



# THE MEDIA IN EUROPE'S SMALL NATIONS

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## Reference

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# CHAPTER THREE

## NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND THE MEDIA IN CATALONIA

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Since 1980, Catalonia has had a policy of developing its own media and communication system. The organisation of this system is not a goal in itself; it has been designed as a tool to achieve a wider political objective: the national, cultural and linguistic reconstruction of Catalonia after the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1978).

During the Franco regime, Catalonia lost the self-government which it had achieved in the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939), and the use of Catalan in public life was prohibited and persecuted (Guibernau 2002). Following the advent of democracy in Spain in the late 1970s, Catalonia regained its political autonomy with the restoration in 1977 of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* (a centuries-old self-government institution that was abolished in 1714 and recovered only briefly during the Republican interval). With the election of the centre-right nationalist party *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) in 1980, a process of Catalan national reconstruction was initiated with two clear aims: firstly, the recovery and expansion of self-government; and secondly, the preservation and revitalisation Catalan cultural identity (Guibernau 2002). This reconstruction project was based on the widely supported idea of Catalonia as a “stateless nation”, a political entity which Guibernau (1998, 12) defines as:

cultural communities that share a common past, that are linked to a clearly demarcated territory, that want to decide on their political future and lack their own State. These communities are included within one State, or within various States, which they tend to consider as alien. Stateless nations demand the right to self-determination, which at times is understood as an increase in the autonomy it exercises within the State, while in other cases it is interpreted as the right to secession.

Successive Catalan governments have viewed the media as a key tool in the process of Catalan national reconstruction. Consequently, a comprehensive set of policies aimed at achieving three complementary objectives have been implemented: firstly, and most importantly, the normalisation of the Catalan language within the media; secondly, the creation of an autonomous public sphere in Catalonia; and thirdly, the strengthening of the powers of self-governance over communications.

The significance given to the Catalan language is no accident. For many Catalan nationalists, the continuity of Catalonia as a nation depends on the preservation of Catalan. Since the Franco dictatorship, when the public use of the Catalan language was prohibited and persecuted, there has been a wide social and political agreement (especially between political parties of Catalan origin) on the importance of language as a basic component of Catalonia's national identity and the need for its promotion. This position was particularly defended by Jordi Pujol (CiU), president of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* between 1980 and 2003 (Guibernau 2002, 233-34 and 266-75).

It is important to bear in mind that, while in 1975 as many as 79.9% of Catalonia's inhabitants understood Catalan, only 53.1% spoke it. Thus, at the time of negotiating the Spanish Constitution of 1978, one of the main objectives set out by political Catalanism was to ensure that Spain's minority languages would be co-official in the territories where they were spoken (Guibernau 2002). With this explicit constitutional recognition, the *Generalitat* governments could then implement a linguistic policy to promote the Catalan language.

Catalonia's linguistic policy has been designed around two objectives: firstly, the development of the media in Catalan; and secondly, what was known as *linguistic immersion*—the use of Catalan as the language of instruction in all public primary and secondary schools in Catalonia. The result has been an improvement in the state of the language. The Catalan government's latest *Language Policy Report* (2010) reveals that 95% of inhabitants of over 15 years of age understand Catalan, while 65% claim they know how to speak it. Furthermore, 36% of Catalan citizens state that Catalan is their usual language, while 12% say they use it indistinctly with Spanish (Generalitat de Catalunya 2010, 244). Thus 48% of people who live in Catalonia use the Catalan language in their daily life.

All of this political action was carried out on the legal basis of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that Catalonia is one of the 17 autonomous communities of the Spanish state. This has led, on several occasions, to conflicts between the central Spanish government and the

Catalan government over the powers and specific policies applied within Catalonia. However, Catalonia's demographic and economic weight—and therefore its political weight—within the Spanish state has helped the *Generalitat* to win some of these conflicts: it is the second most populated autonomous community (it has 7,565,603 inhabitants, more than countries such as Denmark and Norway) and has a per capita income of €27,430 in 2011, higher than the Spanish average (€23,271) and the European Union average (€25,134) (National Statistics Institute of Spain 2012).

The aim of this chapter is to describe and analyse the communication policies developed by the *Generalitat* between 1980 and the autumn of 2012 (the time of writing), along with the main successes of these policies in relation to the creation of a Catalan media system. Although on a local level other public bodies in Catalonia have also developed communication policies, the chapter essentially focuses on the work of the autonomous Catalan government, for this is the institution that has come to define the core aspects of the communication system under construction.

