



Press release, 29th March, 2016

Can public service news organisations stay competitive in a digital environment?

How are public service media services delivering news in an increasingly digital environment? And what action do they need to take to remain competitive in a fast-evolving global digital landscape?

A new Reuters Institute report looks across Europe and shows that while some public service news organisations, notably the BBC in the UK and Yle in Finland, have invested heavily and are navigating the challenges brought by digital media with sophistication, others are struggling to adapt. The report looks at key public service organisations in six countries, Italy, Poland, the UK, France, Germany and Finland, documenting how they're adapting their newsrooms and strategies to a fast-evolving digital media environment. Most face a raft of common challenges, including internal challenges around legacy organisations' ability to adapt to a swiftly evolving digital environment, and external pressures including funding limitations and political influence. In many countries, more people use social media like Facebook as a source of news online than use public service media.

What are the ideal conditions for a public service broadcaster to be able to flourish?

"We found that the key common traits between the conditions in which The BBC and Yle operate, and which contribute to their notable success, could be split into external and internal conditions," says Dr Annika Sehl, lead author of the report.

"Looking at external conditions, both operate in technologically advanced media markets, are comparatively well funded, are integrated and centrally organised across various platforms and have a degree of insulation from political influence, in comparison to other public service organisations.

"Internally, they benefit from a pro-digital culture where new media are seen as opportunities as well as strong senior management and editorial leaders who are publically committed to driving change in line with a constantly evolving media landscape."

With technology developing faster than even some of the most innovative media organisations, the challenges created by an increasingly digital environment won't go away. Historically, responses from public service news organisations to changing technology have been reactive, defensive and pragmatic. But the report warns that unless public service media organisations change their organisation to prioritise digital media, mobile platforms, and social distribution, they risk losing touch with their audience – the public they exist to serve and which funds them.

Dr Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford and co-author of the report, says "The media environment continues to change at a faster pace than public service media do. Most public service media are falling behind and are losing touch especially with younger audiences. To remain relevant and reach a wide and diverse audience, they need to be able to adapt much more quickly than they have in the past as digital media continues to evolve."

ENDS

About the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The Thomson Reuters Foundation is the core funder of the RISJ, based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. The RISJ was launched in November 2006 and developed from the Reuters Fellowship Programme, established at Oxford 32 years ago. An international research centre in the comparative study of journalism, the RISJ aims to be global in its perspective and provides a leading forum for scholars from a wide range of disciplines to engage with journalists from around the world. See <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

About the authors

Annika Sehl is a Research Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Her research interests are mainly journalism and comparative research. She comes from a post-doctoral position at the Institute of Journalism at TU Dortmund University, where she also completed her doctorate, and has been a visiting professor of communication studies at the University of Hamburg. Her teaching has focused mainly on journalism, audience research and research methods at different institutions in Germany and abroad. She co-authored a book on digital journalism in Germany and has published in a range of academic outlets including *First Monday* and *Media Perspektiven*. In addition to her academic experience, she was trained as a journalist with the news broadcaster N24 in Berlin, Hamburg and Munich.

Alessio Cornia is a Research Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. His research interest is comparative research on journalism, with a focus on news industry developments, digital news, EU journalism and political communication. He comes from a position at the Department of Political Science at the University of Perugia, where he has taught courses on online communication campaigns and digital media studies. He has published a monograph and several articles in academic journals including *Media, Culture and Society*, the *European Journal of Communication*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies* and *Journal of Risk Research*.

Rasmus Kleis Nielsen is Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford and editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Press/Politics*. His work focuses on changes in the news media, political communication, and the role of digital technologies in both. He has done extensive research on journalism, American politics, and various forms of activism, and a significant amount of comparative work in Western Europe and beyond. Recent books include *The Changing Business of Journalism and its Implications for Democracy* (2010, edited with David Levy), *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns* (2012), and *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (2014, edited with Raymond Kuhn).

About the Digital News Project

The Digital News Project marks an expansion of the Digital News Report into a full-scale series of research pieces, thanks to the support of Google via the Digital News Initiative. Eight new reports will be released in 2016. The new series builds on the success of the Digital News Report as the world's largest comparative international survey of changing news habits, and will continue to track the transition of the news industry towards an increasingly digital and multi-platform future. 2016 will see an expanded team of researchers, sponsors and collaborators explore trends and developments across 26 countries.

Increased support from Google, co-sponsors of the initiative since 2013, has allowed the Institute to extend the report's coverage of Europe to 20 countries in 2016. The new countries to be included are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal,

Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. These will be added to the countries covered in the 2015 report; UK, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Spain, Australia, Brazil, Japan and the US. Other sponsors for the Digital News Report 2016 are: the BBC, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Edelman UK, Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, Hans-Bredow-Institut, Korea Press Foundation, Laval University, The University of Navarra, Ofcom, the University of Canberra and the Fritt Ord Foundation.

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact Hannah Marsh, Marketing and Communications Officer: hannah.marsh@politics.ox.ac.uk