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## UNIT 17 GLOBAL MEDIA POLICIES

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### 17.0 INTRODUCTION

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You might have encountered issues like net neutrality, social media policy, media literacy for combating misinformation, and debates around free journalism and journalists. Much of it is influenced by the media and communication policy of the nation and the ones involved across the border. This is how media in China is different from media in Sweden.

Global media policies are a set of rules, regulations, and guidelines that govern the functioning and operations of media across national borders. The world is now increasingly interconnected. Hence, global media policies are pivotal in shaping the dissemination of information, promoting cultural diversity, and protecting the freedom of expression.

This Unit will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of global media policy, its historical context, key challenges and opportunities, relevant case studies, and the importance of promoting inclusive and diverse media environments worldwide.

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## 17.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After going through this unit, you will:

- understand the importance of global media policy;
- acquire knowledge of the history and evolution of global media policy;
- be familiar with the organisations involved in global media policy;
- understand the challenges and opportunities in global media policy;
- discover prominent case studies related to global media policy;
- understand country-wise media policy approaches; and
- analyse the strengths, weaknesses, and implications of global media policies.

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## 17.2 HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL MEDIA POLICIES

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### 17.2.1 A Brief History

The development of global media policies can be traced back to the early 20th century. It all began when international telecommunication agreements started emerging. The formation of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 1865 laid the foundation for international cooperation in the field of communication.

However, it was in the mid-20th century that media policies gained significant attention.

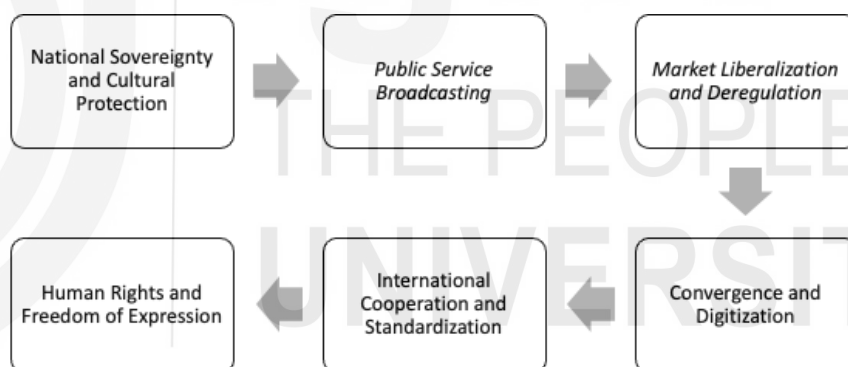
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was pivotal in developing global media policies. In 1980, UNESCO adopted the "Many Voices, One World" report, also popular as the MacBride Report. It emphasised the importance of a free and pluralistic media system. The report highlighted the need to democratise global communication and reduce information imbalances between developed and developing countries.

### 17.2.2 Evolutionary Concerns in the Development of Global Media Policy

Over time, the Global Media Policy (GMP) approaches have evolved. It has been shaped by cultural, political, and technological contexts specific to each country or region. Understanding these historical approaches provides insights into the policy decisions and regulatory frameworks that have shaped today's global media and communication landscape.

1. **National Sovereignty and Cultural Protection:** In the early years of media regulation, many countries accentuated the protection of national sovereignty and cultural identity. They imposed restrictions on foreign media ownership, content importation, and the dissemination of information from external sources. The focus was to safeguard domestic media industries and preserve cultural values.

2. **Public Service Broadcasting:** The concept of public service broadcasting emerged in the early 20th century. This was a response to the rapid growth of commercial media. Countries like the United Kingdom and Canada introduced policies to establish public broadcasters. These were either funded by license fees or government subsidies. It aimed to provide educational, informative, and culturally enriching content while maintaining independence from political and commercial influences.
3. **Market Liberalisation and Deregulation:** In the late 20th century, there was a shift towards market-oriented policies. The belief in the benefits of competition and free markets drove this. Many countries undertook media deregulation, privatisation, and liberalisation. The aim was to reduce government control over media and promote market-driven approaches. These policies aimed to foster innovation, investment, and diversity in media industries.
4. **Convergence and Digitisation:** With the advent of digital technologies and the convergence of media platforms, new challenges and policy considerations emerged. Governments and regulatory bodies started revisiting traditional media regulations to manage the digital landscape effectively. Policies developed attempted to regulate online content, ensure net neutrality, protect user privacy, and promote access to digital communication services.