The Catalan communication policy has generated large legislative instrumentation, numerous government actions, and has had abundant financial resources available to it (Corbella 1991; Moragas and Corominas 2000; Fernández Alonso, Guimerà i Orts and Fernández Viso 2012). This chapter is based on the results of previous research carried out both by the authors and by other researchers in this field (Fernández Viso and Guimerà Orts 2012). Our methodology is based on documentary analysis and interviews with some of the key individuals responsible for the communication policies in Catalonia between 2000 and 2012.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter is organised into five sections. The first details the powers in the field of communication in Catalonia. The second sets out the communication policies applied and the central objectives guiding them, while the third summarises the main results obtained in the organisation of an own media system. Section four analyses the impact of the current economic and financial crisis both on policies and on the system itself from 2010 onwards. The fifth and final section offers some additional considerations by way of conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> David Madi (The Catalan Secretary for Communication 2001-03), interviewed by Josep Àngel Guimerà, February 2007; and Enric Marín (The Catalan Secretary for Communication 2004-06), interviewed by Josep Àngel Guimerà, February 2007. See also Tresseras (2010) and Martí (2011).

## Catalonia and the Spanish State

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognised Catalonia as a “nationality” and guaranteed the right to autonomy of all the “nationalities and regions” that make up Spain. This started a political and administrative decentralisation process that resulted in a new model of territorial organisation of the State: the State of autonomies (Spanish: *Estado de las autonomías*). The State of autonomies combines the principles of self-government and shared government. The two levels of government—central and regional—enjoy constitutionally guaranteed parliamentary institutions and separate powers and competencies. This means that the authority of the regional level is an entity in its own right: it is not a delegation of the central government.

The Statute of Autonomy is the basic institutional norm of each autonomous community. Among other elements, it contains the competences that each autonomous community assumes within the framework established in the Spanish Constitution. Article 149 of the Constitution states: “Matters not expressly assigned to the State by this Constitution may fall under the jurisdiction of the Self-governing Communities by virtue of their Statutes of Autonomy”. Catalonia passed its first Statute of Autonomy in accordance with this constitutional norm in 1979 and its second Statute of Autonomy in 2006.

The powers to regulate the fields of media and culture are distributed between the central Spanish State and the *Generalitat*. The Constitution grants the former exclusive power in matters of telecommunications (including, for example, the planning of the radio spectrum), as well as the power to establish the basic rules relating to organization of the press, radio and television and, in general, all mass-communications media. For its part, the autonomous Government of Catalonia has assumed full competences in the following areas: the development and implementation of the basic regulation of media and communications (for example, the development of the planning of the radio spectrum carried out by the Spanish Government); cinema; promotion of the Catalan language and culture; and the establishment of its own public communication media.

However, as noted above, the powers and rights of the autonomous communities are not clearly defined and delimited in a list. On the one hand, there is a substantial margin to interpret the powers that could be assumed by the autonomous communities (all those not specifically reserved for the State in the Constitution). On the other hand, Article 150.2 of the Constitution authorises the State to transfer or delegate some of its powers to autonomous communities. In this way, the issue of distributing

powers has been—and continues to be—a subject of disputes and negotiations. In fact, the deployment of the State of Autonomies in Spain has followed a process of transfer and/or devolution of State powers to the autonomous communities, forced in many cases by the demands of the latter. During the late 1970s, there was a broad social and political consensus in Catalonia about the fundamental importance of the media, both for the national reconstruction of Catalonia after the Franco dictatorship and for the survival of Catalan cultural identity (Fernández Viso and Guimerà i Orts 2012). Consequently, since the establishment of democracy in Spain, Catalonia has demanded full regulatory power and authority over its media and communication system and has tenaciously negotiated this demand with the successive Spanish governments over the last thirty years. The Catalan government, as we will see below, has even managed to force the legal framework in order to obtain the granting of new powers in this field.

This line of political action has received the support of the Catalan academic community, which has proposed the political organisation of a Catalan media and communication system as an essential requisite not only for the survival of Catalan identity but ultimately of the Catalan nation itself. The most complete and influential proposal has been that made by the communications scholars Josep Gifreu and Maria Corominas in their book *Construir l'Espai Català de Comunicació* (Constructing the Catalan Communication Space 1991), which was the result of an in-depth research project carried out with public funding. Such investment in communication research has also been an important line of political action in Catalonia (Fernández Viso and Guimerà i Orts 2012).

