

In Defence of Radio Televisión Madrid and Freedom of Information

30th June 2021, Pozuelo de Alarcón

The media constitute a fundamental channel for the participation of the society in which they develop. An active and participatory citizenship requires access to truthful and quality information that public institutions must preserve and ensure. The public media have been fulfilling a triple function throughout their recent history: to inform, to educate and to entertain.

Likewise, the right to freedom of expression and the right to freely communicate or receive truthful information by any means of dissemination, which is enshrined in article 20 of the Spanish Constitution, find in public radio and television one of their main channels. The existence of public media that act with independence, neutrality and objectivity is the guarantee of the right to information and, therefore, of social participation based on freedom and the ability to access this content.

In the information society, the public media play an essential role in the development of democracy, the debate of ideas and citizen participation. Despite the irruption and establishment of new forms of communication, radio and television continue to be a necessity and a bastion in the proximity connection with society. A radio and television based on criteria of plurality, transparency, independence, and the professionalism of its workers is the best guarantee for achieving these objectives.

Law 8/2015, of 28 December, on Radio Televisión Madrid, includes in its preamble the intention to create "a new model of public radio and television in Madrid, characterised by transparency, plurality, the implementation of good practices in the sector and good corporate governance" and, furthermore, it also assures that the model must be "plural and aspire to ensure that Madrid society feels represented, both in its composition and in the audiovisual content that is programmed, and to ensure that the different social sensibilities, both majority and minority, are permanently reflected, without discrimination for ideological, political or other reasons, as set out in the Spanish Constitution".

The defence of the assumptions set out in the preamble of the law requires the rejection of any initiative aimed at controlling and directing RTVM from other bodies. The existence of Radio Televisión de Madrid as a professional and depoliticised entity is incompatible with its direct intervention by the Executive Power, a fact which is aggravated when the constitutional guarantee of the non-retroactivity of provisions restricting individual rights is violated.

For all these reasons, we believe that this reform of Law 8/2015 is unnecessary, and we uphold the defence of Radio Televisión Madrid as an essential public service for Madrid society, based on the plurality, neutrality, objectivity, transparency, and professionalism of its workers, in the face of attempts to undermine its independence and the deterioration of the quality of the services it provides.