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## Commentary

### **Economy, technology and ideology decide the future of Nordic public service companies**

**The next few years will be eventful for the Nordic public service companies. There are plenty of challenges. The companies' responses to economic and technological developments are the most salient topic. A host of external and internal investigations have been set in motion in order to cast light on the future of the public service companies. The investigations will also take ideology – the production of content – into account.**

Which are the strongest driving forces behind media trends? Market demand? Strong-willed politicians? Technological advances? Complicated questions. The participants in the media markets, politicians and media researchers are constantly on the look-out for answers.

A dominating force in the debate is how the Nordic public service (PS) broadcasters can make use of technological developments, and how an offensive strategy in this field may be financed. On the other hand, what happens to the ideology of the PS companies in a time of convergence? Here, in short, I will define ideology as the paramount objectives that guide the production of content, with particular emphasis on the PS institutions as broadly founded builders of democracy, identity and culture, and as serving the needs of the minorities

### **Convergence impels development**

There is consensus that convergence – the melding of media technologies – today constitutes the prime force behind the PS development in the Nordic countries. For instance, the requirement that DR must offer PS content on all relevant technological platforms, is one of the main points in the new public service contract between the Danish Ministry of Culture and DR for the period 2007-2010.

According to the strategic plan, “YLE 2010”, the Finnish PS broadcaster must offer products on all platforms and be a “customer-oriented Finnish producer of content”, where “the recipients, independent of technology at the receiving end and of time and place, may utilize contents from YLE”, Director of YLE’s Department of Research and Strategic Planning, Erja Ruohomaa told Nordvisionen’s Aktuelt.

”In recent years the environment in which radio and TV at the service of the people is working has changed drastically”, Swedish Minister of Culture Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth observes in a press release. Before the end of May 2008 an investigator will have concluded whether there is a need to amend the charters for the three Swedish PS companies (SVT, SR, UR) before the next charter cycle, starting on 1 January 2010. The new Swedish Government halved the term of the charters, from six to three years, in the Fall of 2006.

In Norway, the Government recently issued a White Paper, “Broadcasting in a digital future”, which presumes that PS broadcaster DR’s new services will be free to all. The Government also circulated a proposal for a new set of rules for PS broadcasting for comment, reasoning that the statutes of NRK do not adequately reflect technological and commercial developments in the media field, but first and foremost concentrate on the traditional activities of NRK.

### **The licence fee gives economic security – and vulnerability**

The economy of the Nordic PS companies is based on income from the licence fee, and the debate, as always, revolves around issues related to this means of financing PS activities.

“Not only the PS companies should receive income from the licence fee, the revenue should be distributed evenly to all radio and TV companies transmitting nationwide,” and “the licence fee should be abolished, and no other public source of income should be introduced to replace it,” are among the views put forward.

In responsible political fora in the Nordic countries discussions have primarily centred around how the licence fee should be constituted in a time of convergence, in order to include the viewers and listeners who use new platforms to receive the PS transmissions.

Icelandic PS company RÚV was reorganized to become a public limited company, and the traditional licence was replaced by an earmarked tax. As of 1 January 2007, the terms of the licence were amended in both Denmark and Sweden. In Denmark, owners of mobile phones and PCs equipped to receive TV transmissions must pay the licence fee, in addition to the owners of ordinary TV sets. In Sweden, the requirement to pay the licence fee has been extended to include owners of PCs equipped with a TV card.

”It is the Government’s conviction that the licence fee paid by the Danes is high enough”, Danish Minister of Culture Brian Mikkelsen said in a press release in April 2007. “The increase in the cost of building DR Byen should not affect the licence payers in the form of a rise in the licence.”

The statement was related to the discussion on whether the Danish PS company DR should be allowed to raise the level of the licence fee in order to cover some of the additional building costs associated with the new headquarters of DR, DR Byen. During the winter of 2007 it became clear that the budget excesses had reached 1.7 billion DKK. DR has to cover these costs by cuts in expenditures in the range of 300 million DKK in the span of four years. This has rendered several hundred members of the staff redundant; the production of programmes has been cut back, as well. Among other things, a host of principal sports events (World Cups, Olympic Games) will not be carried by DR for several years to come.

This example shows the vulnerability of the PS companies. Their management is not free to increase the price for their main products; radio and television programmes aimed at the

general public, even though the financial situation may be difficult. DR still has to comply with its PS commitments, outlined in the public service contract DR has entered into with the Ministry of Culture for the period 2007-2010. The contract, signed in January 2007, describes in some detail what DR must carry out in return for the 3.3 billion DKK in licence fee revenues that the company receives each year.

