by members of one political party (The Centre Party), and not deliberated. It will be submitted again in the fall.

B. Media Support & Media Ecosystem

1. Two major commercial media outlets bankrupt

Two major commercial media service providers in Iceland declared bankruptcy in 2023: *N4 ehf.*, the former owner of the television channel *N4*, which was based in Akureyri, North Iceland, and *Torg ehf.*, the former owner of *Hringbraut* television channel and *Fréttablaðið* newspaper/online news site in Reykjavík, one of the two biggest daily newspapers in Iceland.

2. Continued financial support for commercial media

Due to a rapidly changing and difficult media environment the future and sustainability of media remain a key concern in Iceland. On 8 June 2023 an act on the continued financial support scheme for commercial media entered into force. The subsidies are to be provided over a 2 year period. The total amount to be allocated each year is ISK 476,7 million ISK (24,10 million DKK / 36,56 million NOK / 37,24 million SEK / 3,23 million EUR). The aim is to establish a more predictable long-term financial framework for the media. The media scheme is open to all private, registered media in Icelandic jurisdiction, without restriction as to platform, technology or form. The media service providers must fulfil certain requirements related to e.g. content, number of employees and publication frequency. Thus, the media support scheme is only open to media that cover news, current affairs and social issues. Specific exceptions apply to regional media in terms of number of employees and publication frequency. An Allocation Committee, consisting of three media, legal and financial experts, was appointed to assess the applications. The task of preparing all the relevant application forms as well as preparing the applications assessment and providing expert assistance, was allocated to the bureau of the Icelandic Media Commission. The bureau of the Icelandic Media Commission had the same task in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

C. Media and Information Literacy

1. National media literacy network

In December 2021 the Media Commission initiated a *national media literacy network*, TUMI, to create a forum for discussion on media literacy and online safety between different national institutions, ministries, companies and NGOs.

2. Media and Information Literacy Week in elementary schools

The recently established national media literacy network, TUMI, organized an *Information and media literacy week* that was held in elementary schools in Iceland in the week of 13 – 17 February 2023. All elementary schools in Iceland received new educational material on media literacy, including six videos with teaching guidelines on subjects ranging from social media use, hate speech online and age recommendations to news, disinformation and pornography. The videos were also broadcast on RÚV, the public service broadcaster, during the media literacy week, and published online on RÚV's website for young people. The information and media literacy week is expected to become an annual event.

3. A new website on media literacy and online safety

A new website, miðlalæsi.is, was opened at the beginning of the media literacy week, with educational material on media literacy, including the beforementioned six educational videos, a glossary on recurring terms in the context of disinformation and links to educational material on online harms and online safety.

4. Conference on media and information literacy

The national media literacy network TUMI held a conference on media and information literacy on 16 February 2023 in Reykjavík. The Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, delivered the opening speech and the main speaker of the day was Stephanie Comey, former senior manager of Media Literacy with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), current Director at the newly established Coimisún na Meán in Ireland.

5. “On tour” with the Data Protection Authority

The Icelandic Media Commission and the Icelandic Data Protection Authority have been organizing an educational “campaign tour” in Iceland due to take place in the fall of 2023. Representatives of both regulatory authorities will go “on tour” around the country to educate children and teachers in elementary schools all over Iceland, on the importance of data privacy, media literacy and children's online safety.

6. The Icelandic Media Commission publishes results of studies on hate speech, polarization, disinformation and trust

The Icelandic Media Commission conducted *studies on media literacy* in November 2022. The first part of the results was published in a report called “Hate Speech, Polarization, Disinformation and Trust” in February 2023. The questions were partly based on a study done by the SOM Institute of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and partly based on a study done by the Norwegian Media Authority, Medietilsynet, in cooperation with the consulting and research company, Kantar. Thus it was possible to compare the Icelandic results to the results in Norway and Sweden.

7. Nordic Think Tank for tech and democracy publishes recommendations

Elfa Ýr Gylfadóttir, Director of the Media Commission, participated in a Nordic Think Tank for Tech and Democracy, that in April 2023 published [11 recommendations for how Nordic governments should tackle the problems that Big Tech has created in society](#). The Nordic Think Tank was established by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2021 to address the influence of Big Tech on democratic debate in the Nordic countries. The Think Tank consisted of 13 members from all over the Nordic Region: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Faroe Islands and Åland.