

DEMOS

POLITICIAN PRESENTERS

HOW UK REGULATION OF
POLITICIANS PRESENTING NEWS &
CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES
COMPARES WITH EUROPE

DR JAMES PAINTER

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Dr James Painter

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ABOUT THIS GUEST PAPER

Demos is the UK's leading cross-party think tank producing research and policies that have been adopted by successive governments for more than 30 years. Our mission is an upgraded democracy, with a new deal to mend the broken relationships between the state, institutions, and citizens.

This is the latest guest paper written as part of the [Epistemic Security](#) programme that focuses on securing information supply chains within the UK, tackling vulnerabilities and building resilience to adverse influences on our democratic processes.

In this report, author and researcher Dr James Painter provides evidence of the current practice and legislative landscape of serving politicians presenting broadcast news and current affairs programmes. He finds the UK is an outlier in Europe that permits this practice.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rapidly changing media landscape and audience consumption patterns as well as changes in the communication practices of political parties across Europe have introduced a range of challenges for broadcast regulatory authorities, particularly in the UK. In recent years, there has been significant and increasing criticism of the UK regulator, Ofcom, over its regulation of some of its licensed news channels and radio stations in the areas of due impartiality, accuracy and misleading material.

Ofcom is required to ensure that broadcasters achieve due impartiality in all news (in whatever form) and on matters of (major) political or industrial controversy and (major) matters relating to public policy. However, some observers consider that Ofcom is failing in this area and, in particular, with regard to *GB News*. The channel has been criticised by both left and right wing commentators because of its use of active Reform UK and Conservative politicians as presenters of what Ofcom refers to as 'current affairs programmes'.^{1,2}

The criticism centres on the view that their presence on *GB News* strengthens an editorial agenda of right-wing talking points, but with a significant degree of editorialising and opinion offered by the presenter, often aligned with Reform UK policies. The CEO of *GB News* Angelos Frangopoulos has defended the channel from these criticisms, saying that the politicians present *current affairs* programmes not *news* programmes, and that *GB News* always includes different political perspectives.³

In this report, we compare the UK's regulatory framework for serving politicians presenting news and/or current affairs programmes with the situation across Europe.

Based on evidence provided by 37 media regulatory authorities belonging to the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA), it shows that⁴

1. The UK is an outlier in Europe in three key ways:
 - a. Whereas serving politicians are permitted to present current affairs programmes (and news in exceptional circumstances) on all its licensed television and radio services, this rarely happens in the rest of Europe.
 - b. This practice is explicitly permitted by the UK regulator Ofcom,
 - c. There is significant debate regarding this practice in the UK.
2. Unlike in the UK, in thirty-five of the thirty-seven countries, no examples were given of a serving political figure having a presenter role in a news and/or current affairs programme on a national television channel. Iceland and Malta were the two exceptions.

1 <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/ideas/media/72784/gb-news-reform-tv-no-one-stopped-it>

2 <https://www.thenewworld.co.uk/alan-rusbridger-screen-scandal-how-gb-news-gets-away-with-it/>

3 <https://www.gbnews.com/news/angelos-frangopoulos-responds-lisa-nandy-criticism-nigel-farage-show>

4 The countries responding were Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, and Switzerland.

3. Also differing to the UK, there are a wide range of legislation, regulation and codes creating a media context in which it is very difficult for serving politicians to present news and/or current affairs programmes in 34 European countries.
 - a. These 34 countries prevented or substantially restricted politicians from presenting news and/or current affairs programmes, either explicitly or through the application of more general legal or regulatory requirements.
 - b. Politicians are explicitly not permitted to present news or current affairs programmes in eight countries, as a result of either broadcasting law and/or regulatory codes (France, Georgia, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, Portugal and Romania), restrictions on politicians holding multiple offices (Latvia), and the journalists' code of practice (Norway).
 - c. While serving politicians were not explicitly banned by a single statutory law, regulation or code, they were substantially constrained by one or more legal or regulatory requirements in 26 countries. Constraints included: principles of impartiality, transparency, objectivity, or pluralism; conflict-of-interest regulations; political sponsorship of programmes, or political advertising; broadcasters' independence from government; editorial policy of media organisations; and specific rules during election periods.
 - d. In three countries (Armenia, Finland and Malta), there was no specific legislation or regulation concerning serving politicians presenting programmes. In the first two of these, however, there have been no cases of this happening.
4. While the UK sees considerable debate, there was no significant debate about the practice of serving politicians presenting news or current affairs programmes in the 34 countries who responded to this question. This is perhaps a reflection of this practice being so limited across Europe.