### **Catalan communication policy 1980-2010**

Since 1980, when the first elections for the Catalan Parliament in the new democratic era were held, Catalonia has had ten governments, the last of which was elected in November 2012. All of these governments have had the presence of Catalan nationalist political parties. The centre-right nationalist CiU party governed Catalonia without interruption between 1980 and 2003, when a nationalist coalition comprised of three left-wing parties (socialist, pro-independence and ecologist) came to power. The members of this coalition included the pro-independence *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) party, which assumed responsibility for communication and cultural policy. The conservative CiU returned to power in November 2010, and two years later, in 2012, it called early elections, but lost almost 20% of its seats in the Parliament. CiU still rules

Catalonia, but only thanks to the support of the left-wing and pro-independence ERC, which doubled its seats and became the second political party in the Parliament.

The communication policies adopted by the different Catalan autonomous governments in the last three decades have sought to contribute to the national, cultural and linguistic reconstruction of Catalonia by fulfilling three essential—and interrelated—objectives: firstly, and as a central focus, the normalisation of the use of the Catalan language in all spheres of daily life; secondly, the configuration of an autonomous media sphere in Catalonia; and thirdly, the increase in the powers of self-governance to design and regulate the Catalan media system, pushing to the limit the possibilities opened up in this regard by the constitutional design and even openly challenging it.

In the 1980s the linguistic normalisation policy of the *Generalitat* gave central importance to promoting the use of the Catalan language in the media in order to provide citizens with access to information and cultural products produced in their own language. Following the passing of the *Ley de Normalización Lingüística* 7/1983 (Law of Linguistic Normalisation 7/1983) in 1983, the Catalan administration established a grant system for publications written fully or partially in Catalan. Considering the discretionary nature with which part of these public subsidies were awarded up to 2003, there is very little data corresponding to the total amount of money invested in the first two decades of this programme. Nevertheless, Fernández Alonso and Blasco Gil (2005) claim that €25 million was distributed for this purpose in 2003 alone.

The second central objective of Catalan communication policy—the construction of an autonomous media sphere—has been closely linked to the goal of linguistic normalisation. Thus, the desire to set up a separate communications space was initially expressed in the creation of a Catalan public media system designed to give priority to the Catalan language, culture and interests. The *Corporación Catalana de Radio y Televisión* (Catalan Radio and Television Corporation) (CCRTV) was set up in 1983, despite the fact that it was not permitted by Spanish legislation until the passing of the *Ley del Tercer Canal* (Third Channel Act) later that year.<sup>2</sup>

The challenge presented to the Spanish state by the establishment of CCRTV—a challenge initiated by the Basque autonomous government, which had set up its own public broadcasting service several months previously—serves to illustrate the third central objective of Catalan

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<sup>2</sup> *Ley 46/1983, de 26 de diciembre, reguladora del Tercer Canal de Televisión.* (Regulatory Law 46/1983, of 26<sup>th</sup> December 1983, on the Third Television Channel).

communication policy: the constant struggle with the Madrid government to increase the capacity and powers of the Catalan government to control and regulate Catalonia's media and communication system. After arduous negotiations, the Spanish state legalised and authorised the Basque and Catalan public television channels by passing the above mentioned Third Channel Act. The previous year it had done the same after the *Generalitat* assumed the power to regulate FM radio broadcasting licences in Catalonia on the understanding that the Catalan government was responsible for developing the planning of the use of the radio spectrum. (The Spanish state took the conflict to the Constitutional Court, where judgement was pronounced in favour of the *Generalitat*.)

In the 1990s the Catalan government continued to map media and communication in Catalonia with two new public calls for applications for the granting of FM licences (granted in 1991 and 1999 respectively) and the maintenance of public subsidies for publications in Catalan. With the progressive expansion of material and human resources during those years, CCRTV helped to strengthen the Catalan communication sphere, helped by the Act on Linguistic Policy 1/1998, which consolidated the normalisation of the Catalan language in Catalan public media by obliging radio and television broadcasters under licence granted by the *Generalitat* to guarantee at least 50% of their broadcasting time would be provided in Catalan. In order to guarantee a significant presence of Catalan in films shown in Catalonia, a decree made in the same year also obliged film distributors to dub or subtitle into Catalan half of the copies of those films of which 18 or more copies were distributed in Catalonia.<sup>3</sup> Due to pressure from multinational distribution companies, this measure did not come into effect. Nevertheless, many distributors did agree to dub films into Catalan and provide a suitable number of showings in cinemas (Jones 1999).