The licence fee is a privilege extended to the Nordic PS companies for historic reasons. The size of the fee is regulated by the authorities. The income gives security and an ability to maintain long-term planning. In the event that the PS companies should be financed by ordinary taxes – even if they are earmarked – the income level would not be predictable. The income could have a tendency to fluctuate in keeping with the political mood and changes in the composition of Nordic parliaments.

Commercial financing of the PS companies is not unthinkable. The Icelandic RÚV, for example, is partly financed by licence fee, partly by commercials. Although there appears to be a political will to turn the PS companies loose in the market for commercials in the Nordic countries, this market hardly would be of a size that could accommodate both the nationwide commercial radio and television companies and the PS companies, with all their channels. In addition, some of the commercial radio and TV channels are defined as PS institutions. Special demands are made of them, and these would be more difficult to fulfill if the competition for income sources should increase dramatically. Nor would pay TV be a satisfactory alternative to today's income from the licence fee. Whatever the case, it would violate the prevailing principles stating that the PS channels should be free to all.

### **The production of content is the main strength of the PS companies**

Will the income from the licence fee be sufficient to produce quality programmes when all the bills for building or renting new infrastructure, the installation of new production equipment and wages for a multitude of employees have been paid?

The production of content is the main strength of the PS companies. When the managers of the Nordic PS companies meet, they usually emphasize their role as builders of national identity – as Kenneth Plummer (DR), Hans Tore Bjerkaas (NRK) and Eva Hamilton (SVT) all claimed at the Nordic Media Days in Bergen, Norway, in May 2007.

The ideology of the PS companies (formulated as “something for everyone, always” by the Norwegian PS company NRK), is both a strength and a weakness, as is the dependency on the licence fee. It is a strength, because it allows quality to be prioritized in preference to quantity, with their owners' backing. It is a weakness because the ambition to reach a high proportion of the listeners and viewers – “something for everyone” – may tempt PS companies under pressure to copy the success of programming of the commercial companies; an abundance of very light and popular programmes may blur the programme profiles of the PS companies.

The foundation of the activities of the PS companies – and the financing by means of licence fees – indicates that they must produce content aimed at the population in its entirety. This foundation wavers if the listeners and viewers disappear. Three out of four members of the cooperative, regional network of the independent Nordic public service broadcasters, Nordvisionen (DR, YLE, NRK, SVT), lost viewer shares in 2006, seen in relation to 2005. Only the Finnish PS company YLE could register a slight growth. The downswing is not great for the other three Nordvisionen members, but Swedish SVT's setback of 1.5% in a year that was filled with great sporting events may signal a trend, according to Nordvisionen's *Aktuelt*.

The PS companies want to win over new viewers and listeners in the youngest age groups. This means that the companies go for new platforms, like Internet and mobile television. The PS programmes need to stand out, and this means that a lot of energy is spent on new content, suitable for the new platforms.

”To look only at the TV part of our activities is too narrow a view. We must take the whole of the media palette into account. Technology is just a means to the end, which is to reach out to the whole of the population, wherever people might be, and with the medium of their own choice”, Lars Thunø, head of the DR department of analysis, told Aktuelt.

### **The dream of watching Nordic neighbours’ PS channels lives on**

The Nordic PS companies cooperate extensively. Through the Nordvisionen regional network they have succeeded in the field of co-productions and in the transmission of programmes to and from all the Nordvisionen members. On average, 1.5 hours of Nordvisionen programmes are transmitted each day in each of the member countries. The Nordic Film & TV Fund is another important factor where co-productions on a Nordic basis are concerned.

Implicit in the Nordic dream of watching the neighbouring countries’ PS-channels is a desire to receive the channels directly. The dream still lives on. The 1980’s were characterized by attempts to collaborate around a joint Nordic TV satellite, a scheme that might have fulfilled the dream. In the 1990’s the Nordic PS companies strove to find common technological solutions for the digital terrestrial networks for radio and television, but to no avail. This would have required co-ordinated development in all the Nordic countries.

Soon, when the terrestrial networks for television have been digitized in all the Nordic countries – albeit utilising different technologies – the spillover effects, TV signals crossing the Nordic borders, will not function the way they used to in the analogue era. For instance, MPEG4 technology is used in the new Norwegian digital terrestrial network for television, whereas Sweden uses MPEG2.

Not only have the Nordic countries chosen different technical solutions, but the organization of the costly nationwide infrastructure for digital terrestrial television also differs from country to country, which makes it more difficult to co-ordinate direct transmissions of the PS companies’ programmes in the terrestrial networks across Nordic borders.