While the UK's approach to allowing serving politicians to present news and/or current affairs programmes has been proven to be relatively rare in the context of Europe, this report makes no judgement or recommendations on whether the UK's current impartiality framework in broadcasting should be amended nor whether the criticism of Ofcom and *GB News* is valid.

INTRODUCTION

THE UK CONTROVERSY ABOUT POLITICIAN PRESENTERS

The rapidly changing media landscape and audience consumption patterns across Europe have introduced a range of challenges for broadcast regulatory authorities. In this report, we focus on one particular challenge, that of the practice of serving politicians presenting news and/or current affairs programmes.

There are several reasons for such a focus. Two of the most important are first, that the practice raises important questions about (due) impartiality and other traditional editorial standards; and second, the effective and fair regulation of (often new to the market) broadcast channels closely associated with a political party or position. The wider picture is that, if unregulated, the presence of 'politician-presenters' on a broadcaster could help to cement the presence of more overtly partisan broadcast media (along the lines of Fox News in the USA), and gradually change the boundaries of the UK's regulations on broadcast impartiality.

The aim of this report is to map the current situation in European countries and compare it to the UK where there has been considerable debate regarding Ofcom's regulation of *GB News* where serving politicians are permitted to present current affairs programmes.

We focus on broadcast content (not web-based programmes) that requires by law a licence or other authorisation, and is regulated by members of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA),⁵ which has 56 member authorities in 47 countries.⁶ We are particularly interested in the extent to which these authorities prohibit, restrict or permit the presentation by serving politicians of broadcast programmes, particularly in news, current affairs and other factual programming.

CONTEXT IN THE UK: CRITICISM OF OFCOM AND GB NEWS

The situation in the UK has prompted such a focus. In the past couple of years there has been significant and increasing criticism of – and public debate about⁷ – the UK regulator, Ofcom, over its regulation of some of its licensed news channels and radio stations in the areas of due impartiality, accuracy and misleading material. Ofcom is required to ensure that broadcasters achieve due impartiality in all news (in whatever form) and on matters of (major) political or industrial controversy and (major) matters relating to public policy. Some observers consider that Ofcom is failing in this area and, in particular, with regard to *GB News*, a free-to-air television and radio news channel launched in June 2021, and *Talk*, a news and talk channel that transitioned from a traditional television broadcast to an online-only streaming and Ofcom-licensed radio service mid-2024. The criticism of *GB News* has come from both left-wing commentators such as the former editor of the Guardian, Alan Rusbridger, who has accused

⁵ <https://www.epra.org/>

⁶ Though examples do exist of web-based programmes being presented by politicians in Europe e.g. SwebbTV in Sweden, they are outside the scope of this study.

⁷ For example, see <https://theconversation.com/why-ofcom-wants-to-plug-a-legal-loop-hole-around-politicians-presenting-news-256744>

Ofcom of allowing *GB News* to become 'Reform TV',⁸ and the right-wing commentator and founding Chair and former *GB News* presenter, Andrew Neil, who has been quoted as saying that *GB News* has been turned into the 'Reform Channel'.⁹

