

CMFE Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023

I. Introduction

Founded in 2004, **Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE)** represents networks, national federations, projects and individuals active within the Third Media Sector often called community media, at the European level. There are many different definitions of the term community media¹. This variety has its roots in the diversity of the sector itself. Each station is "shaped by its environment and the distinct culture, history and reality of the community it serves"². However, there are usually some common elements of the definitions that help to understand what community media is and what it's not. These include:

- operating on a non-profit basis to achieve goals that are relevant to the community;
- broadcasting a programme addressed to local community or of community interest;
- participation by the community in creating the programme, management, and ownership;
- independence from authorities and commercial entities.

Community media play an important role in the promotion of media literacy, cultural diversity and democratization of communication. They serve diverse communities and involve thousands of volunteers in multilingual media productions, in training and in management - with women, marginalized groups, artists, journalism students, citizens, some with a migrant or refugee background, non-mainstream DJs, youth and elderly people actively at the forefront.

CMFE takes an active role, advocating for citizens' rights to community media and serves as a platform for dialogue and recognition of community media at the European level, as a clearly distinct media sector, alongside public service and private commercial media. In a context where freedom of expression and access to information are increasingly endangered by concentration in the media field and by the spread of misinformation, community media are indicators of media pluralism.

CMFE raises awareness about the contributions of community media to democratic participation and development, and it supports cooperation with new independent civic media initiatives in transition countries. CMFE works towards a strong European media landscape that ensures access for citizens and fosters pluralist European values and human rights.

CMFE has an observer status at the Steering Committee on the Media and Information Society (CDMSI) of the Council of Europe and is part of the CoE International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGO) Conference. CMFE was also one of the 29 members of the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism (CSPM). CMFE has received funding by the European Union for its participation in projects like MARS and MEDIANE (with the Council of Europe), Media against Hate (with the EFJ) and the Europe for Citizens Programs.

Currently, CMFE has 98 members (of which 25 are National Federations or networks) from 24 European countries. It cooperates with AMARC, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters. According to a joint mapping by CMFE and the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) in 2012, a total of 2237 community radio stations and 521 community television stations are active across Europe.

With this strategic plan CMFE wishes to present an outline of where it is today and where and how it is set to move forward to achieve its vision during the coming 5-year period through realisation of its four strategic, thematic work areas.

¹ One of the most complex definitions of community media can be found in the Council of Europe document in the creation of which Community Media Forum Europe was actively involved, *Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the Role of Community Media in Promoting Social Cohesion and Intercultural Dialogue*, [online] <www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/news/CMDec_Community_media_110209_en.asp>

² S. Buckley, T. Mendel, M. Raboy, K. Duer, M. Price, S. O'Siochrú, *Broadcasting, Voice, and Accountability: A Public Interest Approach to Policy, Law, and Regulation*, Washington 2008, p. 207.

II. The strategic plan

Strategic Direction

1. Vision

A society where community media are recognized and supported as important inclusive sites for dialogue, debate and learning, owned by the communities, and where all citizens have access to freely address issues of concern.

2. Mission

CMFE's mission is to advocate for community media in Europe, and thus raise awareness of the contributions of community media to media pluralism, democratic participation and development. This mission includes efforts to obtain legal recognition of the 3rd sector on a European and national level, secure funding opportunities and entertain dialogues with European bodies, provide links to research and activities that foster support, exchange and cooperation with independent civic media initiatives.

3. Values and principles

- Dialogue and Openness
- Tolerance and Respect
- Human rights
- Gender equality
- Inclusion and diversity
- Freedom of speech and freedom of the media
- Credibility
- Accountability and transparency



Strategic Programming

The board has outlined four strategic themes with related goals for CMFE's work during the upcoming 5-year period covered by this strategic plan. The CMFE board will review and revise the strategic plan annually, to ensure that changes in our context will be well reflected and that we can continue to generate the changes we want as effectively and efficiently as possible.

1. Strategic Themes and Goals

LEGAL, ENABLING BACKGROUND WORK – ADVOCACY

Working with key European organisations underpins much of the below work.

1. Strengthen the enabling environment through recognition of the 3rd Media Sector
 - Obtain recognition of CMFE by the European Union and the Council of Europe as a point of reference for European and national culture and media policy;
 - Obtain recognition of CM by the drawing up of a basic charter or other reference document, such as a Framework Convention on Community Media to inspire and advance CM on a national and European level. This needs to be done on the basis of a needs analysis to recognize challenges for members in their respective countries;
 - Strengthen CM's enabling environment by supporting the establishment of funding possibilities for community media within the future EU programmes, among others by securing media-related budget lines.

