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Commentary

Pan-Nordic television on the agenda: The Nordic Council calls for the political will to put cultural aspects up front

What opportunities do Nordic citizens have to watch the television channels of neighbouring countries via the four digital distribution platforms – terrestrial, satellite, cable and broadband? Not as many as Nordic politicians would like to see.

The question of the potential for watching neighbouring Nordic countries' television channels is once more on the agenda. In 2006, the Nordic Council launched a recommendation, in which the governments of the Nordic countries were petitioned to ensure that Nordic public service channels are included when digital television is introduced.

In this context, the term "digital television" means "digital terrestrial television networks". Less than a third of Nordic viewers use the terrestrial networks that will soon be fully digitalized, around half are connected to the cable television networks, around twenty per cent have chosen satellite reception, while less than five per cent receive their TV signals via broadband (IP TV). A household may use several platforms, which makes it difficult to obtain exact figures.

The Culture & Education Committee of the Nordic Council considered the recommendation during the fall of 2007, after receiving the Nordic Council of Ministers' answer on behalf of the Nordic governments. The Committee states, among other things, that the inclusion of neighbouring countries' public service channels in digital terrestrial television networks differs from country to country. However, the Committee is of the opinion that it should be possible to offer the channels of neighbouring countries – provided the political will to do so exists. It is surprising to note, the Committee says, that in some of the Nordic countries the distribution companies running the terrestrial networks have not been given any guidelines mentioning cultural policy aspects.

The Committee recommends that the Nordic public service channels take advantage of the opportunities for wide distribution inherent in the Internet, and points out that the Nordic governments suggest that a discussion be initiated, on the Nordic level, regarding the problems connected with the right to transmit programmes.

The Nordic Council of Ministers is following up the report from the Culture & Education Committee by, among other things, organizing a Nordic cultural forum in 2008, a seminar

discussing pan-Nordic television in the digital age. A report from the seminar will be published later on.

Legislative cooperation during the 1980s was successful

Over the past forty years, the debate and reports on pan-Nordic television have concerned the desire to be able to freely watch the public service channels of neighbouring countries. The idea has been that this will strengthen Nordic cultural fellowship and language consciousness.

The history of the struggle for pan-Nordic television shows that both cultural and industrial policy aspects have played a role in a process that has yet to show the desired outcome: That every Nordic citizen should have free access to neighbouring countries' TV channels.

Technology has been a central theme of most initiatives and debates on pan-Nordic television throughout the years. The way in which cultural aspects have played a politically important role has also been debated. During the 1970s, quite a few culture-conscious Northerners opposed the idea of a joint Nordic satellite. This would lead to the distribution of a great number of programmes of a dubious quality, it was maintained. The war cry "trash is trash, even if it is distributed via a satellite" ("skit är skit, om än per satellit") is still remembered by many.

The breakthrough of ideas about effective and pan-Nordic distribution of television channels (Nordsat) might have been of great importance. Before the end of the 1980s, Nordic TV viewers generally had to make do with their national public service channels.

The pan-Nordic Nordsat initiative of the 1970s and 1980s did not succeed. However, the reports and debates were not all in vain. In the mid-1980s, a new Nordic report was presented. It laid the foundation for legislation and collective agreements with rights holders in all the Nordic countries; the main theme was the dissemination of channels carried by satellite in the Nordic cable television networks. As from the last part of the 1980s, the Nordic public service channels – based on legislation and agreements – have been accessible for Nordic cable television subscribers. In this case, however, "accessibility" does not mean "accessibility of all channels for all"; the market mechanisms of supply and demand have subduing effects.

The marginalization of Nordic public service channels

Estimates show that the Nordic public service channels, as a whole, have a *market share* in neighbouring countries of less than one per cent, in Denmark and Sweden. In Finland, Iceland and Norway, the figures are even less accurate. The *reach* of the Nordic channels is highest in Denmark and Norway (between forty and fifty per cent), less in Sweden and Finland (ten to fifteen per cent).

