

SOUTH KOREA

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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 political system

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

The main features of media landscape in Korea are broadcast, print and internet in the form of both public and private ownership. Among these, broadcast is the most influential media. The major stations are KBS and MBC (public service broadcasters). There are also approximately 50 private broadcasters among which SBS is the biggest.

The government has the sole authority to give permits for media businesses in Korea. In particular, the public service providers are directly or indirectly influenced by the government in their business decisions as well as executive level HR matters. Therefore, the political colour of the public service broadcasters tends to vary when there is a change of political regime.

In addition, there are around 10 newspapers in South Korea. Chosun Daily, Joongang Daily and Dong-a Daily are the leading paper companies among them and they have a clear inclination toward conservatism. On the other hand, Hankyoreh Daily, Kyunghyang Daily speak for the left-wing sector.

Among the hundreds of internet media, Ohmynews is the most influential.

The media in Korea confront each other very dynamically whenever there are critical national and social issues on the agenda.

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>

- South Korea's score is 30th in the Freedom House Index 2010.

- South Korea's ranking is 42th in Reporters Without Borders Index 2010.

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

- Yes. In general, South Korea has freedom of press. However, the control over the media by political power and capital (mainly the big conglomerates, i.e. Samsung and Hyundai, etc.) is becoming increasingly more sophisticated and these influences are the main constraints on the freedom of the media in Korea.

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

- Currently, the Korean government intends to implement a policy to enable conservative papers to own private broadcasting channels. If this happens, there will be a potential threat that the majority of the broadcast and print media would represent the voices of the conservatives.

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?

- Above all, the Korean government has the sole and official authority to appoint the CEOs of the major public service providers and by doing so they can easily control the media. If the journalists protest these decisions, they can easily be accused and restricted according to the law.

- In addition, the big conglomerates control the media through financial pressures. They simply can threaten the financial stability of the media by withdrawing the advertisements which are the major pipeline of income for the press companies.
- In summary, the political control and the financial pressure from businesses are the main challenges to the free press in South Korea.

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

- More and more, the so called 'new media', mainly represented by the internet press, are on the rise and are beginning to have the same influence as the existing main stream media in South Korea. However, they still lack the accuracy and the fairness that media should adhere to. If the 'new media' can improve these shortcomings, they could become critical catalysts in the integration of Korean society which is going through ideological conflict at this moment.