When the digitization of the terrestrial television networks of Finland and Sweden was planned in the 1990’s, development of the infrastructure under the direction of state-owned companies was seen as the natural choice. The analogue terrestrial television networks in both Finland and Sweden will soon be closed down. Planning of the digital terrestrial TV networks in Denmark and Norway started later than in Finland and Sweden, and there, digitization is entrusted to private enterprises working on concession. The analogue networks will be shut down in the course of 2009.

TV channels of the neighbouring Nordic countries may (to a certain degree) be purchased from the satellite and cable TV distributors as a part of subscribed channel packages. However, this solution is not satisfactory to those who urge that the Nordic PS channels be distributed free to all, without any extra costs on the receiving end.

”Why are Nordic TV channels not available on more TV sets?” That question was the title of the report Ole Norrback wrote for the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2004. The background

for the report was a continuing debate in – among other fora – the Nordic Council concerning the need and feasibility of Nordic neighbours watching each others' PS channels.

Norrback's report concludes with a series of proposals. Maybe the Nordic dream of watching the neighbouring countries' TV channels will be realized in a broadband and Internet-based future – provided that solutions to important copyright related questions can be found.

Terje Flisen  
Editor

## **Media Notebook**

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### **Nordic cooperation**

#### **Coordinated Nordic efforts to promote free software [Nordic cooperation]**

A Nordic software bank for free software and a liaison network for Nordic software developers, that is the core of a pan-Nordic project led by ICT Norway. The project is partly financed by Nordic Innovations Centre.

Other participants in the network are Centre for Open Source Solutions i Finland (COSS), the Association for Open Source Suppliers in Denmark (OSL), the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), and the Federation of Icelandic Industry.

Source: The Norwegian Ministry of Government Administration and Reform (11 June 2007)

#### **Record growth in the cooperative network Nordvisionen [Nordic cooperation]**

2006 was the best year ever for the cooperative network Nordvisionen. 2,821 hours of television programmes were transmitted, 83 hours more than in 2005.

On average, Nordvisionen participants, the non-commercial public service television companies in the Nordic countries, each transmitted more than 1 hour and 30 minutes of Nordvisionen programmes each day. Even the number of co-productions increased in 2006, by 73 hours or 5.7%.

Recently, the board of Nordvisionen decided to revise the guidelines for the Nordvisionen Fund in the Fall of 2007, the purpose being to enhance their clarity and to ensure that the guidelines are in accordance with the objectives of the Nordvisionen network. The board also paid out 144,600 euro in support to research and development, and 50 million DKK in production support, divided between 35 projects.

Source: Nordvisionen (9 June 2007)

## **Media commentary in Analys Norden [Nordic cooperation]**

Analys Norden's May 2007 issue carries comprehensive comments on relevant trends in the Nordic media sectors. Analys Norden is published on the Internet by the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers. Each month Nordic columnists give their views on topics of current interest. It is published in the Nordic languages only.

"A dramatic break-up in the media world" is the title of Thomas Larsen's Danish contribution. Foreign investors, free papers, the economy of Danish public service company DR, and journalistic credibility are some of the ingredients.

"Offended by digitization", writes Markku Heikkilä, referring to the fact that analogue terrestrial TV transmissions in Finland will cease on 31 August 2007. A good number of viewers have not acquired the necessary receiving equipment for digital transmissions, and the question of whether it is sensible to phase out the analogue network now, presents itself.

Media matters were not mentioned at all during the campaign leading up to the general election in Iceland in May 2007, notes Icelandic columnist Ólafur Stephensen. In the summer of 2004 there was much commotion about a new bill on media ownership. A Cabinet crisis was imminent due to the fact that the President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, used a dusty clause in the Constitution that empowers the President to veto a bill. The Government withdrew the bill and appointed a new all-party commission, which prepared a proposal for a watered-down version. This bill has not seen the light of day since, Ólafur Stephensen writes.

The Norwegian columnist Aslak Bonde's contribution is entitled "Media policy blindfolded". The politicians subsidise the daily press with billions of kroner and want to strengthen public service broadcasting, while the consumption of newspapers decreases and Norwegians take to the Internet as never before.

"They are all fighting for young viewers", Swedish columnist Margit Silberstein states. Young people watch less television and fresh statistics show that advertising on the Internet has decreased by 40% compared to last year. Within the media sector, web television is expanding the most, which has media analysts talking about a paradigm shift.

Source: Analys Norden – May 2007

## **The Nordic Computer Game Program awards grants to seven projects [Nordic cooperation]**

The Developer Support Expert Group of the Nordic Game Program has reviewed the 47 applications from 39 different Nordic companies for the first round of Development Support Grants for 2007, according to the Nordic Game Program. In total the grant applications exceeded 23 million DKK.

The Developer Support Expert Group awarded the 2,5 MDKK in available funds for the first half of 2007 to seven projects; three Norwegian, two Swedish and two Danish. The projects each received grants ranging from 250,000 to 300,000 DKK.