The Nordvision cooperation between the Nordic public service companies – established in 1959 – has been successful when it comes to co-production of programmes and programme exchange. There are strong indications that Nordic viewers value programmes produced in other Nordic countries. Thus, there is good reason to ask whether the market share of the channels of neighbouring countries might not have been higher if marketing and accessibility had been better.

Around half of the Nordic television audience is connected to a cable television network, mainly receiving TV signals from large distribution companies, whose infrastructure stops at the exterior walls of homes. Today, some of the channels from neighbouring countries are

included in the basic channel packages from cable distributors in Denmark and Norway. In Finland, some of the distributors offer a package containing Swedish channels, and it is possible to buy Swedish channels one by one. In Sweden, there are no Nordic channels in the basic packages, but Nordic channels may be bought singly, as additional channels.

The Nordic TV audience, with a few exceptions, has little influence on the composition of cable distributors' channel packages and on buying channels singly, a fact that applies to all platforms of TV distribution. The Swedish cable TV distributors may refer to the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression and exclude the audience from the process of choosing which channels to distribute, in which packages, the journal *Nordens Tidning* writes in an article on pan-Nordic television.

Less than a third of Nordic TV viewers receive signals from the (soon to be fully digitalized) terrestrial networks. Only Danish authorities have requested that TV channels from neighbouring Nordic countries be included in the coming digital terrestrial network, to be run by a private gatekeeper. In Norway, the privately owned distribution company RiksTV, in 2007, might have been able to enter into agreements with the Swedish public service company SVT and the Norwegian rights holders' institution NORWACO on the distribution of SVT channels. It then became clear that the network did not have sufficient capacity to carry SVT, and other channels were prioritized by RiksTV. However, there are indications today that RiksTV will get competition from other distributors when the capacity of the Norwegian digital terrestrial network is expanded.

Overspill in the Nordic border areas of television signals from the analogue terrestrial networks has enabled quite a few to receive the free channels of neighbouring countries. Digitalization of the terrestrial networks, at a different pace and with different technology, may reduce this overspill. In Sweden and Finland, the analogue terrestrial networks have been closed down; in Norway and Denmark the transition will be completed within a couple of years.

Approximately twenty per cent of the Nordic TV audience have chosen to receive the signals via satellite. Only a handful of the satellite distributors offer the public service channels of the neighbouring countries to their national audience, mainly owing to the lack of necessary agreements. Less than five per cent of Nordic TV viewers receive their TV signals via broadband (IP TV), and the conditions and channel packages resemble those of the cable networks.

The account of pan-Nordic television today should be completed by mentioning the satellite-based channels SVT Europa, transmitted in Finland, and TV Finland, distributed in Sweden. Both channels only distribute the television companies' own productions, and may be received via satellite in the Nordic countries, Europe as well as in more remote regions.

Should the increasing power of TV distributors be restricted?

Today, all Nordic TV channels are accessible via two satellites covering the whole of the Nordic region. In *principle* the Nordic public service channels may be distributed to *all*, via all digital platforms: terrestrial, satellite, cable TV and broadband. The restrictions imposed on the distribution of channels to the single Nordic consumer are of a legal/economical/practical, not technological, nature.

Who are the participants with the power to influence the diffusion of neighbouring countries' television channels throughout the Nordic countries? The national authorities dictate the framework conditions of the other participants: the TV companies, the rights holders' organizations/the institutions managing the rights and the distributors of TV signals.

The television audience must also be regarded as a participant in this context. However, viewers, on the whole, do not have the right to actively choose channels, and to buy channels singly. From a *technical viewpoint*, distributors can sell the channels of neighbouring countries one by one. In some Nordic countries, via some platforms, single channels are offered in addition to the basic packages, but as a rule, subscribers have to take the mandatory channel packages. One argument from the distributors is that, for consumers, the system of channel packaging normally pays – in the end – because the price per channel is lower when distributors are able to handle a large number of channels in the same manner.

