

FRANCE'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Media, diversity, and public debate

Many journalists and media managers report that French media remains too Franco-centric and continues to struggle with gender representation.

In France, the press sector has historically functioned as an opinion-driven press. In contrast, the audiovisual sector is subject to internal pluralism requirements and overseen by the national regulatory authority, ARCOM. As a result, audiovisual media must adhere to strict political diversity guidelines, particularly during election periods.

Cross-checking, verifying, and fact-checking sources remain paramount for journalists and media managers. However, these practices are often challenged by the fast-paced and competitive nature of the sector. Despite this, **professionals prioritize journalistic integrity, and responsibility apologizing and rectify errors when needed.** Similarly, interviews with journalists and media managers in France confirm that investigative journalism is crucial to the media's watchdog role. However, it demands significant **time, expertise, and financial independence.**

Despite efforts to encourage public debate, **audience diversity remains often limited, with many media outlets primarily targeting specific audiences.** Additionally, **invited participants and editorialists sometimes lack diversity, and question framing introduce bias.** In this context, regional and community media tend to demonstrate greater openness and transparency, as their proximity-based accountability fosters more inclusive public debate. **Newsrooms also acknowledge the persistent gender gap, with male experts dominating discussions and many women**

feeling less confident asserting their authority in media spaces. Furthermore, some debate formats also may amplify controversy and deepen societal divisions.

Public debate, political and socio-cultural diversity, and citizen participation are closely linked in France. Many journalists and media managers note that **the media remains Franco-centric and struggles with gender representation despite efforts toward inclusivity.** While opinions differ on improving minority and female visibility, most agree on the media's responsibility to reflect societal diversity. **Engaging with citizens' concerns is seen as key to fostering broader political participation.**

The rise of social media and the spread of disinformation pose significant challenges to the media's democratic role. **Combating the proliferation of false and misleading information has become an essential component of journalism and is shaping the transformation of the profession.** Additionally, fear of lawsuits is increasingly seen as a threat to media freedom and pluralism.

Finally, **financial constraints challenge the media's democratic role,** with professionals calling for more resources and protection from owner influence. They stress the importance of media literacy and scientific knowledge in ensuring accurate information. Their mission is to empower citizens with independent opinions and a deeper understanding of the world.

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