*Evolutionary Concerns in GMP Development*

5. **International Cooperation and Standardization:** International cooperation became necessary with the globalisation of media and communication. Various international organisations, such as the United Nations, UNESCO, and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), facilitated dialogue, collaboration, and the development of common standards and principles—international agreements, conventions, and guidelines materialised to promote cross-border cooperation. Endeavours to tackle global challenges like cybersecurity and the digital divide also surfaced.
6. **Human Rights and Freedom of Expression:** The recognition of freedom of expression as a human right influenced the development of media policies. International human rights frameworks, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and regional human rights conventions, provided a foundation for advocating media freedom, access to

information, and protecting journalists' rights. These principles are mirrored in media policy approaches worldwide.

**Activity 1:** Go through the Media policy document of your country.

- What concerns could you spot in the media policies?
- What is the latest approach in the contemporary media policy debates?

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## 17.3 BROAD CLASSIFICATION OF MEDIA POLICIES

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### 17.3.1 Content-Carriage Categorisation

Media and communication policies can be categorised based on the message and vehicle. This approach will help you to identify different aspects of the regulatory framework. Here's an elaboration on each:

A. **Content Policies:** Content policies focus on regulating the material disseminated through media and communication channels. These policies typically aim to balance protecting freedom of expression and addressing concerns about harmful, offensive, or illegal content. Such policies deal with:

- **Censorship and Content Restrictions:** Governments may restrict certain types of content, such as hate speech, incitement to violence, or pornography. These policies vary across jurisdictions. The extent of restrictions imposed can impact freedom of expression significantly.
- **Broadcasting Standards:** Policies may set standards for broadcast content, including guidelines for appropriate language, violence, and nudity. Regulatory bodies often enforce these standards. Additionally, they may have mechanisms for receiving and addressing complaints from the public.
- **Public Service Broadcasting:** Policies might promote the existence of public service broadcasting to provide programming that serves the public interest and diverse communities. These policies often outline the funding mechanisms and programming obligations for public broadcasters.
- **Classification and Age Restrictions:** Policies may establish systems for classifying media content, such as movies, TV shows, and video games, based on their suitability for different age groups. These classifications help parents and consumers about the content's appropriateness.

B. **Carriage Policies:** Carriage policies pertain to regulating the infrastructure and means by which media content is transmitted. These policies often focus on promoting fair competition, access to information, and ensuring the reliability and availability of communication services. Carriage policies can include:

- Telecommunications Regulation: Policies may govern the telecommunications industry by licensing telecommunications service providers, spectrum allocation, and technical standards. These policies aim to ensure reliable and accessible communication services.
- Net Neutrality: Net neutrality policies aim to ensure equal and non-discriminatory treatment of internet traffic by internet service providers (ISPs). These policies prevent ISPs from blocking, throttling, or prioritising certain online content or services. It also ensures an open and level playing field on the Internet.
- Universal Service Obligations: Policies may impose obligations on service providers to ensure universal access to communication services, particularly in underserved or remote areas. This includes provisions for affordable and accessible telephony, broadband, and other essential communication services.
- Interconnection and Access: Policies may regulate the interconnection between different communication networks. This is done to ensure fair and non-discriminatory access to network infrastructure. These policies aim to promote competition and prevent anti-competitive practices.

*\*Note- Policies within each category can vary significantly across different countries and jurisdictions, reflecting the unique social, cultural, and political contexts in which they are developed.*