It is important to point out that the majority of the political measures that we have described thus far received wide, if not unanimous, support from the different political forces represented in the Parliament of Catalonia. The recovery of the Catalan language and culture was an unquestioned goal and one that was also demanded by Catalan society. This implicit consensus on the subject of communication policy became evident again in December 1999 with the unanimous passing in the Catalan Parliament of a decision about audiovisual media in Catalonia.

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<sup>3</sup> This quantity would be reduced to 16 after the third year of the decree being applied. *Decreto 237/1998, de 8 de septiembre (publicado en el DOGC 2725, del 16), sobre Medidas de Fomento de la Oferta Cinematográfica Doblada y Subtitulada en Lengua Catalana* (Decree 237/1998, of 8<sup>th</sup> September, on measures to promote the cinema offering dubbed and subtitled in Catalan).



This called for the legal framework of the Catalan communication system to be modified in order to, on the one hand, promote a space for communication in the Catalan language that would also encompass other territories and regions where Catalan is spoken, and, on the other hand, to develop the capacity for self-governance in this area.<sup>4</sup> The political agreement involved acknowledging the strategic, economic and political importance of the audiovisual sector and the need to further the development of its own regulations in this matter.

Catalan communication policy experienced a notable boost in the decade from 2000 to 2010 with the passing of important measures to continue developing the objectives pursued to date. The first of these measures was the enactment of Law 2/2000 of the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC). This regulation made the CAC—created in 1996 as a media advisory body—into the audiovisual regulatory authority of Catalonia, the first of its kind to be set up in Spain. More specifically, the new law gave the CAC regulatory and sanctioning powers and increased its powers of inspection. Subsequent legislative decisions have further broadened the CAC's powers considerably. For example, the Audiovisual Communication in Catalonia Act (passed in 2005) granted the CAC full powers in the processes of allocation and renewal of radio and television licences in Catalonia, as well as greater sanctioning powers. This important regulation, which systematised and updated the Catalan legislation relating to the audiovisual sector, defended the *Generalitat's* right to have competences over the use of the radio spectrum. However, it was not recognised by the Spanish Constitutional Court.

Along this same line of increasing the capacity for self-governance in Catalonia regarding communication issues, the *Generalitat* presented a new *tour de force* to the Spanish State in 2003. Firstly, it granted one hundred provisional authorisations (not legally valid) for FM radio broadcasting as a pilot plan. It did this not as part of the development of a national technical plan previously devised by the State, but to demonstrate that radio spectrum was still available in Catalonia in order to demand the consequent planning of that free space from the Spanish state and thereby make it possible for new local and regional FM broadcasting licences to be granted. The Madrid government eventually approved a National Technical Plan for FM Broadcasting in 2006, which contained the majority of the spectrum demands anticipated in the Catalan pilot plan.

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<sup>4</sup> *Resolució 3/VI del Parlament de Catalunya, de 15 de diciembre de 1999, sobre el mitjans audiovisuals de Catalunya* (Resolution 3/VI of the Parliament of Catalonia, of 15<sup>th</sup> December 1999, on audiovisual media in Catalonia).

Secondly, and in the framework of the rollout of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) in Spain, the Catalan government obtained in 2003 a second DTT full multiplex channel (a group of television channels transmitted over a single digital bandwidth) with regional coverage, which it granted to a major private Catalan communications group (Godó), even though the National Technical Plan for DTT approved by the State in 1998 had reserved only one digital multiplex for each autonomous community. That same year CiU came to an agreement with the governing conservative party in Spain for legalizing the exception made with the allocation of two DTT full multiplexes to Catalonia. Later, the National Technical DTT plan of 2005 increased the number of digital multiplexes that could be assigned to each autonomous community to two. Catalonia requested and obtained a new multiplex, meaning it now had *de facto* three digital multiplexes (and is the only Spanish autonomous community to have this privilege).

The arrival of the pro-independence ERC party to the areas of communication and culture of the *Generalitat*—through the coalition government that rose to power in Catalonia in 2003—led to an intensification of the political action in this field, mainly concerning the linguistic normalisation of Catalan, which was a goal not only for Catalonia, but also for the other territories where the language is spoken. The *Generalitat* continued its commitment to supporting the use of the Catalan language in the media, but it modified the subsidy-granting procedure in order to make it more transparent and to include digital media as well. Furthermore, it promoted the creation of the Barometer of Communication and Culture, a publicly funded project that aims to measure media audiences and cultural consumption in both Catalonia and the other two Spanish autonomous communities where Catalan is spoken (Valencia and the Balearic Islands).