Alf Hildrum, Managing Director of the Norwegian TV 2 Corporation, in a debate article in the newspaper Aftenposten (June 6, 2008), asks Norwegian authorities to intervene, in order to secure consumers' free choice of TV channels. This will stimulate quality and diversity, Hildrum writes. He maintains that it is high time to do something with an obsolete system in which less than a handful of distributors decide what the viewer has to buy in order to watch television; the viewer must buy packages that are confusingly similar.

TV 2 wants to run pay-TV channels when the present concession to run nationwide commercial television via the terrestrial network expires in 2010. The TV 2 Corporation owns the distribution company in the digital terrestrial network, RiksTV, together with public service broadcaster NRK and the telecommunication company Telenor.

The distribution companies do not have editorial or cultural obligations, but they have nevertheless gradually seized power at the expense of the TV production companies and consumers, Hildrum writes. He points out that distributors may decide that channels are to be removed from or added to the packages, even if the technical capacity to distribute them exists. Hildrum feels that distributors have ambitions of entering the editorial offices, for instance by obtaining control of rights to transmit sports events.

Broad cooperation is necessary

What may be done to promote the idea of the right to freely access the channels of neighbouring Nordic countries? "Freely access" in this context means that TV viewers have to pay for channels that have copyright clearance, the exception being the non-regulated overspill in the terrestrial networks.

Copyright, who will have to pay for channels that have copyright clearance and how, is a central theme. Comprehensive cooperation on finding solutions is necessary – based on a broad understanding of the opportunities offered by today's distribution technology – to serve the best interest of Nordic consumers.

Terje Flisen
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Media Notebook

Nordic cooperation

DKK 3 million for ten new Nordic computer games

[Nordic cooperation]

Ten new Nordic game projects have been granted millions in funding from the Nordic Computer Game Program. This year's first round of development grants took place at the international game conference Nordic Game 2008, where 3 million Danish kroner's worth of funding found its way to the Nordic game industry, according to a press release from the Nordic Council/the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic Computer Game Programme was launched in 2006 and is in the third year of a six-year course. The programme focuses on improving access to Nordic computer games for Nordic consumers of which the funding scheme is an important part.

Source: The Nordic Council / the Nordic Council of Ministers (15 May 2008)

Culture improves Nordic competitiveness

[Nordic cooperation]

A new cultural campaign aims to improve the position of the Nordic Region in global competitiveness and to strengthen the creative industries and international dialogue, according to the Nordic ministers of culture, who have just agreed on a joint globalisation cultural initiative.

As the first follow-up to the ministers' globalisation initiative, the ministers of culture will approach the Nordic ministers of trade directly with a proposal for joint ventures in the creative industries. The Nordic Game Program, an initiative taken by the ministers of culture, has produced excellent results in the form of educational computer games for children and young people. The Nordic Film and TV Fund has supported the development of quality productions. These two areas will be further developed and put to better use in international marketing of the Nordic countries as a creative region.

Source: The Nordic Council / the Nordic Council of Ministers (7 May 2008)

A commitment to female Nordic filmmakers

[Nordic cooperation]

The Nordic Culture Fund has decided to support Reykjavik International Film Festival with DKK 95.000. The festival is to be held for the fifth time in October 2008, and the focus will be on women film directors from the Nordic countries.

The festival sold 20,000 tickets last year – an audience that is equivalent to seven per cent of the Icelandic population. As the largest and most visited cultural event in Iceland the festival has the overall aim to offer both the Icelandic and the visiting audience a broad and alternative range of international, independent film, according to a press release from the

Nordic Council/the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Source: The Nordic Council / the Nordic Council of Ministers (23 April 2008)

Printed media

Two-digit fall in circulation for a number of daily newspapers

[Printed media] [Denmark]

A number of Danish newspapers have seen a great decline in circulation the first few months of 2008, reports Business.dk. Advertisement revenues are also on the way down.

It is clear that a decrease of more than 10 per cent is not going to last. But people are beginning to get accustomed to the fact that they can make do without pay papers. We have yet to see an end to this development, Print Director at Mediaedge:cia, Jane Ravn, says to Business.dk, and she calls for more significant actions on the part of the major daily newspapers.