### Activity 2

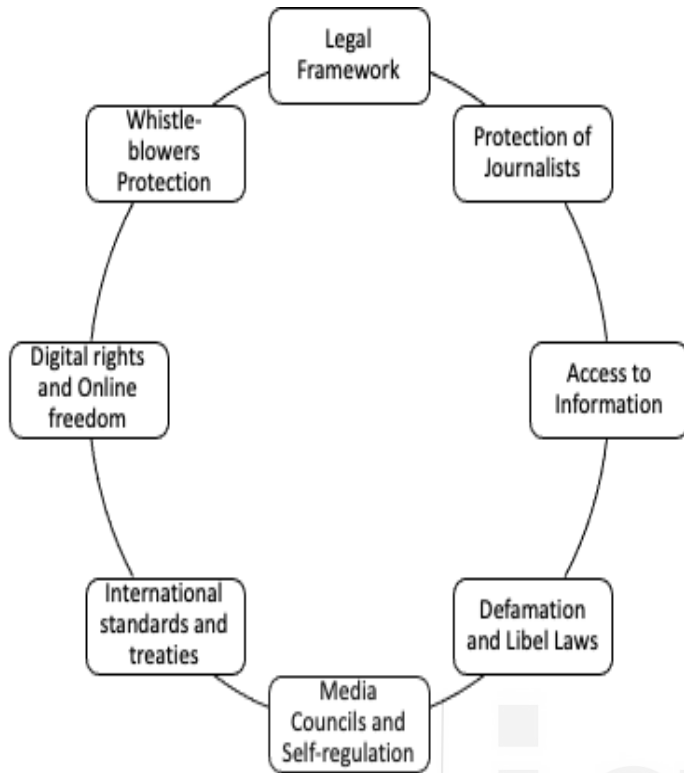
1. How does age group censor movies in your country?
  - a. Are there categories for it?
  - b. Who is responsible for issuing these certificates to films?
2. Try to find out about the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and the various initiatives under it.

### 17.3.2 Based on the Functional Dimensions

Media Policies can also be categorised into key areas that can help understand global media policies' functional dimensions.

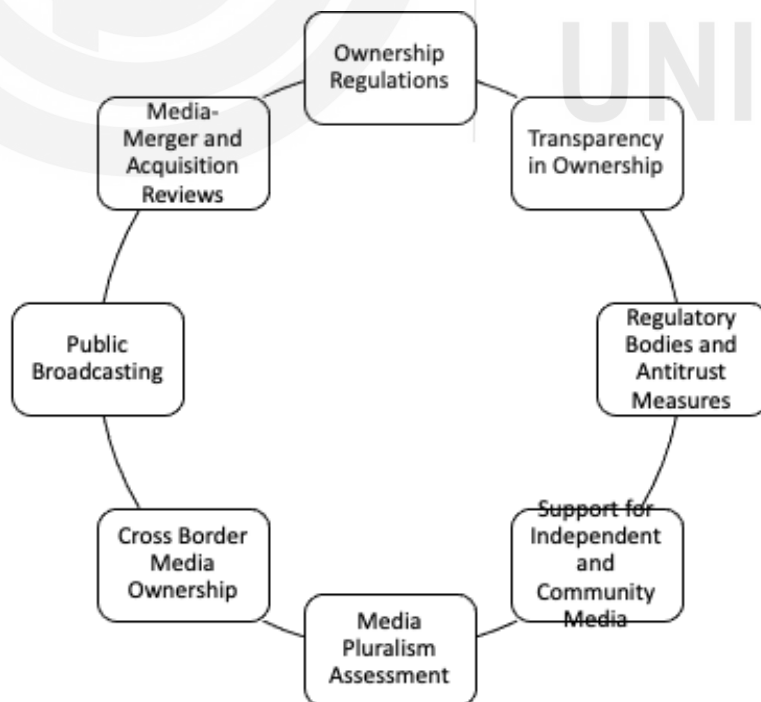
These categories provide a framework to help you understand the multifaceted nature of global media policies. However, it is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive, and policies often intersect across multiple areas.

**A. Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom:** As you might have guessed, these policies promote and protect the freedom of expression and the press. They encompass laws, regulations, and practices that ensure individuals and media organisations can freely express their views, opinions, and ideas without undue censorship or restrictions. These policies also aim to safeguard journalists, combat impunity for crimes against journalists, and promote media pluralism.



