



## **The systemic importance of the media in times of crisis – Extension of the remit of Subgroup 2 and creation of an ERGA Action Group**

### **1. Background**

In light of the recent unprecedented developments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, ERGA Members are aware that especially audiovisual media services and radio stations play a central role in stabilizing the society by generating and disseminating solid and reliable information. They are, therefore, particularly significant for preserving and fostering resilient democracies in the Member States. At the same time, media companies, like other businesses, are currently struggling with the negative impacts of the pandemic.

In agreement with the ERGA Board, the ERGA Chair brought this issue to the attention of Commission's Executive Vice-President Vestager, Vice-President Jourová and Commissioner Breton. In his letters, he encouraged the European Commission to keep the central role of media in mind when taking action to respond to this extremely challenging situation. He also suggested an exchange between the European Commission and ERGA to explore measures, which could be taken to stabilize the media landscape throughout the crisis.

ERGA should adopt the following gradual approach so that ERGA and its members are best prepared when asked for support.

In order for ERGA to be ready to react, the ERGA Board, in concertation with the European Commission, proposes:

- An extension of the remit of Subgroup 2 on Disinformation, and
- The creation of a dedicated Action Group on the economic conditions for the audiovisual media sector in the Member States.

### **2. Extension of the remit of Subgroup 2 on Disinformation**

Subgroup 2 on Disinformation, led by the Slovak NRA, will extend its scope to conduct an assessment on how platforms react to the challenges posed by this extraordinary situation. The assessment will put a particular focus on the platforms' measures to identify, control and prevent the dissemination of fake, misleading or incorrect information on medical treatments and the disease as such, the way it is spreading as well as measures taken by governments and NRAs.

This assessment fits within the objectives of the Subgroup 2.

### **3. Dedicated Action Group**

The Action Group will serve as a forum to exchange experiences and information about the crisis' implications on the economic conditions for the audiovisual media sector in the Member States. Taking into account the different scopes and competences that NRAs might have in this regard, such an exchange could help to collect economic and regulatory measures already put in place in the Member States, planned actions and envisaged tools to support the media sector. The exchange could also take into account the impact of such measures on the compliance of media actors with regulatory obligations and on the activity or capacities of the NRAs.

To guarantee a quick exchange of information among interested ERGA members, the Action Group could establish any so-called "emergency channel" via a messenger service, for example, in which every willing NRA can take part.

If the results of the stocktaking exercise and the exchange of information allow, the Action Group could make practical recommendations to the European Commission and policy makers in the Member States, which would inspire them to take into account the media sector and its particular role for stable democracies when creating safety nets for the economy.

The Action Group will be led by the ERGA Vice-Chair, Mr Karim Ibourki (Belgian NRA), who also holds the special responsibility for action groups according to the internal distribution of tasks within the Board.