

ECMI WORKSHOP SERIES

MINORITY-LANGUAGE MEDIA
AND KIN-STATES:
CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES
AND PROSPECTS

PROGRAMME



25-26 SEPTEMBER 2024 | RIGA, LATVIA

LEAD ORGANIZATION

THE EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES

The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) is an independent research institution funded by the governments of Denmark and Germany. Founded over 25 years ago in the German city of Flensburg, the Centre has become the leading organization for the study of national minority issues in Europe. With an international staff of 20, the Centre covers all aspects of minority studies across six different research clusters.

POLITICS & CIVIL SOCIETY CLUSTER

Since 2020, the Politics and Civil Society Cluster at the ECMI has been conducting concerted research on the topic of minority-language media and has developed an extensive network of scholars interested in these issues.

The leaders of the Cluster, Sergiusz Bober and Craig Willis, are founding members of the International Association for Minority Language Media Research (IAMLMR), and they follow closely the work of the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS). Since April 2023 the ECMI is also a member of the European Language Equality Network (ELEN). An important milestone in this work was the submission of a proposal last October to establish an EU COST research network, supported by 31 partners from 25 countries. As the main proposer, the ECMI successfully secured COST Action funding for this initiative, now titled "Language Plurality in Europe's Changing Media Sphere" (PLURILINGMEDIA) (CA23105).

CONTACT PERSON

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RATIONALE

A central component of minority community in the modern age is the existence of own-language media, be it print, broadcast or electronic/social. The role of media can be critical in terms of identity formation, language preservation and development, collective consciousness building, and simply informational exchange with both minority members and majority communities.

However, minority-language media can also be particularly challenging, where minorities have a kin-state, which produces extensive media offerings already in that language. The difficulties begin with what are the actual means of access to these offerings for minority community members (including overcoming geo-blocking and other barriers). Equally, there is the question of what effect kin-state media have on the opportunity to generate minority-language media in the home-country (resource needs, low usage statistics, limited content creation). Thirdly, there is the more malevolent dimension to kin-state media, including the dissemination of misinformation by the kin-state and/or the capture of minority-language media by kin-state economic interests.

All of these processes are affecting minority-language media in Europe today – some more and some less, depending on the context. The European Centre for Minority Issues therefore seeks to organize a workshop that will profile this range of questions from a broad comparative perspective.

EVENT FORMAT

The event will cover two days, with a first day devoted to academic panels and presentations, and a second featuring meetings with practitioners and policymakers. The speakers for both days will be put together through a collaboration between the ECMI and the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence. The academic panels on Day 1 will take place in English as a closed workshop. The panels on Day 2 will be open to the public and include Latvian-English interpreting. These panels will also be geared toward coverage in the local media itself.

DAY ONE

WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2024

09:15–09:30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

09:30–11:00 SESSION 1: DEFINING THE ROLE AND CONTENT OF MLM

Synopsis:

MLM in countries with kin-states occupy a paradoxical space. On the one hand, these outlets play a central role as mediators of regional or national information in the minority language. They also serve as the key infrastructure for the maintenance of a public sphere within the minority community, helping to sustain discussion about minority affairs. At the same time, there is a limit to which MLM in these countries can go beyond these roles into novel cultural content production, since often the kin-state will predominate with its broader range and variety of such programming.

Analytical questions:

- How do MLM in countries with kin-states navigate these balances? How much do the former roles overshadow the latter?
- How have these choices changed with digitalization, i.e. the transformation of production (plat)forms both away from print and the proliferation of online frameworks and social media (including TikTok)?
- How much do MLM with common languages cooperate across borders? (Russian-language media in the Baltics, German-language media in CEE)

Academic panellists:

- Gunta Sloga, *Baltic Centre for Media Excellence*
- Monika Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, *Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences*
- Andreea Udrea, *Royal Holloway University of London*
- Craig Willis, *ECMI*

Discussant/chair:

- Vello Pettai, *ECMI*

11:00–11:30 COFFEE BREAK

11:30–13:00 SESSION 2: MLM AUDIENCES

Synopsis:

Consumers of MLM in countries with kin-states also face choices between relying on these MLM for regional and national information, whilst also enjoying access to the media content and cultural production of the kin-state.

Analytical questions:

- What are the consumption patterns of minority community members toward MLM and kin-state media?
- What are the expectations of minority community members from their MLM? Practical information? Critical debate? Entertainment?
- What are the levels of trust in the MLM?
- Are audiences migrating to entirely different realms of communication like social media (including TikTok)?