GB News has also been criticised for using active politicians as presenters of what Ofcom refers to as 'current affairs programmes'. These presenters are almost exclusively from the right of the political spectrum and many of them are serving or active representatives of Reform UK, which in the first few months of 2026 led the opinion polls. For example, Nigel Farage, currently the leader of Reform UK and a Member of Parliament for Clacton-on-Sea, has been a presenter at *GB News* since 2021, and at the time of writing has a nightly show three times a week. He has earned more than £500,000 from *GB News* since becoming an MP in 2024. Lee Anderson joined as presenter on *GB News* in 2023, whilst also working full time as the Reform UK MP for Ashfield. The presenter, Matt Goodwin, stood as a Reform UK candidate in the Gorton and Denton by-election earlier this year. Jacob Rees-Mogg is another presenter, including when he was a Conservative MP before he lost his seat in the July 2024 general election. The criticism of such presenters is that their presence on *GB News* strengthens an editorial agenda (which Ofcom has no jurisdiction over) of right-wing talking points, but with a significant degree of editorialising and opinion offered by the presenter, often aligned with Reform UK policies.

The CEO of *GB News* Angelos Frangopoulos has repeatedly said that *GB News* has never used, and does not use, politicians to present news programmes, but politicians can present *current affairs* programmes. He maintains that *GB News* always includes different perspectives from across the political spectrum.¹⁰ Angelos Frangopoulos has also stated that *GB News* "chose to be regulated [by Ofcom]" and it is "very dedicated to compliance".¹¹

GB News has a small but not insignificant audience. According to figures from the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB), in the last half of 2025 it had the highest average monthly audience figures for an all-news channel at around 80,000 (more than the BBC News channel or Sky News).¹² Its TV channel acts as production base for content that is then redistributed for far greater social media reach, particularly on YouTube, X and Facebook,¹³ but it remains far smaller by most digital metrics than other broadcasters, and has a much lower percentage of overall audience share when all news output is taken into account.¹⁴

This report makes no judgement or recommendations on whether, in light of developments in the media and technology, the UK's current impartiality framework in broadcasting should remain unchanged or be amended. Nor does it pass judgment on whether the criticism of Ofcom and *GB News* is valid.

8 <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/ideas/media/72784/gb-news-reform-tv-no-one-stopped-it>

9 <https://www.thenewworld.co.uk/alan-rusbridger-screen-scandal-how-gb-news-gets-away-with-it/>

10 <https://www.gbnews.com/news/angelos-frangopoulos-responds-lisa-nandy-criticism-nigel-farage-show>

11 <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14607/pdf/>

12 https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/gb-news-viewing-figures-2025-sky-bbc/

13 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/09564748241276634>

14 The 2026 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism survey found that the share of respondents who said they watch *GB News* every week was 8%, behind BBC News (at 48%), ITV News (24%), Sky News (15%) and Channel 4 News (10%), but ahead of Channel 5 (3%).

UK REGULATORY CONTEXT

Ofcom is required by the Communications Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act") to prepare and, from time to time, revise a code containing the standards to be applied to its television and radio licensees (and the BBC). Section 319 of the 2003 Act sets out those standards (and principles) that must be included in that code. These include the requirement that due impartiality is preserved in relation to:¹⁵

1. news, in whatever form;
2. matters of political or industrial controversy and matters relating to current public policy; and
3. matters of major political or industrial controversy and major matters relating to current public policy.¹⁶

The 2003 Act does not prescribe who may, or may not, present or report programmes. Nor does it prohibit politicians from presenting news or current affairs programmes. Rather, it requires Ofcom to secure due impartiality through the Broadcasting Code, which it is responsible for preparing and enforcing.¹⁷

As outlined above, the 2003 Act requires due impartiality both in relation to news and controversial (major) matters. While the 2003 Act imposes an additional statutory requirement of due accuracy in relation to news, it does not expressly provide that news should be subject to a higher standard of due impartiality than controversial (major) matters. However, Ofcom has interpreted the statutory framework as supporting a more restrictive regulatory approach

¹⁵ See section 319(2)(c) and section 320 of the 2003 Act.