The normalisation of the international use of Catalan reached an important milestone when, in 2005, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) approved the generic Internet domain “.cat”. This was the first time that a domain of this type had been granted to a linguistic and cultural community. Catalan civil society had demanded it for a long time, and it was fully supported by the Catalan government. The PuntCAT Foundation presented the application for the domain .cat to ICANN in March 2004, backed by the signatures of more than 68,000 Catalan citizens, companies and institutions.

Continuing with the aim of strengthening and regulating a Catalan sphere of communication, the coalition government completed the legislative reform initiated with the Catalan Audiovisual Council Act and

the Audiovisual Communication in Catalonia Act with a new law regarding the Catalan public broadcasting service. Passed in 2007, the new regulatory framework of the CCRTV—which had now changed its name to *Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals* (CCMA)—aimed to de-governmentalize the management of this public body by substantially modifying both the procedure to elect the members of the Governing Council of the CCMA and the duration of their mandate. This was done to avoid it coinciding with the duration of the parliamentary term of office. The Catalan Corporation of Audiovisual Media Act again insisted that Catalan should be the institutional language of Catalan public media and laid down the obligation that the CCMA must devote a minimum of 6% of its income to funding the Catalan film sector.

Moreover, between 2000 and 2010 the *Generalitat* decidedly promoted the consolidation of a private Catalan media sector. In this regard, as well as the new FM concessions facilitated by the success of the abovementioned pilot plan and the awarding of a full DTT multiplex with regional coverage to a private group, the Catalan government, between 2005 and 2006, granted local DTT licences—for both the public and private sector—from the spectrum planning carried out by the Spanish government. The CAC played a decisive role in this process, since it issued binding reports on the competition rules and on the candidates that applied. Previously, in 2003, digital radio licences with regional, county and supra-county wide coverage had also been granted.

During the second mandate of the left-wing coalition government (2006-2010), the *Generalitat* gave renewed support to the production and dissemination, within Catalonia and beyond, of news and cultural programmes in Catalan and about Catalan society. Firstly, the budget of the Catalan News Agency (ACN) was notably increased in order to encourage its expansion abroad. The ACN had been created in 1999 by several Catalan local administrations, but three years later the CCMA became its majority shareholder, followed by the *Generalitat* in 2007. The budget increase enabled the news agency to open several offices abroad and to set up the Catalan News Agency portal and the Catalan Views blog in order to explain the current situation of Catalonia to an international audience. Secondly, the *Generalitat* undertook a negotiation process with the authorities of other territories in which Catalan is spoken, with a view to signing agreements that would make the reciprocal reception by DTT of its main public television channels possible. The first agreement was signed with the autonomous government of the Balearic Islands, and the second, with the Executive of the Principality of Andorra (a small country located in the Pyrenees, between Spain and France). It also received the

consent of the autonomous government of Aragon for programmes from the main public Catalan television channel to be received in a border area between Catalonia and Aragon. Similar agreements are still being negotiated with the authorities of the autonomous community of Valencia and of some territories in the south of France, where, in any case, the DTT signal of the different Catalan public television channels could, in 2010, already be picked up (Moragas et al. 2011, 247).

Lastly, in 2010 the Catalan Law of Cinema was passed.<sup>5</sup> This established the general regulatory framework for the production and the distribution, commercialisation, and showing of films and audiovisual works. Its output was based on the verification of the economic importance of the cinema sector in the twenty-first century, on the one hand, and on the fact that cinema was—and is—one of the cultural sectors in which the range of programmes offered in Catalan language is more limited, on the other. Consequently, this law established an increase in the volume of public funding for the sector and made the requirements for the dubbing and subtitling in Catalan of films shown in Catalonia considerably tougher. The possibility of sanctioning those distributors that did not fulfil the obligation to dub or subtitle half of the copies of films shown in more than 16 cinemas—except films in Spanish—gave rise to angry protests and to the big American cinema distributors threatening to reduce their activity in Catalonia. Eventually, a European Commission ruling in June 2012 stated that this precept hinders the distribution of non-Spanish films in Catalonia and is therefore incompatible with the EU norms on the free movement of services (El País 2012).

The return to power of the centre-right nationalist CiU party at the end of 2010 coincided with the worsening of the economic crisis in Spain and Catalonia. This marked the start of a process of significant change in the communication policy of the *Generalitat*, which was essentially forced by the grave budgetary restrictions facing the Spanish and Catalan public administrations. The main patterns of change observed in this on-going process will be returned to in the final sections of this article.