Academic panellists:

- Jakob Volgger, *Eurac Research*
- Jānis Juzefovičs, *Rīga Stradiņš University*
- Andres Jõesaar, *Tallinn University*
- Lara Sörgo, *Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana*

Discussant/chair:

- David Smith, *University of Glasgow*

13:00–14:00 LUNCH (ON-SITE BUFFET)

14:00–15:30 SESSION 3: ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND OWNERSHIP ISSUES

Synopsis:

MLM constitute a niche market and as such require a very specific business model. In most cases, MLM have a mixture of commercial earnings, national state funding and perhaps kin-state funding. Additionally, a more and more prevalent phenomenon involves the purchase of MLM (either in part or in whole) by investors from the kin-state. All of these economic and financial issues can affect the content and viability of MLM in these countries.

Analytical questions:

- What are some comparative examples of MLM financial models?
- How central is national funding and what issues do this engender?
- How prevalent are kin-state investors in influencing MLM?

Academic panellists:

- Sergei Metlev, *Postimees*
- Tom Moring, *University of Helsinki*
- Heidi Erbsen, *University of Tartu*
- Jenny Stenberg-Siren, *University of Helsinki*

Discussant/chair:

- Andreea Udrea, *Royal Holloway, University of London*

15:30–16:00 COFFEE BREAK

16:30–17:30 SESSION 4: JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES

Synopsis:

Journalism in MLM involves a wide range of issues: professional career choices (attractiveness of the sector), objectivity and critique (impartiality toward community affairs), linguistic integrity (maintaining dialects or regional nuances), cross-border collaboration.

Analytical questions:

- How does MLM journalism as a profession retain its vitality?
- When and how can kin-states contribute to this?
- Should national states play a role?

Academic panellists:

- Ragne Kõuts-Klemm, *University of Tartu*
- Solvita Denisa-Liepniece, *Baltic Centre for Media Excellence*
- Sergiusz Bober, *ECMI*

Discussant/chair:

- Jenny Stenberg-Siren, *University of Helsinki*

19:30

DINNER

Lidojošās Vardes (Flying Frog Café), Slokas iela 41, Riga

DAY TWO

THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

10:00–12:00 MEETING WITH RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE JOURNALISTS

Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, Palasta 5/1, Riga

This part of the conference will feature a meeting with Russian-language journalists from different sections of the Latvian national broadcaster LSM. The national broadcaster encompasses Russian-language radio (LR4), a news portal in Russian and Russian-language TV. We will hear the journalists' own perspectives on their work in Latvia and vis-à-vis Russia.

12:00–14:00 FREE TIME

PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM

AC Hotel by Marriott Riga, Dzirnavu street 33, Riga

This public part of the event will focus on a broader dialogue on MLM and kin-states, starting with practitioners' experiences and followed by European and international perspectives. The symposium, held in English and Latvian (with simultaneous translation), will invite media outlets, research institutions, government offices, and foreign representatives.

14:00–15:30 SESSION 5: PRACTITIONER EXPERIENCE

Synopsis:

This panel will bring together editors and leading journalists from MLM in different countries in order to have a conversation about the challenges of their work and in particular the kin-state dimensions of their profession.

Analytical questions:

- What are the comparative lessons to be learned about how to relate MLM to kin-states?
- Are there models that work?
- What are the challenges in the contemporary world of greater and greater kin-state activism (including military aggression)?

Practitioner panellists:

- Anatolijs Golubovs, *Rus.Delfi*
- Ekaterina Taklaja, *ETV+*
- Rajmund Klonowski, *Kurier Wileński*
- Ágnes Péter, *Hargite Népe*

Moderator:

- Ragne Kõuts-Klemm, *University of Tartu*

15:30–16:00 COFFEE BREAK

16:00–17:30 SESSION 6: POLICYMAKERS AND INTERNATIONAL MONITORS

Synopsis:

International norms refer to national states as having the primary responsibility for securing minority rights.

Analytical questions:

- What role should national policymakers play in securing funding for MLM, ensuring the vitality of MLM, and monitoring interaction with kin-states?
- How structured is the role of international and European monitoring bodies when it comes to MLM and the relationship with kin-states?

Practitioner panellists:

- Karlis Dagilis, *Ministry of Culture, Latvia*
- Oksana Talisainen, *Ministry of Culture, Estonia*
- David Smith, *University of Glasgow*
- Jarmo Lainio, *Stockholm University*

Moderator:

- Vello Pettai, *ECMI*

19:30

DINNER

Rosemarine, Blaumaņa street 28, Riga



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FOR
MINORITY ISSUES

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