In April 2008, trends in circulation were as follows for the hardest hit newspapers (figures compared to the same period in 2007): Sjællandske -12.7 per cent, Nordjyske -11.4 per cent, Ekstra Bladet -10.5 per cent, Jyllands-Posten -9.9 per cent, Århus Stiftstidende -9.5 per cent, Berlingske Tidende -9.2 per cent.

Source: Business.dk (20 May 2008)

New campaign for the Love of Reading

[Printed media] [Denmark]

Positive experiences from the Love of Reading Campaign 2003-2007 will be passed on in a new campaign, Minister of Culture, Brian Mikkelsen, Minister of Education, Bertel Haarder and Minister of Social Affairs, Karen Jespersen, have decided.

The campaign has shown that it pays to appeal to pleasure and voluntary efforts when teaching children how to read. Libraries in nursery schools, "reading caves", organizing a reading quiz and visits from writers, writing workshops, writing courses, prizes for children's books and a TV show in public broadcaster DR1 – these are some of the more than 130 projects that have succeeded in giving young people a taste of the adventures offered in stories in books and other media, the Ministry of Culture states.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (6 May 2008)

Newspapers the most respected media

[Printed media] [Finland]

Finns clearly regard newspapers as the most respected media. Other attributes connected more often to newspapers than to any other media are expertise, reliability, quality, security, responsibility and depth. Newspapers are seen as the most familiar medium and as the medium most on the side of ordinary people, the Finnish Newspapers Association announces.

These data are revealed in the Images of Media study, which was conducted by TNS Gallup on behalf of the Finnish Newspapers Association. The study was carried out in March-April 2008, including 1,141 replies from Finns 15 years and older.

Newspapers are regarded as respectable by 81 per cent of Finns. Respectability is associated with television by 58 per cent of Finns, with radio by 44 per cent, with periodicals by 22 per cent and with the Internet by 14 per cent.

Other strong qualities associated with newspapers are expertise, topicality and utility. Newspapers are seen as reliable by 71 per cent of Finns, whereas the figure for the next most reliable news medium, television, was 47 per cent.

Trust in the news published in one's own newspaper has remained very high. According to a follow-up study, 91 per cent of Finns regard the news contents of their own newspaper as very or quite reliable. A year ago, the share was 92 per cent: the highest reading in the history of the study, which has been conducted since the 1980s.

Source: The Finnish Newspapers Association (13 May 2008)

Fixed prices on schoolbooks still exempted by the competition authorities

[Printed media] [Norway]

The book trade will be able to continue to cooperate on fixed prices for academic and textbooks until the end of 2010, reports the Ministry of Government Administration and Reform.

The Norwegian Publishers' Association and the Norwegian Booksellers' Association have been given exemptions from the Act of Competition until 1 July 2008. Now the Government has endorsed the recommendation from the Ministry of Government Administration and Reform to extend the exemption to 31 December 2010, when the current book trade agreement expires.

An evaluation of this agreement will be completed in time to be a part of the preparations for possible negotiations for a new book trade agreement effective from 2011.

Source: The Ministry of Government Administration and Reform (30 May 2008)

Norwegians both read and buy more books than before

[Printed media] [Norway]

The Norwegian book trade survey shows that nine out of ten read one or more books in 2007, that eight out of ten bought one or more books in 2007 (all shopping channels are included), that four out of ten borrowed one or more books from the public libraries in 2007, that seven of ten book readers read one day a week or more and that six of ten respondents were reading a book at the time they were asked to participate in the survey. Eight out of ten of those who have children under the age of ten years read to their children daily or at least two or three days a week.

The Norwegian book trade survey is carried out through collaboration between The Norwegian Publishers' Association and the Norwegian Booksellers' Association. The Associations have conducted similar surveys since 1977, the last survey taking place in 2006.

Source: The Norwegian Publishers' Association and the Norwegian Booksellers' Association (23 April 2008)

New conditions for press support

[Printed media]

According to an internal report from the Ministry of Culture – New Conditions for Press Support – some of the clauses concerning operational support in the decree regulating press support (1990:524) should be amended so as to be consistent with the EU Treaty's set of rules on state support.