Part of the cultural co-operation funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Game Program has earmarked 5 million DKK for development funding in 2007, to be distributed in two rounds. The second application period will run from 1 September to 15 October 2007.

Source: The Nordic Computer Game Program (15 May 2007)

### **The Nordic countries are on the top of the IT world [Nordic cooperation]**

The five Nordic countries all feature in the World Economic Forum's '10' of investors in new technology as a means of generating economic growth, the newsletter of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Ministers reports. Denmark has knocked the USA off top spot in The Global Information Technology Report 2006-2007.

Here is the list, with last year's position in brackets. The report covered 122 countries.

1. (3) Denmark
2. (8) Sweden
3. (2) Singapore
4. (5) Finland
5. (9) Switzerland
6. (12) The Netherlands
7. (1) USA
8. (4) Iceland
9. (10) Great Britain
10. (13) Norway

Irene Mia of Global Competitiveness Network praised the Nordic countries for focusing on education, training, innovation and development in the IT field.

Source: The newsletter of the Nordic Council/Nordic Council of Minister (10 April 2007)

### **Printed media**

#### **Losses for Nyhedsavisen in 2006 [Printed media] [Denmark]**

The accounts for the Icelandic-owned free newspaper Nyhedsavisen, the distribution of which started in the Fall of 2006, show a loss of 113 million DKK in 2006, according to the newsletter, Dansk Presse. The result for 2006 was as expected, says the owner company.

The accounts of the publishing company, 365 Media Scandinavia A/S, shows total losses of 127 million DKK. This means that the equity capital was lost, and fresh capital had to be secured by the owners. The company expects its operations to show a deficit in 2007, as well.

Dansk Presse writes that 500,000 copies of Nyhedsavisen are distributed daily, 400,000 of which to households. In spite of this, Nyhedsavisen still has only 291,000 readers, according to the latest figures from TNS Gallup LæserBarometer, April 2007.

Source: Dansk Presse no. 23-2007 (8 June 2007)

### **Book Committee to keep an eye on free pricing** **[Printed media] [Denmark]**

How does free pricing affect the book market? The objective of the Book Committee, recently appointed by the Ministry of Culture, is to keep an eye on the trends. The committee is a result of an agreement between all the parties in the Danish Parliament in 2006, to loosen the reins on pricing of books. Among other things, the agreement means that the publishers may set prices on every tenth new publication.

In addition to analyzing the development of the book market, the committee has been asked to propose measures to improve the statistics for the market. A report to the Minister of Culture is to be submitted by the end of October 2008. Parliament will discuss the report in 2008/2009.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (5 June 2007)

### **Amendments to press support in 2008** **[Printed media] [Finland]**

The Finnish system of press support will be amended in 2008 as a result of the recent government negotiations. The system consists of both general and selective subsidy schemes. Most general grants are awarded to the party press, according to a distribution formula that allots 90,000 euro annually per seat in Parliament.

The selective press support (to selected newspapers, receiving grants for distribution and other costs) will be 500,000 euro annually. A new criterion for the distribution of grants is that the national minority language must be shown special consideration.

In 2008, press support will increase by 4,236,000 euro over the level in 2007, when a total of 14,264,000 euro was disbursed, 8 million euro of which to the party press.

Source: The Ministry of Transport and Communications (7 June 2007)

### **Are the days of glory of the free newspapers over?** **[Printed media] [Sweden]**

Competition increases, and so do costs, business weekly *Veckans Affärer* writes, and points out that publishing of free newspapers no longer gives a guarantee for good economic results.

The cause for these speculations is the difficulties experienced by *Metro* during the last year. Although it appeared that the paper's profitability had stabilized at the end of last year, the loss figures for the first quarter 2007 are dramatic.

The free newspaper corporation *Metro* reports a loss before taxes of 12.4 million USD for the first quarter of 2007, compared to 4.9 million USD in the same period last year. Sweden is one of the problematic markets for *Metro*, *Veckans Affärer* writes.

*Veckans Affärer* sees the main cause of the losses to be local media corporations' copying of *Metro's* concept and concludes that the good times for *Metro* are definitely over.

Source: *Veckans Affärer* (24 April and 15 June 2007)

**Press support: Dialogue with the European Commission**  
**[Printed media] [Sweden]**

The Swedish Ministry of Culture apparently has made great efforts to diminish possible effects of the features of Swedish press support that do not comply with the EC Treaty, Medievärlden writes.

According to Medievärlden the Ministry is proposing a support arrangement that covers only 75% of the real costs. The support may only be used in connection with publishing, and receivers of support must account for how the grants have been used. The money must remain in the publishing company and may not be forwarded to a corporation or the owners. Support will only be extended to a maximum 40,000 copies of the total circulation.