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY – ADVOCACY

2. Raise awareness about the potential and role of community media, including:
 - Sharing knowledge about the large number of social and cultural issues which are covered and supported by the activities of community media, and their role as platforms for women, minority groups and others without a voice;
 - Provide links to ongoing research and initiate research on CM and its social role. Work towards a shared body of knowledge on community media possibly through the establishment of multilingual research platforms with partnering university institutes.

ACTION FOR COOPERATION AND CHANGE

3. Initiate and facilitate dialogue, cooperation and support to strengthen community media
 - Building up a platform for continuous dialogue and discussion on how to ensure media pluralism, freedom of expression and access to information throughout Europe;
 - Ensure the inclusion of community media on all delivery platforms.
 - Organise opportunities for training and exchange of good practise with online workshops and face to face meetings. This will also be for minority groups and others traditionally without a voice and a platform;
 - Strengthening cooperation in support of (new) independent civic media initiatives in transition countries, this being a key condition for democratic participation and development in their societies. CMFE can facilitate contact with members with special experience and insight and support with lobby work.

CMFE SUSTAINABILITY

4. Continue the work to strengthen CMFE as an important CM advocate in Europe
 - Strengthen the social sustainability through strengthened membership base, including mitigating the weaknesses identified above: board, experts and members alike are very busy – reach out to groups ready and able to devote time to what we want and need to do.
 - Strengthen the organisational sustainability through revising working groups and tasks of importance to achieve the first three work areas lined out above.
 - Strengthen the financial **sustainability** through creative identification of opportunities.

No	Strategic theme	Strategic goal (what do we want to achieve?)	Action areas, activities under each of these?
1	LEGAL, ENABLING BACKGROUND WORK - ADVOCACY	Strengthened enabling environment of the 3rd Media Sector through increased general recognition of its importance and democratic value	<p>Obtain recognition of CMFE by the European Union and the Council of Europe as a point of reference for European and national culture and media policy (Lobbying and working with key organisations like EPRA, ERGA and CULT underpins much of the below work).</p> <p>Obtain recognition of CM by the drawing up of a basic charter or other reference document, such as a Framework Convention on Community Media to inspire and advance CM on a national and European level. This needs to be done on the basis of a needs analysis to recognize challenges for members in their respective countries;</p> <p>Strengthen CM’s enabling environment by supporting the establishment of funding possibilities for community media within the future EU programmes, among others by securing media-related budget lines.</p>
2	COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY - ADVOCACY	Increased awareness about the potential and role of community media	<p>Raise awareness about the large number of social and cultural issues which are covered and supported by the activities of community media, and their role as platforms for women, minority groups and others without a voice</p> <p>Provide links to ongoing research and initiate research on CM and its social role. Work towards a shared body of knowledge on community media possibly through the establishment of multilingual research platforms with partnering university institutions.</p>
3	ACTION FOR COOPERATION AND CHANGE	Dialogue, cooperation and support to strengthen community media initiated and facilitated	<p>Build up a platform for continuous dialogue and discussion on how to ensure media pluralism, freedom of expression and access to information throughout Europe.</p> <p>Ensure the inclusion of community media on all delivery platforms</p> <p>Organise opportunities for training and exchange of good practise with online workshops and face to face meetings. This will also be for minority groups and others traditionally without a voice and a platform.</p> <p>Strengthen cooperation in support of (new) independent civic media initiatives in transition countries, this being a key condition for democratic participation and development in their societies. CMFE can facilitate contact to members with special experience and insight and support with lobby work.</p>
4	CMFE SUSTAINABILITY	Work to strengthen CMFE as an important CM advocate in Europe continued	<p>Strengthen the social sustainability through strengthened membership base, including mitigating the weaknesses identified above: Reach out to groups ready and able to devote time to what we want & need to do.</p> <p>Strengthen the organisational sustainability through revisin working groups and tasks of importance to achieve the first three work areas lined out above.</p> <p>Strengthen the financial sustainability through creative identification of opportunities.</p>

2. The organisation to implement the strategic plan

CMFE builds almost exclusively on voluntary work – our organization needs to reflect the special challenges this entails.