It is proposed that limits be imposed restricting how much of a newspaper's running costs may be covered by operational support. The Government also proposes that operational support for big city newspapers, which are published very frequently, should be reduced gradually over five years, and then calculated in the same way as operational support for other newspapers published very or rather frequently. The amendments should come into force as from 1 January 2009, after being endorsed by the European Commission, according to the Ministry of Culture.

Proposals from the Government have triggered many reactions. Svenska Dagbladet and Skånska Dagbladet, which will be affected by the proposed amendments, have published strong comments, according to trade paper Medievärlden:

A reduction in press support threatens the very existence of Svenska Dagbladet and Skånska Dagbladet, they maintain. If implemented, the Government's plan to drastically reduce support for big city newspapers will endanger the future of these two newspapers and create a monopoly for newspapers owned by the Bonnier Group, in the markets where they are published.

Source: The Ministry of Culture / Medievärlden (4 April and 15 May 2008)

Audiovisual media

DR on the right course financially – while TV 2 receives state emergency aid

[Audiovisual media] [Denmark]

TV 2/DANMARK's annual report for 2007 showed that 2007 was a year of major investments and difficulties with liquidity. 2008 will also be a very strenuous year for the company, with an expected deficit, the Ministry of Culture announces.

TV 2 has large debts, and there is uncertainty about the outcome of the cases that have been brought before the European Court of Justice concerning illegal state subsidies to TV 2. The Court's decisions are expected this autumn.

The Danish Government has asked the Committee of Finance in the Parliament to endorse temporary government loans to TV 2/DANMARK. During autumn 2008, the Ministry of Culture will assess the situation all over again. The Government still wants to privatize TV 2.

In 2006, the public service company DR's economy was very strained, as a result of considerable budget overruns during construction of the new DR headquarters. Now, DR's economy has improved. In 2007, the company had a DKK 92 million deficit, an improvement from 2006 of about 70 million. The plan to go from deficit to profit in 2010 seems realistic, according to DR.

Source: The Ministry of Culture and DR (10 June and 23 April 2008)

Swedish Boxer chosen as gatekeeper for the digital terrestrial network for TV

[Audiovisual media]

In November 2009, the Danish analogue terrestrial television network will be closed down. A committee nominated by the Danish Government has chosen the Swedish company Boxer TV A/S to be gatekeeper for the digital terrestrial television network: to establish and run it. The partly state-owned company Boxer is operator of the Swedish digital terrestrial television network. The other candidates were Danmarks Digital TV A/S (Norwegian corporation Telenor) and Danmarks TV A/S (Swedish corporation MTG).

The Committee's assessment of the three applications has been based on an evaluation of applicants' ability to promote effective competition, their plans for programmes and their qualifications and competence to implement their plans, according to the Ministry of Culture.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (27 March 2008)

Call for competition in the digital terrestrial television network

[Audiovisual media] [Norway]

The Post and Telecommunications Authority (NPT) is of the opinion that Norges televisjon (NTV) has not done what is necessary to facilitate the development of a new pay-TV provider in the digital terrestrial network. NTV has a licence to develop the digital terrestrial television, while its sister company RiksTV is the network operator.

NPT has decided that NTV must put out an invitation for tender for one and a half multiplex intended for competitors to RiksTV by 1 November 2008. Agreements with a challenger to RiksTV must be entered into by 1 May 2009. NPT emphasizes that digital terrestrial television should mean greater choice for viewers.

According to Article 4.8 in the license agreement, NTV must offer capacity to competing pay-TV providers when the analogue transmissions are closed down, NPT maintains. At the end of 2009, the Norwegian analogue terrestrial network for television will be completely closed down.

Source: The Post and Telecommunications Authority (10 June 2008)

Digitalization of Norwegian movie theatres starting in 2009

[Audiovisual media] [Norway]

Negotiations and projecting are under way for digitalization of Norwegian movie theatres, but how long the process will take is uncertain.