## **The creation of a Catalan media system**

The intense political activity described above has resulted in the creation of a range of media, both public and private, that allow us to discuss the existence of a dense media system in Catalan. The main breakthroughs are: the formation of a public broadcasting corporation;

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<sup>5</sup> *Ley 20/2010, de 7 de julio, del Cine* (Law 20/2010, of 7<sup>th</sup> July, on Cinema).

support for the creation of competitive multimedia groups; and the establishment of a large and plural press in the Catalan language.

The public company CCMA is considered the main actor in the media system in Catalonia. Since its creation in 1983, it has continued to evolve, becoming a very competitive multiplatform body. As shown in table 3-1, it has progressively increased its output across all media formats with the exception of satellite.

**Table 3-1. Media output on CCRTV/CCMA**

	1983	1989	2003	2011
Radio stations	1	3	3	4
Terrestrial television channels	1	2	4	7
Satellite television channels	0	0	1	1
Websites	0	0	4	11

Source: CCMA website:

[http://www.ccma.cat/corporacio/corporacio\\_historia\\_eng.htm](http://www.ccma.cat/corporacio/corporacio_historia_eng.htm)

The increase in terrestrial television channels in the past 10 years has been especially significant. In 2011 this included a general channel (TV3, also in HD), a cultural channel (33), a news channel (3/24), a children's channel (Súper3), a channel for adolescents (3XL) and a sports channel (Esports3). The number of websites is also very large because, along with news, music and sports, it also includes an on-demand television service and cookery, education and Catalan language channels. The growth of radio has been less ambitious, but the service does include both general programmes (Catalunya Radio) and specialised programmes (Catalunya Informació, Catalunya Música and iCat FM). All these media are broadcast entirely in Catalan and make up a service that seeks to satisfy the needs and interests of Catalan speakers.

The biggest increase in television output came in the 2000s as a result of the combination of two factors: firstly, the establishment of DTT in Spain, which increased the number of channels available; and secondly, the left-wing coalition government's commitment to increase the number of channels after 2004. Its goal was to counteract, albeit partially, the creation of almost 40 new State-wide digital channels in Spanish (Marín 2007; Tresserras 2010). Indeed, the fact that the CCMA used up to seven channels is, as has already been explained, one of the clearest examples of how Catalonia has forced the Spanish legal framework to increase its capacity for self-governance in the field of communication.

In order to be able to provide these services, the CCMA budget has constantly risen. However, the increase in public subsidies made an important leap at the end of the 1990s, and especially from 2003 onwards (see table 3-2). In fact, the increase in channels observed from that year onwards was essentially financed by public funding. This made up between 75% and 85% of the budget during the period 2004-2010.<sup>6</sup> One piece of information shows the importance of the CCMA in the Catalan communication and cultural policies in recent years: from 2006 to 2010 it accounted for between 50% and 60% of the budget of the Department of Culture and Media.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 3-2. *Generalitat* subsidies to the CCRTV/CCMA**

1983	1989	1993	1998	2003	2008	2010
€12.0m	€110.7m	€174.5m	€208.3m	€309.4m	€311.3m	€357.5m

Source: CCRTV/CCMA annual budgets

This media output is very well received, in general terms, by the Catalan population. TV3 has always competed for leadership in audience share in Catalonia. In 2009, after several years in second and third position, it recovered the leadership and remained in that position until 2011 (Moragas et al. 2009; 2011). Several opinion polls also show that Catalans consider it to be the most credible television channel (its news programmes have the most viewers) and the most entertaining (Moragas et al. 2009, 90). Similarly, in the last decade Catalunya Radio has been one of the two most listened to radio channels in the country (Moragas et al. 2009 and 2011).

As well as the implementation of a powerful and competitive public service, the *Generalitat* has also sought to create private Catalan multimedia groups with a strong presence in Catalonia. This line of political action was essentially based on the granting of radio and digital television frequencies to press publishers. Hence the importance the *Generalitat* attributed to granting concessions to use the radio spectrum.

Since the end of the 1980s, different Catalan companies have been granted radio frequencies, although they have not all been successful. In the 1980s, for example, Cadena 13 did not survive, and in the 2000s Ona Catalana, created by another Catalan multimedia group (Grupo Zeta, publisher of *El Periódico de Catalunya*), also failed. The granting of an

<sup>6</sup> See CCMA budgets (2006-10) and information provided by *Televisió de Catalunya SA* (CCMA company that manages the television channels).

<sup>7</sup> See *Generalitat de Catalunya* budgets (2006-10).

autonomous television frequency took place in 2003, already within the framework of the DTT rollout.