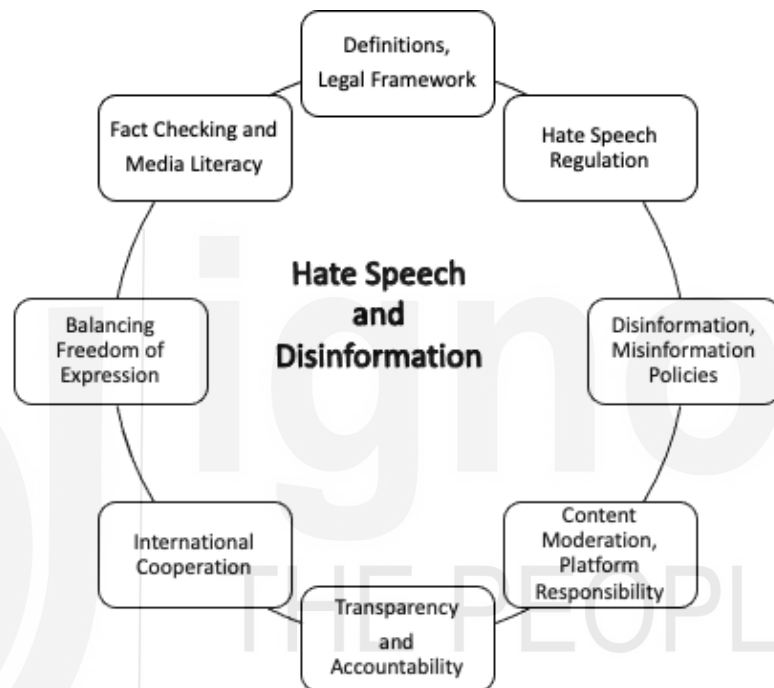
Policy Issues related to Freedom of expression and Press Freedom

**B. Media Ownership and Concentration:** The policies related to media ownership and concentration fall under this category. It aims to ensure a diverse and pluralistic media landscape. They aim to prevent monopolistic practices, regulate cross-media ownership, and promote transparency in media ownership structures. This would ensure undue control of media outlets by a few entities, facilitating a wide range of voices and perspectives.



Policy Issues Related to Media Ownership and Concentration

- C. **Media Pluralism and Diversity:** These policies promote diverse and inclusive media ecosystems. They promote representation of various cultural, ethnic, social, and linguistic groups and platforms for marginalised voices. They try to achieve it through measures to counteract discrimination, support community media, and foster content diversity.
- D. **Regulation of Hate Speech and Disinformation:** These policies seek to combat the spread of harmful content through hate speech, disinformation, and misinformation while balancing the right to free expression. They promote identifying and addressing hate speech, fact-checking, and transparency in online platforms.



*Policy Issues Related to Hate Speech and Media Disinformation*

- E. **Privacy and Data Protection:** With increasing digitisation, privacy and data protection policies have become critical. These policies focus on safeguarding individuals' data, ensuring consent-based data practices, and protecting privacy rights in the digital realm. They deal with regulations on data collection, storage, and usage by media organisations and online platforms.
- F. **Internet Governance and Net Neutrality:** Internet governance policies address the regulation and management of the Internet. It comprises issues such as net neutrality, cross-border data flows, cybersecurity, and digital rights.
- G. **Media Literacy and Education:** Policies in this category aim to promote media literacy and education among citizens. They focus on equipping individuals with the skills to critically analyse and evaluate media content, fostering media literacy in schools, and promoting digital literacy to navigate the complex media landscape.
- H. **Copyright and Intellectual Property:** Policies related to copyright and intellectual property address the protection of creative works, including media content. These laws and regulations govern the rights of creators,

fair use, and copyright infringement. A balance between intellectual property protection and access to information is a parallel concern of these policies.

### Activity 3

Go through the important updates related to media policy in the last year

- Nationally
- Internationally

What functional dimensions do you find

## 17.4 GLOBAL MEDIA POLICY LANDSCAPE

Each country has distinctive media policies shaped by cultural, political, and social contexts. For example, the United States strongly emphasises freedom of speech and limited government intervention. In contrast, countries like China have a more controlled media landscape with censorship and strict regulations.

### 17.4.1 Power Dynamics in GMP

Several countries have historically had significant hegemony in shaping global media and communication policies. Here are some notable examples:

- A. **United States:** The United States has dominated in shaping global media policies. With a robust media industry, technological advancements, and multinational media corporations, the US has been influential in setting standards, content distribution practices, and industry regulations. The country's policies, including those related to intellectual property, copyright, and trade, have had a global impact on media and communication.
- B. **United Kingdom:** The United Kingdom has played a crucial role in shaping global media policies, particularly during colonialism and the expansion of British media networks. The BBC's model of public service broadcasting, with its emphasis on quality programming and educational content, has influenced media policies in many countries. Additionally, the UK has been active in international organisations and forums that address media regulation and industry practices.
- C. **Germany:** with its strong media industry and cultural influence, Germany has been influential in shaping media policies within the European Union (EU) and globally. The country has advocated for the protection of cultural diversity and media pluralism. Its hate speech and privacy regulations have influenced discussions on those topics worldwide.
- D. **France:** France has actively promoted cultural diversity and media pluralism globally. The country has advocated for policies that protect and support local content production, particularly in France. France has been vocal in pushing for regulations on digital platforms, including measures to protect copyright and combat disinformation.



