

## SUMMARY

Community media in its present form developed after Second World War in South and North America as a means of serving marginalized communities, which were excluded from the mainstream media. Common features for the diverse community media are content production by amateurs, non-profit activities, participation of communities and the prioritization of local languages. As well as counter-media stations for mainstream media, community media organizations have a role as educators of NGOs, cultural producers, community activators and democracy promoters. This third sector media has been recognized, among others, by the UN cultural and scientific organization UNESCO, World Bank and the European Union.

There are community radios, community televisions and an increasing number of Internet media in each and every corner of the world. Particularly in the third world, radio has remarkably contributed to the training and empowerment of underprivileged groups.

This media industry has been legally recognized as third sector media between public services and commercial media in North America and several Southern American countries – in Europe, mainly in the Western part of the continent. However, there is a growing interest in community media in Africa and Asia, where it has been legalized e.g. in India and South Africa. In several countries, particularly in Europe, but also e.g. in Africa, there are specific public funding mechanisms for community media.

Finland, together with Estonia, Romania, Greece, Czech Republic and Slovakia, forms a minority of EU member states which have not legalized community media. In spite of this, there have been active non-profit local television stations for forty years and community radios for almost twenty-five years. Nowadays, there are five citizen radios and around twenty community television stations, some Internet media and a few radio initiatives with restricted radio licenses. Non-profit media raises funding from several sources: selling or renting studio and air time, voluntary watching and listening fees, producing, copying and converting videos, Christmas, New Year and 1st of May greetings, and public project funding. Community stations linked with communes or educational institutions are strongly dependent on public funding.

One particularity of the Finnish community media is the Swedish

speaking<sup>a</sup> local television stations mainly in Ostrobothnia, a region across from the Swedish Eastern coast.<sup>1</sup> Interest in community television in Ostrobothnia arose already in the 1970's, when there were technical difficulties in watching the Swedish television because of the weakness of the signal. The situation was improved by the building of cable co-operatives in communities and the conversion of the satellite signal suitable for the cable network. This also gave villages a television broadcast platform of their own.

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture allocates more than a million Euros per annum for alternative culture magazines. The print media has always had a strong social standing and it has been supported in several ways. However, the Ministry of Transport and Communication, responsible for electronic communication, grants so called 'support for communication communities' (nowadays 100 000 Euros annually), mainly for big social and health organizations. According to the representative of the Ministry, there is no interest for community media in Finland.

In 2008, the European Parliament approved a resolution, where member states were recommended to legalize community media and to set up a funding mechanism for non-profit citizen media. The third sector media also gained strong support in the statement given by the European Commission in 200. In spite of this, the Finnish community media, which has been an active part of civic society already for 40 years, has not been legalized nor granted an own support system similar to those of alternative cultural magazines.

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a The Swedish-speaking language and cultural group is an old Finnish minority, mainly living in the coastal area across from Sweden, as well as in the Helsinki and Uusimaa region. There are around 300 000 Finland-Swedish in Finland (around 5 % of the population).