The main beneficiary of this policy was Grupo Godó, which received radio (1999) and television (2003) concessions. Organised around the newspaper *La Vanguardia* (one of the oldest Catalan newspapers), it manages two radio channels with Catalan coverage (the general channel RAC1 and the music channel RAC105) and a television company (Emissions Digitals de Catalunya) that uses a full multiple digital channel with four channels. The success of this output varies greatly in terms of audience. While the television is marginal (approximately 3% of the audience between 2010 and 2012), RAC1 competes with Catalunya Radio. In fact, one of the two radio audience studies carried out in Catalonia considered it to be the leader in 2009 and 2010, while the other placed it just behind the public channel for these same years.

Lastly, a varied output of press printed in Catalan has become consolidated in Catalonia, largely as a result of public subsidies. There are two main types of funding: firstly, generic subsidies for media published in Catalan (which are automatic and are received by media publishing wholly or partially in Catalan); and secondly, project grants, which support both the creation of new media and the development of new products, technological investments and so on (Moragas et al. 2007: 228).

The first newspaper published fully in Catalan, *Avui* (founded in 1976), has been subsidised historically. The same was also true for the second, *El Punt* (1978). When these two newspapers merged in 2009 (after years of financial problems in both cases), the *Generalitat* helped them financially. Likewise, the appearance in 1997 of a Catalan edition of *El Periódico de Catalunya* (founded in Spanish in 1978) and of *La Vanguardia* in 2011 came about as a result of public funding. The same occurred in 2010 with the launch of a new newspaper in Catalan with distribution throughout Catalonia, *Ara* (Moragas and Corominas 2000; Moragas et al. 2009 and 2011). As a result, the four autonomous community-wide newspapers published entirely in Catalan in 2012 have all received public subsidies in different measures.

From 2004 onwards, the left-wing coalition government extended the subsidies to all types of media (press, radio, television and Internet), which facilitated the creation and/or maintenance of other media. The subsidies also helped to consolidate multimedia groups. Since then, the radio and television channels of Grupo Godó have received public money. As can be observed in table 3-3, the extension to all media types involved an increase in the money distributed: if the value of the subsidies distributed between

1995 and 2010 amounted to almost €200 million, more than half that amount was allocated in the last six years.

**Table 3-3. Subsidies to Catalan language media**

1995–2004	2005–2010
€90m	€107.3m

Source: *Generalitat de Catalunya* (excludes institutional advertising).

The impact of these policies on Catalan media consumption reveals varying results depending on the market being considered. Looking at the most recent data by Moragas et al. (2011) for 2010, the most popular media for the Catalan language is general radio, in which 54.2% of listeners tuned into radio stations broadcasting in Catalan. In news radio the figure is 56.2%, although the total number of listeners is much lower. Conversely, fewer people listen to music radio in Catalan (29.3%). As regards printed daily press, consumption is very low at 19.4%. In October 2012, five Catalan online press publications had, for the first time, more than half a million unique users. In television, 22% watched the CCMA channels and/or 8TV (where not all the programmes are in Catalan).

Historical trends also show varying behaviour in the consumption of media in Catalan. While general radio consumption has constantly increased at the same rate as the audience of the private RAC1, slight fluctuations can be observed in the press. In television, the Catalan language has been dropping positions since the start of the century, especially since the arrival of new state channels in Spanish since 2005 (Moragas et al. 2009; 2011).

### **The impact of the economic crisis**

As revealed in the previous section, the *Generalitat* has demonstrated a historical trend to increase the economic resources it contributes to the Catalan media system. However, the economic crisis of 2008, which became a financial crisis for the public administrations in 2010, has halted this trend. In the framework of a plan to restrict expenditure and reduce public deficit, the Catalan government elected in 2010 has applied huge cuts in the field of communication, bringing about a radical shift compared to the previous policies. This change can be easily observed by analysing the evolution of the CCMA budget and the resources allocated for private media subsidies.