The proposal – if implemented – is not expected to affect the economy of the newspapers receiving press support to any greater extent, Medievärlden writes.

The proposal was presented for the European Commission's Directorate General for Competition at a staff-level meeting 19 June. The Swedish system of press support aroused the attention of the Directorate General when Sweden notified the Directorate about changes in the support scheme last summer.

Source: Medievärlden (13 June 2007)

## **Audiovisual media**

**Agreement reached on network for digital terrestrial TV**  
**[Audiovisual media] [Denmark]**

The parties behind the Media Agreement 2007-2010 have agreed on the conditions for development of the Danish network for digital terrestrial television. The agreement includes a network operated on commercial terms by a "gatekeeper"; this in addition to today's digital transmissions offered by public broadcasters DR and TV2/Danmark.

The gatekeeper will have at its disposal four multiplexes containing around 25 channels, and there will be a must-carry-obligation to transmit at least one channel from neighbouring countries. In addition a multiplex for public service broadcasting purposes, not to be operated by the gatekeeper, will be set up as a supplement to the multiplex already operated by DR and TV2, according to the Ministry of Culture.

Now the plan is being circulated for comment, and a gatekeeper will be in place from the start of next year. The analogue terrestrial TV network will be closed down in October 2009 at the latest.

Public service broadcaster DR comments that the company is satisfied with the balance between the deference taken to public service broadcasting and commercial channels, respectively. Particularly important is the fact that all DR channels will continue to be free to all.

DR had been critical of the scheme presented by a working group of senior public servants (Hermansen-udvalget) this past April. In that plan the public service multiplex apparently was to be a part of the private gatekeeper's domain, as well.

Source: The Ministry of Culture and DR (11 June 2007)

**DR on a pilot light – but will live up to its public service obligations**  
**[Audiovisual media] [Denmark]**

The board of public service broadcaster DR has announced that the company will have to use 287.5 million DKK annually over a period of four years to cover the budget overrun in connection with the building of the new headquarters, 'DR Byen'. 100 million is to be saved in the areas of administration and support, 187.5 million will affect departments where programme production takes place.

DR's chairman of the board, Mogens Munk-Rasmussen, says that DR will and must live up to its public service contract and keep its position as the most important Danish cultural and media institution.

Between 275 and 300 employees must either be given notice or resign. The fact has provoked spontaneous work stoppages in some of the departments that produce programmes. The sports and entertainment sectors will be hit hardest. For example, DR television will not carry either World Cup tournaments or the Olympic Games. Planned entertainment programmes for Saturday evenings have been shelved, and the growth in drama production will be less than previously announced.

In April the Ministry of Culture announced that it will help DR, renewing, for example, favourable state loans (ca 8 million DKK) and allotting DR additional income from the licence fee, approximately 50 million DKK. However, the Ministry will not discuss any general increase in the level of licence fee at the moment.

Source: DR and the Ministry of Culture (24 April 2007)

**Cable TV companies may keep analogue transmissions until February 2008**  
**[Audiovisual media] [Finland]**

On the eve of 1 September 2007 the analogue terrestrial TV networks in Finland will be shut down. Suvi Lindén, the Minister of Transport and Communications, has in accord with the TV companies, decided that the cable TV companies may continue to convert digital signals to analogue, until the end of February 2008.

In April 2007 the TV companies and the Ministry agreed on a transitional period if less than 85% of the households covered by the cable TV companies had acquired a digital adapter by August 2007. The decision to introduce a transitional period was taken earlier than planned, as it was clear already in June that coverage would not reach the agreed threshold.

Source: The Ministry of Communications (20 June 2007)

### **Peak year for Icelandic films on the home market** **[Audiovisual media] [Iceland]**

Mýrin, directed by Baltasar Kormákur, drew larger crowds on the home market than any foreign film in 2006. 81,580 tickets were sold to Mýrin. In second place was Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest with 65,406 tickets.

The market share for national films was 8.5% (2.7% in 2005). In total 1.5 million cinema tickets were sold in Iceland in 2006, 128,595 of them for films produced at home.

Source: SMAIS (the Association of film rights-holder in Iceland)/ nordicfilmnews.net – Nordic Film & TV Fund (11 April 2007)

### **“The pathfinder for the Norwegian film effort” adopted** **[Audiovisual media] [Norway]**

The Parliament has approved the Government's new plan for Norwegian film production. Three institutions, the Norwegian Film Fund, the Norwegian Film Institute and Norwegian Film Development are to be merged into one new institution, which will administer the whole process, from idea and script to production and distribution. In addition, regional film centres and regional film funds will be strengthened.

