

# Federal Council offers financial assistance to online media

27 September 2019 | Contributed by [Walder Wyss](#)

## Electronic Media Act New measures Comment

In view of the media industry's ostensibly democratic and political role, the Federal Council has decided to adopt effective and feasible support measures. These measures will be implemented by adapting existing laws and incorporating online media into the scope of the Federal Act on Radio and Television. However, the plan to create a new [Electronic Media Act](#) has been abandoned.

### Electronic Media Act

In 2018 a pre-draft version of the [Electronic Media Act](#) was released for consultation among civil entities (eg. companies, political parties and NGOs) with controversial results. Although opinions differed, many respondents stressed that the economic difficulties of newspapers required urgent measures. For instance, Swiss newspaper revenues are falling, editorial offices are merging and jobs are being lost. At the same time, significant investment is expected from the media industry to support the digital transition.

### New measures

On 28 August 2019 the Federal Council suggested several measures to support the media industry, including direct and indirect financial assistance. The proposed package of measures is available in [German](#), [French](#) and [Italian](#) and a short summary is available in [English](#).

The measures, which aim to replace the draft of the Electronic Media Act, are as follows:

- Direct financial support of online media: people increasingly rely on the Internet to stay informed but are reluctant to pay for access to digital media services. Further, online ads remain a difficult means of financing media content. Therefore, the Federal Council wishes to support media services that offer paid services, which could be a financially viable model in the long term. Financial aid of Sfr50 million per year is proposed to support such offers, provided that they meet certain qualitative conditions (eg. editorial content, journalistic standards and publication rates).
- Direct material support such as training and development institutions, news agencies, self-regulatory organisations and IT projects for electronic media will be included in the package of new measures. These measures were already included in the draft of the Electronic Media Act and received general support throughout the consultation process. Therefore, the Federal Council has retained these features in its new measures.
- Indirect financial support: currently, special rates and conditions on postal distribution are granted to print newspapers. Such measures will be extended and expand the circle of beneficiaries to small newspapers and publications.

### Comment

Parliament is currently discussing diverse parliamentary initiatives to create a constitutional basis for direct support of the media. In the meantime, the Federal Council will present its immediate package of measures to Parliament in the first half of 2020. Therefore, the legal evolution of the media sector should be closely monitored in order to adapt to these dynamic developments.

*For further information on this topic please contact [Jürg Schneider](#), [Annemarie Lagger](#) or [Christophe Gösken](#) at Walder Wyss by telephone (+41 58 658 58 58) or email ([juerg.schneider@walderwyss.com](mailto:juerg.schneider@walderwyss.com), [annemarie.lagger@walderwyss.com](mailto:annemarie.lagger@walderwyss.com) or [christophe.goesken@walderwyss.com](mailto:christophe.goesken@walderwyss.com)). The Walder Wyss website can be accessed at*

## AUTHORS

[Jürg Schneider](#)



[Annemarie Lagger](#)



[Christophe Gösken](#)



The materials contained on this website are for general information purposes only and are subject to the [disclaimer](#).