- E. **China:** In recent years, China has influenced global media policies, particularly concerning its domestic media market and technological advancements. China's approach to media regulation, censorship, and control over information flow has been influential within its borders. It has raised discussions about the impact of Chinese media policies on the international media landscape.

Contrary to this, several countries have been marginalised to varying degrees in global media and communication policies. Marginalisation can occur in different ways and to different extents. Here are a few examples of countries that have faced challenges in terms of representation, access, and influence in the global media landscape:

- A. **Developing Countries:** Many developing countries, particularly those with limited economic resources and technological infrastructure, face significant challenges in participating fully in global media and communication policies. These countries often struggle with limited access to advanced technologies, internet connectivity, and digital media platforms, which hinders their ability to compete and contribute to the global media market.
- B. **Small Island States:** Small island states, particularly those in the Pacific and the Caribbean, often face marginalisation due to their geographical isolation and limited resources. These countries may have small populations, which makes it challenging to sustain a thriving media industry and gain international visibility. They also face vulnerabilities related to climate change, which can further limit their ability to participate in global media and communication policies.
- C. **Non-English Speaking Countries:** Countries where languages other than English are predominantly spoken can face challenges in global media policies. English has a dominant presence in international media, and countries with different languages may face barriers regarding language accessibility, translation, and dissemination of their content to a broader audience. This can result in limited international visibility and influence.
- D. **Conflict-Affected Countries:** Countries experiencing conflicts or political instability often face significant challenges in shaping media policies and ensuring access to free and independent media. Governments may restrict media freedom, limiting representation and diverse perspectives in the global media landscape.
- E. **Indigenous Communities:** Indigenous communities worldwide often face marginalisation in global media and communication policies. Their voices, languages, and cultural expressions are often underrepresented or overlooked in mainstream media. This marginalisation can perpetuate stereotypes, cultural erasure, and limited access to media platforms to share their stories and perspectives.

### 17.4.2 Key Organisations for GMP

Several international organisations have contributed to shaping global media policies. A few key organisations are:

- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a specialised agency of the United Nations, focuses on global telecommunication standards and policies.
- The World Trade Organization (WTO) also significantly regulates media and communication services trade.
- Additionally, through bodies like UNESCO, the United Nations (UN) promotes media development and advocates for press freedom.
- Regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), and the Organization of American States (OAS) also contribute to the formulation of regional media policies.

### 17.4.3 Recent Influences on GMP

Several incidents have influenced global media policies.

- The Net Neutrality debate, particularly in the United States, has led to dialogues on equal access to online content and preventing internet service providers from favouring some websites or services.
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) enforced by the European Union has set a precedent for data privacy and protection globally. It has driven organisations to prioritise user consent, transparency, and the secure handling of personal data.

#### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Describe the history and evolution of global media policies. How has the development of these policies been influenced by the changing media landscape and technological advancements?

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2. Classify global media policies based on content-carriage categorisation and functional dimensions. How do these classifications help in understanding the diverse approaches adopted by countries?

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3. Analyse the power dynamics involved in global media policies. How do global organisations and key stakeholders influence the formulation and implementation of these policies?

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**Activity 3**

Did you come across any net neutrality debate lately? If yes, what was it about? If not, then try to find out the discussions about it at the national and international levels.

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## 17.5 GLOBAL MEDIA POLICY EVALUATION

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### 17.5.1 Research Organisations and GMP

Research offers a wealth of information on global media policy. Research, reports, case studies, and analyses can serve as valuable references for understanding the evolving landscape of media policy worldwide.

- A. Global Media Policy Observatory (GMPO):** The GMPO is a research and knowledge hub offering worldwide insights and analysis on media policy issues. It provides research papers, reports, and resources on various aspects of global media policy.

Website: <https://www.gmpo.org/>

- B. International Telecommunication Union (ITU):** The ITU is a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for setting global telecommunications standards and policies. Their website offers publications, reports, and databases related to media policy and regulation.

Website: <https://www.itu.int/>

- C. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):** UNESCO promotes freedom of expression, media development, and the safety of journalists. Their website provides resources, publications, and reports on global media policy and press freedom.