Production of an average 25 feature films annually — five of which must be documentaries, and five aimed at children and young people — and a market share of 25% (three million tickets) for the national films; are among the key objectives.

Another goal is to strengthen the Norwegian film culture by (1) securing a broad film presence in television channels, libraries and digital cinemas over the whole of the country and (2) various initiatives to attract and keep children and young people coming to the cinemas and to inspire them to produce their own films are other important objectives.

Source: The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (13 June 2007)

### **No channels from Nordic neighbours in RiksTV's channel package** **[Audiovisual media] [Norway]**

The channel package from RiksTV for the digital terrestrial television network to be opened in the counties of Oslo and Akershus, Østfold and Rogaland this Fall has been presented.

Norges televisjon, jointly owned by public service broadcaster NRK, TV 2 and Telenor, has the concession for the network, while its sister company, RiksTV, handles the administration of the channel packages.

Among the channels included are NRK's four TV channels (NRK1, NRK2, NRK3 and NRK Super) and NRK's 13 radio channels, all free to all. In addition a host of channels, both Norwegian and foreign, will be available in a basic subscription package.

Quite a few critical reactions followed the presentation of the channel package. For one thing, it does not include any channels from the neighbouring Nordic channels. The Media Authority has asked RiksTV AS and Norges televisjon as to explain their choice of channels.

The digital terrestrial network for television will cover 95% of the population when the last of the analogue terrestrial network is shut down at the end of 2009.

Source: RiksTV and the Media Authority (12 and 22 June 2007)

### **Review of the public service commitments of broadcaster NRK [Audiovisual media] [Norway]**

The Government has put forward a White Paper on public service broadcasting in a digital future.

The public service obligations of NRK are up for review. NRK should be required to make better use of the new media platforms and develop new services that appeal to all segments of the population. Today's by-laws for NRK do not adequately reflect technological and commercial developments; they focus primarily on the traditional programme activities of NRK, the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs writes in a press release.

The Ministry has therefore circulated a proposal for a new set of rules for public service broadcasting for comment. NRK should not be alone in the field of public service broadcasting. It is important for media diversity that the commercial broadcasters, too, have a broad and diverse range of programmes, Minister Trond Giske emphasizes.

Source: The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (11 May 2007)

### **Conditions for commercial radio to be investigated [Audiovisual media] [Sweden]**

Judge Martin Holmgren has been appointed by the Government to review the conditions for commercial radio and propose a set of regulations that covers the whole sector. His report is to be submitted by the end of September 2008.

In order to increase competition and plurality in the radio market it is desirable that even nationwide commercial radio transmissions be permitted. The investigator shall determine whether the conditions are ripe for the introduction of one or more permits for nationwide commercial radio, according to a communiqué from the Ministry of Culture.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (14 June 2007)

### **New regulation for transmission permits in digital terrestrial TV networks [Audiovisual media] [Sweden]**

The Government proposes to invest the Radio and TV Authority as from 1 January 2008 with the power of decision over transmission permits in digital terrestrial television networks – the public service broadcasting transmissions excepted. One programme card will apply for all encrypted channels, and the programme companies themselves will be able to designate the sellers of pay-TV subscriptions.

When deciding on transmission permits, the Radio and TV Authority must take into account whether diversity is strengthened and to what extent the services will complement the existing permits. In addition, the programme companies must be willing to cooperate in order to find

suitable technical solutions. The Government will extend existing transmission permits until 1 April 2008.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (8 June 2007)

### **Investigation of the public service broadcasting activities [Audiovisual media] [Sweden]**

The Government has appointed Rose-Marie Frebran, a former MP for the Christian Democrats, to investigate the conditions for public service broadcasting and to determine whether there is any need to amend the companies' charters before the next charter period, starting on 1 January 2010. Her report is to be submitted by the end of May 2008.

The environment in which radio and TV at the service of the people is working has changed drastically in recent years, Swedish Minister of Culture Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth observes in a press release. This broad investigation will make it possible to determine the best ways to develop the activities of the public service institutions in the new media environment.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (31 May 2007)

## **Information Society**

### **Information society to include all [Information Society] [Norway]**

The Government has granted 5 million NOK for the development of indicators and standards to facilitate universal design of automated solutions and electronic services.

Many elderly and handicapped people today have problems when trying to use automated solutions and electronic services, because there are no clear official requirements as regards universal design. The development of universal design is a follow-up of a White Paper (Stortingsmelding nr.17 [2006-07]) called An Information Society for All, and the present Government's declaration of assent (Soria Moria-erklæringen).