The CMFE statutes set the ground rules for our functioning and are the legal framework for our operation and the members' and board's responsibilities.

The General Assembly, held once a year and open to all members, is the overall decision-making body (and can change the statutes if needed).

The board takes decisions in the best interest of CMFE and its members. The executive committee (EC) is made up by the president, treasurer and secretary – all board members. The EC prepares board meetings and acts as a coordinating group. The EC is, together with all the other board members, responsible to ensure the compliance to the statutes during the operational period.

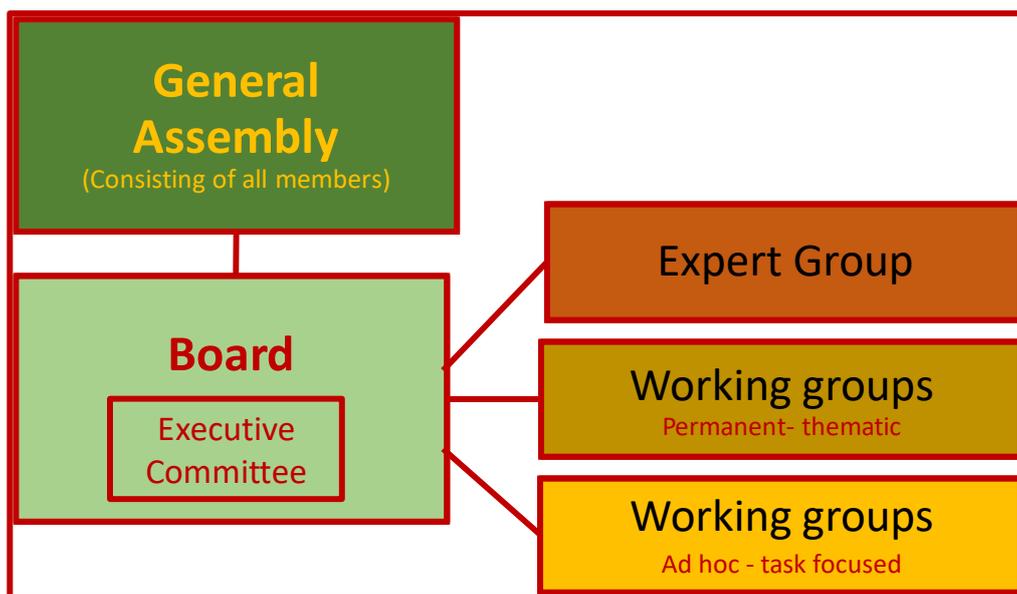
Individual board members and members of the expert group can represent CMFE and get involved in different activities and actions. This will normally mean that each board member takes on certain responsibilities (i.e. to follow the debates in the European Commission, the Council of Europe etc) and reports to the board and members (website, newsletter, social media platforms) about current developments.

Working groups (permanent or ad hoc) follow certain themes and develop statements or contribute to the discussion. They consist of board members, experts and other members and are asked to report to the board on a regular basis.

Members all across Europe contribute to CMFE's mandate and work: by organising events and activities and taking the European perspective into account, by answering to calls for exchange, by acting as project partners and by sharing their experiences via the mailing list or on the website with other CMFE members. Members are invited to propose new members to the board.

CMFE strives to support their members (and potential members) with information, letters of support or contacts with experts and potential partners. Board and expert groups take a special role in providing support.

We cooperate with AMARC Europe and other NGOs and networks where this seems beneficial to the sector and to the CMFE objectives and is possible.



3. A sustainability plan

Organisational Sustainability: CMFE works to be a coherent and functional advocacy organisation, driving the important mission and agenda forward through our individual and collective work in our national, regional and international networks.

Social Sustainability and relevance including ownership of our organisation by members and buy-in to our core issues by partners is a priority for us. During the 5-year period covered by this strategic plan, we plan to further strengthen our communication with members, existing as well as new, plus relevant partners.

Financial Sustainability: We operate within a strict risk control environment with clear financial and accounting regulations and routines, transparency and accountability to partners and members alike. We are continually striving to secure funding from others through partnerships.

Approved by the CMFE board May 15, 2018

CMFE COMMUNITY MEDIA FORUM EUROPE (CMFE)

is a network of policy experts, organizations and federations, which aim to support the role of Community Media in Europe.

CMFE is registered in Belgium as an International NGO,
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