Website: <https://en.unesco.org/>

- D. Global Forum for Media Development (GFMD):** A network of media support organisations working towards media development and pluralism. Their website offers research papers, policy briefs, and global media policy issues resources.

Website: <https://gfmd.info/>

**E. Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA):** A project of the National Endowment for Democracy, focuses on media development and freedom globally. Their website provides reports, publications, and media policy and regulation analysis.

Website: <https://www.cima.ned.org/>

**F. Reporters Without Borders (RSF):** An international organisation advocating for press freedom and protecting journalists. Their website offers the World Press Freedom Index, reports, and resources on media freedom and media policy.

Website: <https://rsf.org/>

**G. Global Digital Policy Incubator (GDPI):** Based at Stanford University, it explores the intersection of technology, policy, and governance. Their website provides research papers, articles, and resources on global digital policy, including media policy.

Website: <https://fsi.stanford.edu/gdpi>

**H. Global Media Policy Project (GMPP):** A global research initiative focusing on global media policy and regulation. They provide publications, blog posts, and resources on various media policy issues.

Website: <https://www.globalmediapolicy.net/>

### 17.5.2 Performance Indexes Related to GMP

Global media policies are indexed through various indicators. Several organisations produce annual rankings and reports assessing countries' performance related to media policies and press freedom. Here are some rankings for you to refer to:

**A. World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders):** The World Press Freedom Index ranks countries based on press freedom and ease of journalism. It evaluates factors such as media pluralism, transparency, legal framework, censorship, and the safety of journalists. The index is widely recognised and respected.

Website: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

**B. Freedom of the Press Index (Freedom House):** The Freedom of the Press Index assesses press freedom and media independence in countries worldwide. It considers the legal environment, political pressures, economic influences, and violence against journalists. This index provides a comprehensive analysis of media freedom.

Website: <https://freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-press>

**C. Media Sustainability Index (IREX):** The Media Sustainability Index reports the health and viability of media systems in different countries. It assesses factors like legal environment, infrastructure, professionalism, business management, and supporting institutions. The index provides insights into the overall sustainability of media sectors.

Website: <https://www.irex.org/msi>

**D. Digital Rights Ranking (Digital Rights Foundation):** The Digital

Rights Ranking assesses countries based on their legal framework, practices, and policies concerning digital rights, including freedom of expression, privacy, and access to information. It focuses on the digital landscape and its impact on human rights.

Website: <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/digital-rights-ranking/>

**E. Media Development Indicators (UNESCO):** UNESCO's Media Development Indicators provide a framework for assessing the status of media development in countries. The indicators cover areas such as media pluralism, diversity of content, professional capacity, and legal and regulatory frameworks. It provides a comprehensive overview of the media landscape in a country.

Website: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/mediadevelopment/assessments/mdi>

### 17.5.3 Countries with a Strong Commitment to GMP

Determining the countries with the best media and communication policies is subjective and can vary depending on different criteria and assessments. However, several countries have been recognised for their strong commitment to media freedom, information access, and policies promoting a diverse and vibrant media landscape. Here are a few examples:

- A. Norway:** Norway is often regarded as a leader in media freedom and press freedom. The country consistently ranks high in global media freedom indexes, emphasising a strong legal framework that protects freedom of expression, an independent media sector, and robust public service broadcasting.
- B. Finland:** Finland is known for its strong media policies that promote transparency, access to information, and freedom of the press. The country has a vibrant media landscape with a strong public service broadcasting system and high media literacy.
- C. Sweden:** Sweden is recognised for its progressive media policies and commitment to media freedom. The country strongly emphasises freedom of expression and transparency, with a legal framework that protects journalists and promotes independent media.
- D. Netherlands:** The Netherlands is often lauded for its media policies that support a diverse and independent media sector. The country promotes media pluralism, freedom of expression, and access to information. It has a strong public broadcasting system and an active media watchdog to ensure media integrity.
- E. Costa Rica:** Costa Rica is notable for its strong commitment to press freedom and access to information. The country has a legal framework that protects freedom of expression and a history of fostering independent media and promoting media diversity.