Public budget allocations to the CCMA decreased from €330 million to €260 million between 2010 and 2012—a reduction of 21.2%. This has resulted in major changes in the company. In 2011 some of the companies making up the CCMA merged, workers' salaries were reduced by 5%, and the management organisation chart was simplified. By 2012 this was affecting output: the number of television channels was reduced from 7 to 5 (the adolescents' channel 3XL stopped broadcasting and the channels 33 and Súper3 started to share frequency), iCat FM stopped broadcasting, and the satellite broadcasts of the international channel were removed. Although CCMA is an autonomous public company, these cuts reflect a suggestion made by the Catalan government in 2011 to close two television channels for an annual saving of €12.4 million.<sup>8</sup>

Public subsidies to the private sector have been reduced even more than those experienced by public radio and television broadcasters in relative terms. As shown in table 3-4, the allocation was decreased by €10.4 million between 2010 and 2012 (a fall of 52.4%). It is one of the largest cutbacks applied in the field of communication in the two years under consideration. The reduction could have been bigger, but contrary to all forecasts, the amount budgeted for 2012 rose again by 37.8%. The procedure to grant subsidies was also reopened, despite the fact that it had been announced at the start of the year that no subsidies would be granted as a result of the *Generalitat*'s delicate financial situation.

**Table 3-4. Subsidies to private media in Catalonia**

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
€20.87m	€18.33m	€16.37m	€19.82m	€6.85m	€9.44m

Source: Fernández Alonso et al. (2012) and the Catalan government

In fact, the Catalan government's behaviour as regards the CCMA and subsidies to private media has been erratic and shows a clear lack of coherence. While the discourse highlights the strategic character of public radio and television broadcasting services (Martí 2011), the substantial cuts have forced them to reduce their output. At the same time, the Catalan executive announced at the end of 2011 the need to reorganise the subsidies for private companies and to start reducing the budget for them.

<sup>8</sup> The Catalan government's suggestion generated strong political and media controversy in late 2011 and early 2012. On April 15, 2012, the newspaper *Ara* published a report relating the possible consequences of this cut. The report contained expressions of concern—and even hostility—from different intellectuals and representatives of Catalan civil society towards this restructuring.

In the end, the subsidies were not redefined and the budget was increased (Martí 2011).

The budget cuts have gone further than the CCMA and subsidies to private media (Fernández Alonso et al. 2011). For example, following substantial growth to finance its expansion, the ACN has seen its budget reduced by 12.4% between 2010 and 2012 (from €4.9 million to €4.2 million). This reduction resulted in redundancies and the closure of branches abroad. The continued operation of the Barometer of Communication and Culture was compromised when the *Generalitat* announced its intention to pull out of the project, although in the end it reduced its contribution by 45% (from €2 million to just over €1 million). Consequently, some of its studies are no longer carried out and the breadth of its survey has been reduced. For its part, the CAC has faced a 41.1% reduction (from €10.6 million to €6.2 million), which has resulted in a 50% reduction in the number of members of its governing body. That has meant that some of its leading projects of the past decade have also been downsized after years of expansion.

## Conclusion

If we take into account the three objectives that guided the Catalan communication policy between 1980 and 2010, we can state that the results of the *Generalitat*'s actions in the communication sector during this period have been generally positive. Firstly, unlike the situation of only three decades ago, Catalonia today has an autonomous system of public and private media in the Catalan language. Secondly, it has managed to considerably increase its powers of self-governance that were recognised by Spain's new democratic regime at the end of the 1970s. Thirdly, the presence of the Catalan language in the media output offered to Catalan citizens has improved, albeit, as we have seen, with varying results depending on the sector being analysed. In this regard, and especially in the fields of television and cinema, there is a still long way to go to balance output offered in Catalan with the output in Spanish.

However, the preservation and the deepening of these achievements are being seriously threatened by the grave economic and financial crisis which Spain and Catalonia have been experiencing with even greater severity since 2010. The impact of the crisis on Catalan communication policy has resulted in a significant reduction in the public budget allocations to the sector. These cuts have caused a reduction in the public media output and the appearance of serious doubts concerning the viability of many Catalan private media services without the support of public

subsidies. In this context, the contradictions observed between, on the one hand, the political discourse and action, and, on the other, the erratic behaviour of the Catalan government in making media-related decisions have revealed a worrying absence of a clearly defined strategy in the communication policy of the *Generalitat* from 2010.

Aside from the economic crisis, another element has raised new questions in 2012 about the future of public communication policy in Catalonia: the start of an intense social, political and media debate about the possibility of Catalonia becoming an independent State within the European Union. If this goal is confirmed and consolidated, Catalonia will need to initiate a debate about the communication policies that will be necessary in this new context.

Authors such as Anderson (1987) and Habermas (1994) have highlighted the central role played by the media in the process of modern nation-state formation. Catalan governments have been aware of this role over the last three decades, and it has been taken very much into account during the process of national reconstruction that has been undertaken in Catalonia after the return to democracy at the end of the 1970s.

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