¹⁶ Together ii and iii are referred to as "controversial (major) matters"

¹⁷ The relevant provisions are contained in Sections Five (Due Impartiality, Due Accuracy and Undue Prominence of Views and Opinions) and Six (Elections and Referendums) of the Broadcasting Code.

to news.¹⁸ It therefore adopts a specific rule in its Broadcasting Code, 'Rule 5.3', prohibits politicians from presenting news programmes (unless there is exceptional editorial justification), while permitting them to present current affairs (and other) programmes, subject to compliance with the wider due impartiality requirements of the Broadcasting Code. Reflecting this approach, Rule 5.3 of the Broadcasting Code provides:

No politician may be used as a newsreader, interviewer or reporter in any news programmes unless, exceptionally, it is editorially justified. In that case, the political allegiance of that person must be made clear to the audience.

This restriction relates to the status of the presenter, rather than solely to the impartiality of the content. The Broadcasting Code therefore regulates not only what may be broadcast but, in the case of news programmes, who may present them.

Ofcom has also published Guidance accompanying the Broadcasting Code. The Guidance explains the factors that Ofcom may take into account when determining whether a programme should properly be characterised as news or current affairs for the purposes of Rule 5.3.¹⁹

The distinction between news and current affairs has been the subject of debate in the UK. In particular, the growth of opinion-led (news) broadcasting has led some commentators to question whether, in practice, the boundary between the two has become increasingly artificial and difficult to apply. According to critics, this has enabled politicians to present programmes that are, in substance, long-form news programmes while being classified as current affairs.

This issue came before the High Court in *GB News-v-Ofcom* in 2025.²⁰ Ofcom had concluded that an edition of *Jacob Rees-Mogg's State of the Nation* - which was classed by Ofcom as a current affairs programme - presented by the then MP Jacob Rees-Mogg, breached Rule 5.3 because it included a live news segment in which he acted as a news presenter. The High Court rejected Ofcom's interpretation, holding that a programme cannot simultaneously be both a news programme and a current affairs programme for the purposes of Rule 5.3. Since the programme was characterised, by Ofcom, as a current affairs programme, Rule 5.3 did not apply.

Following the judgment of *GB News-v-Ofcom* 2025 and a public consultation, Ofcom decided not to amend Rule 5.3, reportedly on the grounds that it would amount to a de facto ban on politicians presenting any kind of programmes,²¹ but instead revised its accompanying Guidance to establish clearer 'guardrails'.²²

- If a politician presents news segments or breaking updates inside a non-news or current affairs programme, their political status is treated as a major factor when Ofcom evaluates whether due impartiality was compromised.
- Rules become substantially stricter during official election periods, when candidates standing for election are barred from presenting any type of television or radio programme.

¹⁸ See Ofcom Consultation on change to broadcasting rules for 'politicians as presenters' at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-standards/consultation-on-change-to-broadcasting-rules-for-politicians-as-presenters>

¹⁹ See Guidance to Rule 5.3 of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-codes/2025/guidance-notes-section-five-due-impartiality-and-due-accuracy-and-undue-prominence-of-views-and-opinions.pdf?v=406322>

²⁰ See <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/GB-News-v-Ofcom.pdf>

²¹ <https://pressgazette.co.uk/news/ofcom-rule-news-presenters-politicians/>

²² <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-standards/ofcom-updates-guidance-around-politicians-presenting-news>

RESULTS

The following results are based on a survey sent out to 44 regulatory authorities, of whom 37 sent back answers in email form or completed surveys. Details of the method, research questions, methodology, sample and limitations can be found in Appendix 1. The full list of countries and organisations to whom the survey was sent can be seen in Appendix 2. Details of the survey can be found in Appendix 3.

Politicians are explicitly banned from presenting news and/or current affairs programmes in 8 European countries

There were eight European countries where politicians were expressly prohibited from presenting news or current affairs programmes.²³ These were France, Georgia, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, Norway, Portugal and Romania.

In six of these cases, it was articles of broadcasting law or regulatory codes that set out the restriction (which may not apply to other genres of programmes). In one case (Latvia), there were also partly restrictions on politicians holding multiple offices, and in another case (Norway), it was the journalists' code of practice.