Source: The Ministry of Government Administration and Reform (15 May 2007)

### **IT Council appointed by the Government [Information Society] [Sweden]**

A working group – the IT Council – consisting of 18 members, led by Minister of Enterprise, Energy and Communications Åsa Torstensson, has been appointed by the Government.

The Council will be a forum for discussion – on a strategic level – between the Government and representatives of different sectors.

Source: The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications (20 June 2007)

## **Freedom of speech and copyright**

### **Jewels of the DR archives accessible via dr.dk [Freedom of speech and copyright] [Denmark]**

As from 1 January 2008 the jewels of public service broadcaster DR's archives will be accessible in all DR channels and platforms. DR and the royalty collecting societies – represented by COPY-DAN – have entered into an agreement which opens a host of new possibilities.

Both parties are very satisfied with the agreement, the first of its kind in the world. The agreement comprises all programmes that are wholly or partly financed by DR, transmitted before 1 January 2007. Programmes consisting solely of music or recitations of books are the only exceptions to the agreement.

Source: DR (29 May 2007)

### **Calls for a broader Media Liability Act [Freedom of speech and copyright] [Norway]**

In a joint hearing statement to the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs on statutory legislation concerning editorial freedom, the Norwegian Media Businesses' Association and the Association of Norwegian Editors stress that the Ministry's proposal should be the first step toward broadening the scope of the Media Liability Act.

The Act should unify the regulation of media liability, which would afford a more systematic overview and a higher degree of predictability than the rather fragmented legal system of today. Moreover, the present legislation is not up-to-date with regard to new technology; it has other serious weaknesses, as well, the organisations write.

Source: Medieportalen – the Norwegian Media Businesses' Association (19 April 2007)

### **Public willing to limit the freedom of the press [Freedom of speech and copyright] [Sweden]**

40% of the respondents in a survey carried out by the SOM Institute at Göteborg University accept the idea of limiting the freedom of the press to print whatever the editors find suitable, a report from the Centre for Business and Policy Studies (SNS Demokratiråd) shows. Only 1% oppose all manner of constraints on the freedom of the press.

The Centre for Business and Policy Studies expresses doubts that the system of self-regulation of the media will be sufficient in the long run, Medievärlden writes (in Swedish).

Among the faults pointed out are the circumstance that a public authority controls the ethics and journalism in television and radio (the Swedish Broadcasting Commission) and that the ethical rules for the press were introduced in a bygone era. "A patchwork and inadequate", is the verdict of the Centre for Business and Policy Studies.

Citizens/media consumers have also changed, from passive subscribers to active participants in the public sphere, which has successively blurred the boundaries between the media and citizens.

Source: Medievärlden (30 May 2007)

## **Media ownership**

### **Denmark's second- and third- largest publishing houses fuse [Media ownership] [Denmark]**

Lindhardt & Ringhof is the name of the new publishing house, formed when Denmark's second-largest publisher, Aschehoug, acquired the third-largest, Bonnier Forlagene — both owned by Egmont, as is the new company.

"With the acquisition of Bonnier Forlagene, Aschehoug continues the growth strategy it has pursued over the past four years, a strategy whereby numerous mergers and acquisitions have made the company Denmark's second-largest publisher after Gyldendal," Egmont writes in a press release.

Source: Egmont (11 June 2007)

### **A merger forms Cappelen Damm AS [Media ownership] [Norway]**

Publishing houses Cappelen and Damm merged to form a new major unit in the Norwegian publishing world. The new publishing house is owned jointly, 50/50, by Bonnier and Egmont.

In the course of 2009 the two houses will be co-localised. The Tanum bookstore chain, which Damm acquired in the summer of 2006, will be included in the merger, Egmont informs in a press release.

Source: Egmont (11 June 2007)

### **Schibsted would dominate Media Norge, says the Media Authority [Media ownership] [Norway]**

The Norwegian Media Authority has determined that Schibsted would unduly dominate the planned media concern, Media Norge. The conclusion is expressed in a digest of the comment received, issued by the Authority 24 April 2007.

None of the 13 responses introduced any new aspects or arguments of sufficient weight to change Authority's preliminary determination.

On 6 June 2007 the Media Authority sent a warning notice, stating that it would intervene in the merger of Aftenposten, Bergens Tidende, Fædrelandsvennen og Stavanger Aftenblad to form Media Norge.

On 21 June, after discussions with the participants in the planned Media Norge corporation, the Authority reported that it saw no prospect of an amicable agreement, by the terms of the Media Ownership Act. On 2 July the Authority announced its intention to intervene.

