

FINLAND

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1) What is the basic political system in your country (e.g. democratic, semi-authoritarian, authoritarian or other type of hybrid regime)?

Democratic. Multi-party system. Coalition governments.

2) What are the main features of your media landscape? (private / public, print/broadcast/internet usage, ownership concentration, government control, etc.)

Our public service broadcaster YLE (Finnish Broadcasting Corporation) is very much like the BBC, in fact largely modelled by it. YLE is funded through a license fee currently collected from people who own a TV set. The parliament is going to decide on a new form of funding, a tax-like payment, in the near future. YLE employs around 3,200 people. It has several TV and radio channels and a broad online news service.

There are also several commercial TV and radio operators and one big newswire service.

We have a dominant national newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, the biggest paper in the Nordic countries. We also have several regional dailies, such as Aamulehti, Kaleva, Keski-suomalainen etc, largely dominant in their areas. Local newspapers can be counted in the hundreds. Finland has two tabloid papers, Iltalehti and Ilta-Sanomat.

Internet penetration in Finland is among the highest in the world, but so is newspaper readership.

3) Where does your country come in the rankings of Freedom House (on freedom of the press) and Reporters Without Borders?

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2009>

<http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html>

Freedom House: number 2, behind Iceland.

RSF: number 1, with Denmark, Ireland, Norway and Sweden.

4) Would you broadly agree with their characterisation of your situation?

Yes. There is no government control over media.

5) a) what are the main challenges facing the media in your country in the next five years (economic, political, technological etc)?

Even though newspapers are doing very well in global comparison, young people do not subscribe to them. They are used to free information online, and this is a problem for Finnish media companies just like anywhere else.

Internet penetration is high, and fast broadband is in fact a civic right. However, there is not much innovation in online journalism, let alone mobile content. I guess this is a problem of early developers.

Economically, the tendency to cut costs in newsrooms whenever there is a downturn is worrying. Young people have difficulties in getting a permanent job in the media.

Politicians have lately raised questions about privacy. The press has reported more about politicians' private lives – one case forced a minister to resign. This is fairly new in Finland.

During the era of Soviet Union the Finnish press was very timid and cautious when it came to writing about the superpower neighbour. This phenomenon, as applied to politicians as well, was called "Finlandization". Some traces of it might still remain in some of Finnish media's attitude towards Russia.

b) what are the main limits on the practice of a free press in your country, based on your own practical experience of working there?

Big companies such as Nokia seem to think they should be able to limit what the press writes about them.

6) What are the main roles that new media play in your country?

Aggregators such as Google and Facebook pose a threat to traditional media online. In the Internet there is no loyalty for a particular website. So far there haven't been many new media start-ups emerging, but I suspect there will be.