



# MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES IN EUROPE: A FOCUS ON EU MEMBER STATES' LEGISLATION ON FOREIGN OWNERSHIP

Fact Sheet

As the data from the Media Pluralism Monitor 2016 shows, EU Member States generally do not impose any restrictions on foreign ownership. That is the case for 23 countries out of 28.

There are only 5 Member States\* that establish some kind of regulatory restriction on foreign ownership in the media sector, but in none of them do such restrictions apply to citizens or companies from EU countries, which enjoy the same rights as national citizens and companies created under the laws of the respective country.

The restrictions on foreign ownership vary both in terms of percentage of capital held and the sector to which they apply.



France limits to a share of **20%** the maximum of foreign capital of a daily newspaper, a terrestrial radio or television broadcasting company, but only for those that are in French language, set the same maximum limit with respect to voting rights.

Poland sets no restrictions for the newspaper sector and a maximum limit of non-EU ownership for the broadcasting sector of **49%**

Austria, establishes restrictions for the radio and TV sectors (but no specific provisions for newspapers), setting the maximum percentage of the share for non-EU citizens and companies at **49%**

Spain has restrictions for both the radio and television sectors - but no restrictions for the print media -, with non-EU citizens and companies being allowed to hold - individually - up to **25%** of the total capital. Moreover, it also imposes a limit on the total amount of shares that can be held by non-EU citizens and companies, which has to be below **50%**

In Cyprus non-EU citizens and companies can individually hold up to **5%** of capital share on approval by the Council of Ministers and the total percentage of foreign capital in a licensed company may not be more than **25%**

Therefore, in all EU MS that establish some degree of restriction on non-EU ownership, the common pattern is that non-EU companies and citizens cannot have control of the media company, with Cyprus and France having the most restrictive environment, applying to all media sectors and with maximum limits for non-EU capital of 20 and 25%, respectively.

\* In Slovakia, although there is no specific limit for foreign participation in the capital of a media outlet, the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission when granting the license for analogue radio and TV broadcasting (currently used only on analogue radio licensing) has to take into consideration that the applicant has "adequate capital participation of the Slovak persons and their representation in bodies of the company provided that the applicant for the licence is a legal entity with foreign capital participation." Nevertheless, considering that this requirement does not apply to digital broadcasting licensing in practice, we can say that there is no significant restriction on foreign ownership in the country.

Sources:

The main source for this Factsheet is the Media Pluralism Monitor 2016 (MPM2016) Database, created under the Media Pluralism Monitor 2016 Project. See the final report of the project. The factsheet relied also on information provided by the Media Pluralism Monitor 2017 (MPM2017) country teams.

Other sources:

Media Reform Coalition (2015). The elephant next door: a survey of international media ownership regulation  
Olga Finkel and Daphne Ann Grech, WH Partners (2016). Regulation and outsourcing in Malta: overview. Thomson Reuters, Practical Law  
Wagner Hatfield (2016). Media ownership and concentration in Europe: a comparative analysis with reflections on the situation in Slovenia. Study commissioned by AKOS - Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia

## CMPF

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The Centre, directed by Prof. Pier Luigi Parcu, coordinated by Elda Brogi, is composed of a team of experts in media markets and economics, law, political science, and communications studies. CMPF draws on a scientific committee and a unique network of experts in media pluralism across Europe and beyond, and engages in public debate with academics, policy makers, regulators, and journalists.

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