The trade organization FILM&KINO held a conference dedicated to digital cinema in Oslo 7-8 April, and the organization has a fair hope that all Norwegian cinemas will be fully digitalized during 2011. Norway thus will become the first "digital cinema nation" in the world.

The conference was opened by the Minister of Culture, Trond Giske, who took the opportunity to underline the unique position of an organized industry that can administer and carry the majority of the costs for full digitalization, FILM&KINO states.

Source: FILM&KINO (8 April 2008)

New support scheme for Swedish film production

[Audiovisual media] [Sweden]

The parties of the Film Agreement of 2006 have agreed on amendments entailing the creation of a new support scheme for Swedish film production.

The amendments will take effect after deliberations on the terms of the agreement that the parties held during the spring. A surplus of funds has been accumulated in the audience-related support scheme, and the organization of Swedish Film Producers suggested during negotiations that a new scheme for Swedish feature films with commercial potential should be introduced.

The board of the Swedish Film Institute will take a decision on guidelines for the distribution of new support no later than 1 July 2008, after consultation with the parties of the Film Agreement, the Ministry of Culture states.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (12 June 2008)

No case in the European Court of Justice about Boxer's monopoly

[Audiovisual media] [Sweden]

The European Commission has withdrawn its case against Sweden at the European Court of Justice after Sweden amended its Radio and TV Act. In particular, Sweden abolished the licensing system that gave the partly state-owned company Boxer an exclusive right to handle certain digital terrestrial broadcasting services in breach of EU law, the Commission states.

The Commission had decided to refer Sweden to the Court in October 2006. Under Article 2 of Directive 2002/77/EC of 16 September 2002 on competition in the markets for electronic communications services ("the Competition Directive") Member States had to abolish by July 2003 all exclusive rights for the provision of electronic communications services, including the encryption of broadcasting programmes.

Source: The European Commission/Rapid Press Releases (5 June 2008)

The digital terrestrial television network has been expanded

[Audiovisual media] [Sweden]

Forty national and fourteen local or regional channels now have transmission permits in the digital terrestrial network for TV, after the Radio and TV Authority considered applications for new permits.

The Radio and TV Authority renewed the mandate of all existing channels and gave permits to eight new national and nine new local and regional channels. Several of the national channels have been allowed more transmission time than they had previously.

Source: The Radio and TV Authority (27 March, 2008)

Information Society

New support scheme for computer games

[Information Society] [Denmark]

Four demo projects and three prototypes have received support from the new support scheme of the Danish Film Institute, New Danish Screen. In all, DKK 2.7 million were given out.

The seven projects represent a good spread across genres and platforms and fulfil the objective of supporting ambitious and innovative computer games. The support scheme had a good start with these projects, and we hear from the recipients that several have been contacted by investors, now that the DFI has taken the first step, New Danish Screen's Editor of Computer Games, Thomas Howalt, says.

Source: Danish Film Institute / New Danish Screen (23 May 2008)

National Digital Library will improve the availability of electronic materials

[Information Society] [Finland]

The Ministry of Education has launched a National Digital Library project (2008-2011). The project will create a joint search facility for libraries, archives and museums, through which customers can access the data resources. The National Digital Library will eventually be affiliated with the European Digital Library, Europeana.

The aim of the project is to promote the availability of key national data resources in libraries, archives and museums as well as their usability in data networks and to develop long-term storage solutions for cultural heritage materials.

Source: The Ministry of Education (4 June 2008)

Broadband must be a basic service for the whole population

[Information Society] [Finland]

The communications market legislation must be amended, in order to raise the minimum speed of basic broadband services established by law to apply to the whole population.

The Minister of Communications, Suvi Lindén, points out that this will have a particularly good effect in remote areas. The Government's proposal for amendment of the legislation will be sent to the Parliament this autumn.

In the first instance, Lindén aims at raising the basic speed to one megabit per second throughout the country, which amounts to twenty times faster than the existing minimum speed.