Source: The Media Authority (6 and 21 June and 2 July 2007)

## **Media surveys**

### **Norwegian media barometer 2006**

**[Media surveys] [Norway]**

No clear falling trends in the use of TV, radio and newspapers are apparent, even though 60% of the population used the Internet on an average day in 2006. That is 5% higher than in 2005. More and more Norwegians access the Internet via broadband networks, which opens the door to a wider variety of net-based activities.

Statistics Norway's Media Barometer 2006 shows that particularly those aged 16-44 years have increased their Internet activity. TV viewing and radio listening showed what may be a slight decrease between 2005 and 2006; the difference was not statistically significant.

The share reading printed newspapers on an average day has diminished during the past few years. From 2005 to 2006, however, there was no decrease, neither in the share reading a newspaper in the course of the day nor in the time spent reading newspapers. Another tendency is that reading of books is becoming more popular; the share has risen from 17% on an average day in 1997, to 24% in 2006.

Source: Statistics Norway (29 March 2007)

### **Nordicom's Media Barometer 2006**

**[Media surveys] [Sweden]**

Increased access to broadband networks in Swedish households has affected media usage – both the pattern of usage and the time spent with the media. This is one of the results derived from the annual survey of the Swedish media usage, Nordicom's Media Barometer, that began in 1997. Nordicom has been responsible for the survey since 1994.

In 2003 barely 30% of the population had access to broadband networks; in 2006 the figure was more than 60%. In the same interval the share of Internet users almost doubled, from 33% to 62% on an average day. The differences in accessibility to broadband between various groups has a tendency to increase both social inequalities and the differences between the Internet usage of men and women.

Total time spent by the Swedes on media overall has been relatively stable the past few years, but an increase is now noted, with total use (all media) passing six hours daily. The use of Internet accounts for the increase.

The share of TV viewers has increased by 5-10 percentage points since the beginning of the 1990's, while the share reading morning newspapers and books remains at the same level as earlier, and the share of radio listening shows a gradual decline.

Source: Nordicom-Sweden (23 May 2007)

## **Publications**

### **Denmark will hold on to IT leadership**

**[Publications] [Denmark]**

The Danish regulation of telecommunications is the theme for the report "Strategisk eftersyn af telereguleringen", (Strategic examination of the regulation of telecommunications), presented to the Parliament by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

The World Economic Forum in March 2007 pointed out that Denmark is the world's leading IT nation. However there are still quite a few challenges to the Danish IT policymakers.

Source: The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (20 June 2007)

### **Development programme for the libraries 2006–2010**

**[Publications] [Finland]**

The usage of the libraries and the public lending are still considerably higher in Finland than in the rest of the Nordic countries, even though in the past few years the lending statistics and the collections of books show a decrease.

In a report "Utvecklingsprogram för bibliotek 2006–2010", (Development programme for the libraries 2006–2010) it is discussed how the libraries may remain a substantial factor in the development of the Finnish society.

Source: The Ministry of Education

### **An action programme for developing media skills**

**[Publications] [Finland]**

"The implementation of media education requires support and new solutions, the concretisation of media education in local curricula and its integration into school practices and culture and into teacher education," the committee responsible for the report "Proposal for an action programme for developing media skills and knowledge as part of the promotion of civil and knowledge society" points out.

Equally important is the observation that "The wide exposure on the internet has caused new kind of concern for parents, especially with regard to data security, as an increasing number of young people put their products on the web."

Source: Reports of the Ministry of Education 2007:29

### **Public service report 2006**

**[Publications] [Norway]**

The Media Authority has put forward the annual evaluation of how the public service broadcasters NRK, TV2, P4 og Kanal 24 has taken care of their obligations.

The report (in Norwegian) shows that the broadcasters fulfil their obligations to a varying degree. The commercial broadcasters are warned about possible sanctions.

Source: The Media Authority (11 June 2007)

**Better co-ordination of public IT standards**  
**[Publications] [Sweden]**

The report "Den osynliga infrastrukturen - om förbättrad samordning av offentlig IT-standardisering" (SOU 2007:47)" (The invisible infrastructure – on better co-ordination of public IT standards) has been put forward by the IT standards committee.

The report suggests that the authorities must use open standards in order to avoid the dependency of specific standards owned by private companies, and that the authorities to a greater extent should utilise the expertise of SIS, one the acknowledged Swedish standardisation bodies, when new standards are developed.

Source: The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications (20 June 2007)

**The annual report on Swedish TV programmes**  
**[Publications] [Sweden]**

The programmes of Swedish TV channels of 2006 have been investigated by Professor Kent Asp, at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of Göteborg University. The report, "Svenskt TV-utbud 2006" has been commissioned by the Swedish Broadcasting Commission.

The report (in Swedish) includes programme profiles, the diversity of programmes, conformity and difference and variation over time.

Source: the Swedish Broadcasting Commission (25 April 2007)