

# Working for reliable, independent and pluralistic *information* in *support of democracy*

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Access to reliable, independent and pluralistic information is a basic condition and founding principle of democracy. The media and journalists, who are an essential vehicle for this, must be able to go about their profession freely and independently in order to guarantee this role of informing citizens and enabling democratic debate.

With technological developments, everyone can be both a receiver and a sender of information, creating profound changes in the way we use and relate to information. These assessments also raise a number of issues, such as freedom of expression, responsibility for what is broadcast and the ability to engage in dialogue within society.

In France, the situation in the news sector is part of a crisis in the economic model that is manifesting itself in a number of ways: a tightening of the advertising market, exacerbated competition between media, and increased concentration. These factors are contributing to the deterioration of working conditions and the lack of job security for information professionals, and are having an impact on the conditions under which information is produced, and on its quality. This situation also contributes to the high level of mistrust among our fellow citizens towards the media and those who produce information. In view of this, the ESEC has chosen to focus on the issues of journalism, media economics and media and information literacy.



40%

**of journalists  
leave the  
profession  
within seven  
years<sup>1</sup>**



77%

**of French  
people say they  
sometimes restrict  
or stop their  
consumption of  
information<sup>2</sup>**

The issues involved and the dissemination of information on the Internet are obviously a very important aspect. The ESEC's opinion statement proposes practical solutions to contribute to the major debate on information currently underway as part of France's Estates-General on Information, and is addressed to all public authorities. Via this opinion statement, the ESEC's intention is to take part in this debate, which concerns all French citizens.

<sup>1</sup> L'insertion et les parcours professionnels des diplômés de formations en journalisme, a study carried out by Ifp/Carism – Université Panthéon-Assas for the Observatoires des métiers de l'audiovisuel et de la presse, May 2017

<sup>2</sup> Guénaëlle Gault and David Medioni, Les Français et la fatigue informationnelle. Mutations et tensions dans notre rapport à l'information, ObSocCo, Arte and the Fondation Jean-Jaurès, September 2022, pages 13, 14 and 16.

## 1 PROVIDE A NEW GENERAL FRAMEWORK THROUGH LEGISLATION

Redraft Law no. 86-1067 of 30 September 1986 on **the freedom of communication**

→ *What is the purpose of this law?*

The law of 30 September 1986 establishes the legal anti-concentration framework and sets out thresholds for capital ownership, rules for combining authorisations and rules limiting multimedia concentrations at national, regional and local level.

→ *Why rewrite it?* This law is proving itself to be obsolete with regard to media concentration. It is ill-suited to the technological developments that have taken place since it was originally adopted. This rewrite will also strengthen Arcom's role and work, as well as the rights and protection of journalists.

## 2 IMPROVE THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

Obtain recognition of **social networks as publishers in** European negotiations.

→ *Why?* Platforms currently enjoy the legal status of hosting providers, which means that there is no general obligation upon them to monitor the content they host. This new status would make them more accountable.

**Register individuals' identities,** under the supervision of the CNIL, **to register and use pseudonyms on the digital social networks** used by more than 10 million people.

→ *Why?* To put an end to the sense of impunity that prevails on the major digital social networks, and ensure enforcement of the digital age of majority (15 years).

## 3 BETTER GUARANTEES FOR THE JOURNALISTIC PROFESSION

Make it compulsory to adopt an **ethics charter** in all general-interest news media with an editorial staff, and to create **ethics committees** chaired by an independent party

→ *Why?* The importance of an ethical commitment is crucial when it comes to guaranteeing reliable and independent information. The Bloche Act, which deals with these issues, is not binding and does not cover all situations.

## 4 PROVIDE ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR THE MEDIA

Temporarily allocate part of **the tax on digital services** to partially offset the manufacturing and operating costs of **the regional daily press** (RDP).

→ *Why?* The RDP, which plays an acknowledged role in maintaining democratic involvement, is facing a weakened economic model and a structural crisis that requires specific support and guidance.

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