Source: The Ministry of Transport and Communications (8 May 2008)

Novel inspired by Iceland's online computer game EVE Online

[Information Society] [Iceland]

The computer game company CCP, which produces the EVE Online multiplayer game with over 230,000 players, has now published the first novel to be based on the game, Daily News from Iceland writes, quoting mbl.is.

EVE Online is a multiplayer fantasy computer game that takes place in galaxies far away from earth, and players from all over the world meet in a fantasy virtual reality.

Since the game was released, the background story has been a vital part of the cyber universe. The story behind EVE has been slowly revealed in articles, short stories and two novellas.

The first novel based on EVE online will be published on June 19. It is called *The Empyrean Age* and was written by Tony Gonzales, author of the two novellas. Despite the fact that the novel is based on a computer game, Hilmar Veigar Péturson CEO of CCP believes that it will appeal to anyone who is interested in science fiction books.

Source: Daily News from Iceland (15 June 2008)

750,000 Norwegian households still do not have broadband connections

[Information Society] [Norway]

Ninety-nine out of 100 Norwegian households could have broadband connections, technically speaking. However, thirty five per cent, 750,000 Norwegian households, still do not have broadband connections at home, the Ministry of Government Administration and Reform reports.

The ICT trade does not have the necessary knowledge of and shows little interest in people who do not have broadband connections, as shown in the report *Why don't more people buy broadband connections?* The report proposes measures the industry and public authorities could take to get more people online.

Source: The Ministry of Government Administration and Reform (28 May 2008)

Access to broadband connections vital for the development of industry and trade

[Information Society] [Sweden]

The report *Broadband to the whole country* has been submitted to the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications by Åke Hedén, who states that access to broadband connections is important, not least because all companies situated in rural areas should be able to operate on an equal footing with companies in denser urban areas.

Regarding development of broadband, Sweden is on the top internationally speaking, but quite a few enterprises still have no broadband connection. Thus, the development must continue in all parts of the country.

Source: The Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications (18 April 2008)

Freedom of speech and copyright

New review of legislation against harmful media content

[Freedom of speech and copyright] [Sweden]

The Government will review the legislation that protects children and young people against harmful media content and damaging influences from the media. The last time such an assessment was done was in the late 1980s, followed up by a range of reports on violence portrayed in the media: *Våldsskildringsutredningen* (SOU 1988:28, 1989:22).

The review should focus on adapting existing legislation and efforts in the area towards development of new media and new media habits. The review includes, among other things, an examination of the possibility of banning films for public viewing, as set out in the Examination and Control of Films and Videograms Act. The study is expected to be completed by the end of May 2009, according to the Ministry of Culture.

Source: The Ministry of Culture (22 May 2008)

No legislation against sexually discriminatory advertising

[Freedom of speech and copyright] [Sweden]

The Government does not wish to follow up the proposals contained in a report on sexually discriminatory advertising (SOU 2008:5) put forward in January 2008.

The reason why the Government has chosen not to go ahead with the investigator's proposal is that the bill may come into conflict with the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression and the Freedom of the Press Act, the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality states.

Source: The Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality (24 April 2008)

Supplementary directive to the committee of inquiry on freedom of the press and speech matters

[Freedom of speech and copyright] [Sweden]

The committee of inquiry on freedom of the press and speech matters has received a supplementary directive that should result in amendments to the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression. The purpose is to address certain problems associated with the current technology-dependant regulations, according to a press release from the Ministry of Justice. The evaluation should be completed by 1 February 2009.

In addition, the committee is still expected to evaluate whether constitutional protection of freedom the press and freedom of expression should be dependent on the technology used when spreading statements. The starting point of the committee's work must be that the fundamental principles of freedom of the press and freedom of speech should be fixed. For instance the fact that it is only the responsible publisher, not the individual journalist, who can be held accountable for what is published, and the protection of sources. The committee's work must be completed by 20 December 2011. The chairman of the committee of inquiry on freedom of the press and speech matters is the Chancellor of Justice, Göran Lambertz.