### 17.5.4 Countries Facing Challenges with GMP

Certain countries have been consistently ranked low regarding media freedom and press freedom by organisations such as Reporters Without

Borders (RSF) and Freedom House. Countries with significant challenges in media policy and restrictions on freedom of expression include:

- A. North Korea:** North Korea consistently ranks at the bottom of various media freedom indexes due to its highly restrictive media environment, government control over all forms of media, censorship, and limited access to information.
- B. Eritrea:** Eritrea is often regarded as one of the most repressive countries regarding media freedom. The government exercises strict control over the media, with no independent media outlets allowed, and journalists face harassment, imprisonment, and censorship.
- C. Turkmenistan:** Turkmenistan is known for its strict media controls and limited freedom of expression. The government maintains tight control over all forms of media, and self-censorship is common among journalists due to fear of reprisals.
- D. China:** China has extensive media controls and censorship mechanisms, including the Great Firewall, which restricts access to foreign websites and social media platforms. The Chinese government tightly controls traditional and online media, and critical journalism is often met with censorship, imprisonment, and other forms of repression.
- E. Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia has a restrictive media environment with limited freedom of expression. The government controls traditional media outlets, and independent journalism is suppressed. Journalists critical of the government have faced intimidation, imprisonment, and violence.

*\*Note - No country is perfect; countries with strong media policies may face challenges and ongoing debates in certain areas. Media policy rankings can change over time and the assessment of media freedom is a complex and multifaceted issue.*

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## 17.6 GLOBAL MEDIA POLICIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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There are many challenges for Global media policies in the contemporary world.

- With the rise of social media and online platforms, issues such as disinformation, hate speech, and privacy have become prominent concerns. Hence, one of the challenges is striking a balance between the free flow of information and the regulation of harmful content.
- Another challenge lies in ensuring media diversity and representation. The concentration of media ownership and control in the hands of a few powerful entities can limit the plurality of voices and perspectives. Bridging the digital divide and ensuring access to information for all, especially in developing countries, is still challenging.

Despite the challenges, global media policies also present opportunities for

positive change.

Digital media, as you know, has enabled greater participation and citizen journalism, allowing diverse voices to be heard. The growth of online platforms provides a space for independent media outlets and content creators, facilitating media pluralism.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Identify key organisations involved in shaping global media policies. How do these organisations collaborate and cooperate to address issues concerning media regulation and freedom of expression?

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2. Evaluate the recent influences on global media policies. How have factors like technological advancements, geopolitical shifts, and emerging media platforms impacted policy-making in the digital age?

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3. Discuss the challenges and opportunities in global media policies. How can international cooperation and policy innovation address the challenges while maximising the opportunities for a diverse and inclusive global media landscape?

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## 17.7 LET US SUM UP

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Global media policies continue to evolve along with technological advancements and societal changes. Balancing the freedom of expression with the need for regulation is challenging.

But there are also opportunities to promote transparency, inclusivity, and cultural diversity in the media landscape.

International organisations, governments, and civil society must collaborate and adopt policies that foster a free, pluralistic, and responsible media ecosystem on a global scale.

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## 17.8 KEYWORDS

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**Net Neutrality:** Equal access to online content and prevents discrimination by Internet service providers

**Media Pluralism:** Media pluralism refers to the presence of diverse and independent media outlets that offer a variety of perspectives, opinions, and voices within a given media system.

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## 17.9 FURTHER READINGS

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## 17.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress 1

1. The history of global media policies dates back to the early regulations of telegraph and radio. Over time, the evolution of media technologies, like the internet, has driven policy changes to address new challenges, such as digital content distribution and cross-border media flows.
2. Global media policies can be classified based on content-carriage categorisation (content regulation vs. infrastructure regulation) and functional dimensions (regulation for economic, social, or political objectives). These classifications aid in comprehending how different nations approach media governance.
3. Influential organisations, governments, media conglomerates, and civil



society actors shape power dynamics in global media policies. They exert their influence through lobbying, international agreements, and strategic alliances to advance their interests and agendas.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

1. Key organisations like UNESCO, WTO, and ITU significantly shape global media policies. They collaborate through multilateral discussions, setting standards, and facilitating cooperation to address media-related challenges and promote freedom of expression.
2. Recent influences on global media policies include internet governance debates, data privacy concerns, and the rise of digital platforms. Technological advancements, geopolitical tensions, and the growing role of social media platforms have transformed policy-making to address the challenges posed by the digital age.
3. Challenges in global media policies include balancing media freedom and regulation, combating misinformation, and addressing digital divides. Opportunities lie in promoting diversity and inclusivity, fostering international cooperation, and developing innovative policies that keep pace with rapid technological changes while safeguarding human rights and democratic values.

