



AMARC Europe - World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
AMARC Europe – Association Mondiale des Radios Communautaires
AMARC Europa – Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias

From

AMARC Europe - Association Mondiale des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires Europe
Rue de la Linière 11
1060 Brüssel
Belgium

To

Austrian Federal Ministry European Union, Art, Culture and Media
Ballhausplatz 2
1010 Vienna
Austria

Brussels, 23rd May 2019

Increase of the Private Broadcasting Fund and Amendment of the KommAustria Act of 6 May 2019

Dear Mr Blümel,
Dear Federal Government of the Republic of Austria,

AMARC Europe (Association Mondiale des Radiodiffuseurs Communautaires Europe) is the European representation of the World Association of Community Radios. Community Radios are non-commercial, locally embedded and non-profit organisations that promote freedom of expression and democratic participation, impart media skills and contribute to a pluralistic media landscape. These are initiatives that strengthen civil society especially minorities who have no voice in the mainstream media. The Community Media sector is internationally recognised as the third media sector alongside the public and private commercial media sector

AMARC is a global Community Radio network with 4,000 members including radio stations, interest groups and associations in more than 130 countries. In Europe, the network consists of more than 300 members (radio stations and national interest groups) in 23 countries. AMARC advocates for the right to communicate at the international, national and local level and promotes the interests of community radios as a fundamental aspect of media pluralism, the promotion of democracy and social participation.

Therefore, we observe with concern the current developments in Austria. The sole increase of the financial means for the promotion of the private commercial media sector stands in contrast to the findings and the appreciations the community media have experienced as an integral part of vital democracies on a European and international level. In this context, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe 2018 in its Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 under item 2.11. advocates the promotion and expansion of community media structures:

*"States should encourage and support the establishment and functioning of minority, regional, local and not-for-profit community media, including by providing financial mechanisms to foster their development. Such independent media give a voice to communities and individuals on topics relevant to their needs and interests, and are thus instrumental in creating public exposure for issues that may not be represented in the mainstream media and in facilitating inclusive and participatory processes of dialogue within and across communities and at regional and local levels."*¹

The European Parliament states on the role of community media in the European Union in its resolution on media pluralism and freedom (2017/2209(INI)) under point 1 on 3 May 2018:

¹ Council of Europe recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership



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"The European Parliament calls on the Member States to take appropriate measures, including ensuring adequate public funding, to safeguard and promote a pluralist, independent and free media landscape in the service of democratic society, including the independence and sustainability of public service media and community media and grassroots media, which are crucial elements of a favourable environment for guaranteeing the fundamental right to freedom of expression and information".²

Thus, AMARC Europe demands a strong commitment of the Austrian Federal Government to support the non-commercial media sector in Austria and to value its contributions to social cohesion, strengthening democratic structures, access to information and freedom of expression.

Thus, AMARC Europe fully supports the demands of the Federation of Community Radios in Austria (VFRÖ - Verband Freier Radios Österreich) and calls for an increase of the fund for the promotion of non-commercial broadcasting from €3 million to €5.5 million in order to guarantee the safeguarding and expansion of non-commercial broadcasting in Austria, media diversity, low-threshold access to local media and information offerings and the mediation of critical media skills.

In this context, AMARC Europe offers its extensive expertise to contribute to the promotion of the community radio sector in Austria and welcomes an answer to this statement.

Yours sincerely

Michael Nicolai
President AMARC Europe

Alexander Vojvoda
Project Co-ordinator AMARC Europe

Francesco Diasio
Secretary General AMARC Europe

Contact for further inquiries

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² European Parliament resolution of 3 May 2018 on media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union (2017/2209(INI))