Source: The Ministry of Justice (17 April 2008)

Media ownership

TV4 Group to acquire Canal Plus

[Media ownership] [Sweden]

TV4 Group will acquire Canal Plus from the German company ProSiebenSat.1, Dagens Nyheter/TT writes: The takeover means that the television company TV 4 will have access to a wide supply of rights to film and sports events and that the debate on media concentration will gain new momentum. TV 4, owned by the Bonnier Group, according to Dagens Nyheter/TT, was interested when Canal Plus was for sale five years ago.

Resume.se maintains that three companies were interested this time: TV4, Norwegian Telenor and Swedish MTG. TV4 won the tug-of-war with an offer of Euro 320 million, Resume.se writes.

The closing of the transaction is subject to approval by antitrust regulators, Bonnier states in a press release on the takeover.

Source: Dagens Nyheter/TT – Resume.se (16 and 17 June 2008)

Media surveys

Norwegian media barometer 2007

[Media surveys] [Norway]

Sixty-six per cent of the Norwegian population logged on to the Internet on an average day in 2007, an increase of 6 percentage points from 2006. The number of households with a broadband connection also increased, and the trend of fewer newspaper readers continued, Statistics Norway announces.

The proportion of people who watch television on an average day has changed very little in recent years. In 2007, the percentage was 82, compared to 83 in 2006. The proportion of radio listeners on an average day has also declined insignificantly, from 54 per cent in 2006 to 53 per cent in 2007.

The amount of people who read newspapers on an average day has fallen in recent years. From 2006 to 2007, there has been a further decline, from 74 per cent in 2006 to 72 per cent in 2007. This decline was seen particularly among children and young people.

While the percentage of book readers on an average day was 17 in 1997, this increased to 24 in 2006 and fell slightly to 23 in 2007. The number of persons who read weeklies, magazines and cartoons on an average day has changed little from 2006 to 2007, Statistics Norway reports.

Source: Statistics Norway (3 April 2008)

Nordicom's Media Barometer 2007

[Media surveys] [Sweden]

When people grow older, they tend to hold on to the media habits established at a young age. The Internet-based platforms for text, sound and images are playing an ever-greater role. These are some of the main findings from Nordicom's Media Barometer 2007, a survey of Swedish media that Nordicom at Gothenburg University carries out every year. The survey began in 1979.

The information flows increasingly freely, more and more without any ties to time and place. We can see how an interactive and mobile communication society will increasingly require more room alongside the traditional media. Passive media consumers become active net producers. The increased access to broadband has strengthened and accelerated this development. How new media habits emerge particularly among the young, 15- to 24-year-olds, can be seen in Media Barometer surveys of recent years, but now we see how habits

seem to follow people as they grow older. Today, perhaps the 24- to 44-year-olds form the most interesting group to study, says Professor Ulla Carlsson, who is responsible for Nordicom's survey.

Source: Nordicom-Sweden (21 May 2008)

Publications

The media are big in Finland's first cultural account

[Publications] [Finland]

In 2005, culture's share of Finland's GDP was 3.2 percent, and employees in the cultural sector accounted for 4.2 per cent of all employed. Culture's share of the GDP was greater than, for example, shares from primary production, traditional commercial activities and tourism. Newspapers, journals and news agencies accounted for nearly one-fourth of culture's share of the GDP.

Finland's first cultural account is a European pilot project, and it is a joint project between the Ministry of Education and Statistics Finland.

Source: The Ministry of Education (11 June 2008)

2006 turnover of radio and television was NOK 8.5 billion

[Publications] [Norway]

Norwegian businesses and companies that produce cultural services had a turnover of NOK 13.5 billion and employed nearly 10,000 people in 2006. Radio and television industries accounted for 63 per cent of the turnover, according to Statistics Norway. The total turnover increased by 12 per cent from 2005.

The statistics include cultural industry groups such as motion picture and video activities, news agencies, and radio and television. The total value added for the firms was NOK 5.3 billion in 2006. This represents a 29 per cent increase from 2002. Turnover increased more than employment did.

Source: Statistics Norway (15 May 2008)

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