The specific laws that prohibit this practice in each of these specific country examples are broken down below:

FRANCE	Broadcasting law	Article 14 of the Law of 30 September 1986 on freedom of communication prohibits political advertising programmes. Consequently, the provision of airtime in return for payment to enable a political figure to put forward their ideas by presenting a programme would be in breach of this law.
GEORGIA	Broadcasting law	Paragraph 3 of Article 54 of the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting: a political official or a member of a political party may not participate in a news or information program as host, interviewer or journalist.

²³ Respondents gave the answer 'no' to: Question 1: Are serving politicians permitted to present programmes broadcast on television or radio in your country? Or implicitly no to Question 2: Which categories of programming may they present?

KOSOVO	Broadcasting law	Article 6, paragraph 9 of the IMC Code of Ethics (KKPM-2016/03) provides that: "No politician may be engaged as a news presenter, interviewer or reporter in any news programme."
LATVIA	Restrictions on politicians	Section 7 of the Law on the Prevention of Conflict of Interest in the Activities of Public Officials, and the Electronic Mass Media Law, requiring objective and neutral content, and a diversity of opinions.
MOLDOVA	Regulation of audio-visual content	Persons holding public positions, spokespersons for public authorities/institutions, as well as persons running for elective positions, including their representatives in electoral bodies or trusted persons, may not act as presenters or moderators in audiovisual news and debate programmes.
NORWAY	Journalists' Code of Practice	The Ethical Code of Practice for the Norwegian Press - Chapter 2 Integrity and Credibility.
PORTUGAL	Broadcasting law	The main focus of Portuguese regulation is on news and current affairs programming, the hosting and presentation of which is strictly reserved for professional journalists (Article 1 of the Journalists' Statute, Law no. 1/99) working under editorial management.
ROMANIA	Broadcasting law	Article 86 of CNA Decision No. 573/2025, audiovisual media service providers may not broadcast news or debate programmes presented or moderated by politicians holding public functions or public office, spokespersons for public institutions.

Politicians are not explicitly banned, but constrained from presenting in 26 countries

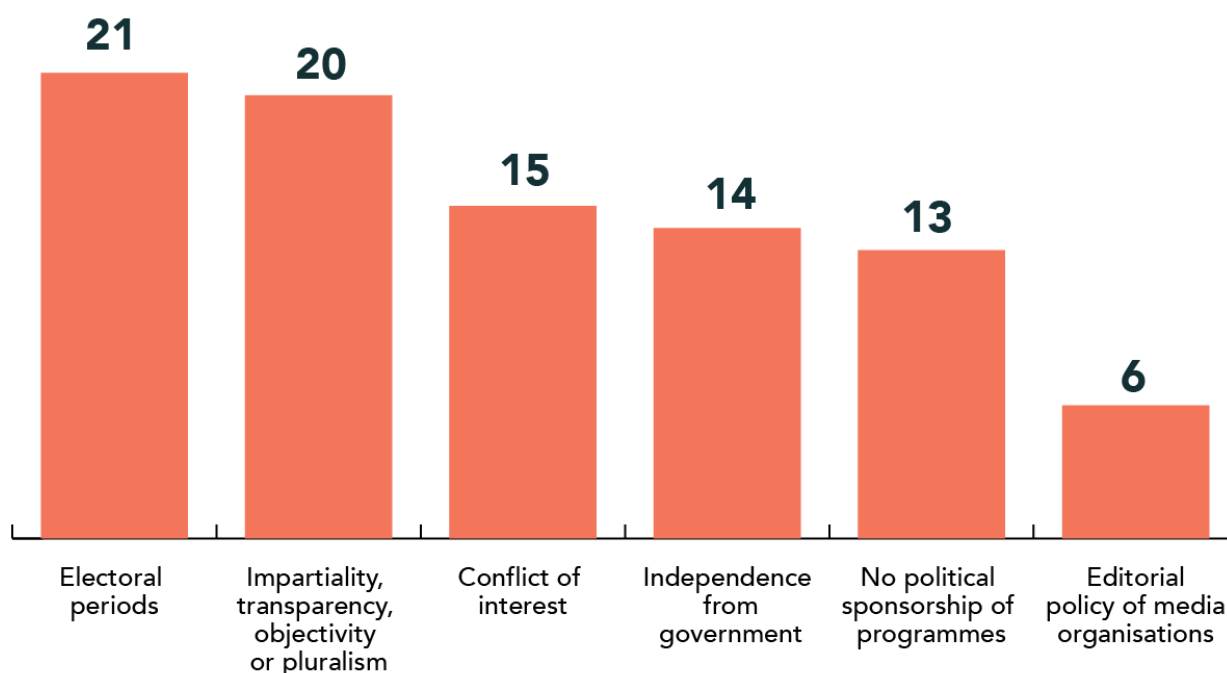
In 26 countries, serving politicians were not explicitly banned by a single statutory law, regulation or code from presenting broadcast news programmes. Rather, they were substantially constrained by one or more (usually more general or indirect) legal or regulatory requirements governing media outlets and programmes, in six broad categories described further with examples below:

1) Electoral periods i.e. periods in the run-up to, or during, elections where serving politicians are explicitly banned from presenting any programme.	An example of this comes from Ireland, where Coimisiún na Meán's Guidelines in Respect of Coverage of Electoral Events state the following in Section 5: "It is the opinion of Coimisiún na Meán that it is not appropriate for election candidates to present programmes during the campaign period of an electoral event (including news and current affairs programmes). The campaign period is understood to commence when an election is called."
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2) Principles of impartiality, transparency, objectivity, or pluralism derived from legislation or regulation, not the media companies' own editorial policies.	An example of this would be from the Czech Republic where Section 31(3) of Act No. 231/2001 Coll. states that "the broadcaster is obliged to ensure that the principles of objectivity and balance are observed in news and political-affairs programmes and, in particular, that no political party or movement, or its opinions, or the opinions of individual groups of the public, is favoured one-sidedly within the broadcast output as a whole, having regard to their actual standing in political and social life."
3) Conflict of Interest or restriction on activities (paid work) of politicians	An example of this comes from Portugal where "Serving politicians are prohibited from presenting or hosting news and current affairs broadcasts due to the professional incompatibilities explicitly set out in the Journalists' Statute [Article 3(1)(e) and (f)], which preclude the simultaneous practice of journalism while holding political office, executive roles in political parties, or elected public office".
4) No editorial interference from politicians, broadcasters' independence from government, code of journalistic ethics.	An example of this can be found in Germany, where "The independence of broadcasting programmes is safeguarded by the general duty of journalistic care set out in Section 6 MStV: "Reporting and information programmes must comply with recognized journalistic standards, including when using virtual elements. They must be independent and objective." Even stricter requirements apply to public-service broadcasters; see Section 26(2) MStV."
5) No political sponsorship of programmes, or political advertising, or politicians as broadcasting licensees/ owners/shareholders.	An example of this comes from Denmark where "Political presenters should be distinguished from political advertising. TV advertising for political parties, elected members or candidates is prohibited, as is political-party sponsorship of television and public-service radio programmes (Broadcasting Act, ss. 76(3) and 83(2))."
6) Editorial policy of media organisations (independent of legislation or regulation).	An example of this comes from the Netherlands where "Editorial statutes (redactiestatuten) of the individual public broadcasters: focus on editorial independence. Staff (including presenters) are generally expected to avoid political functions without approval and to prevent the appearance of bias."

Figure 1 below shows the number of times in the survey responses these six categories were explicitly mentioned in the text.²⁴ Note respondents could select more than one category.

FIGURE 1
RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICIANS AS PRESENTERS



As can be seen from Figure 1, Category 1 (electoral periods) was the most mentioned in the text of the survey responses (21 times), followed by impartiality, transparency, objectivity, or pluralism (20), conflict of interest (15), independence from government (14), no political sponsorship (13) and editorial policies of media companies the least (6).

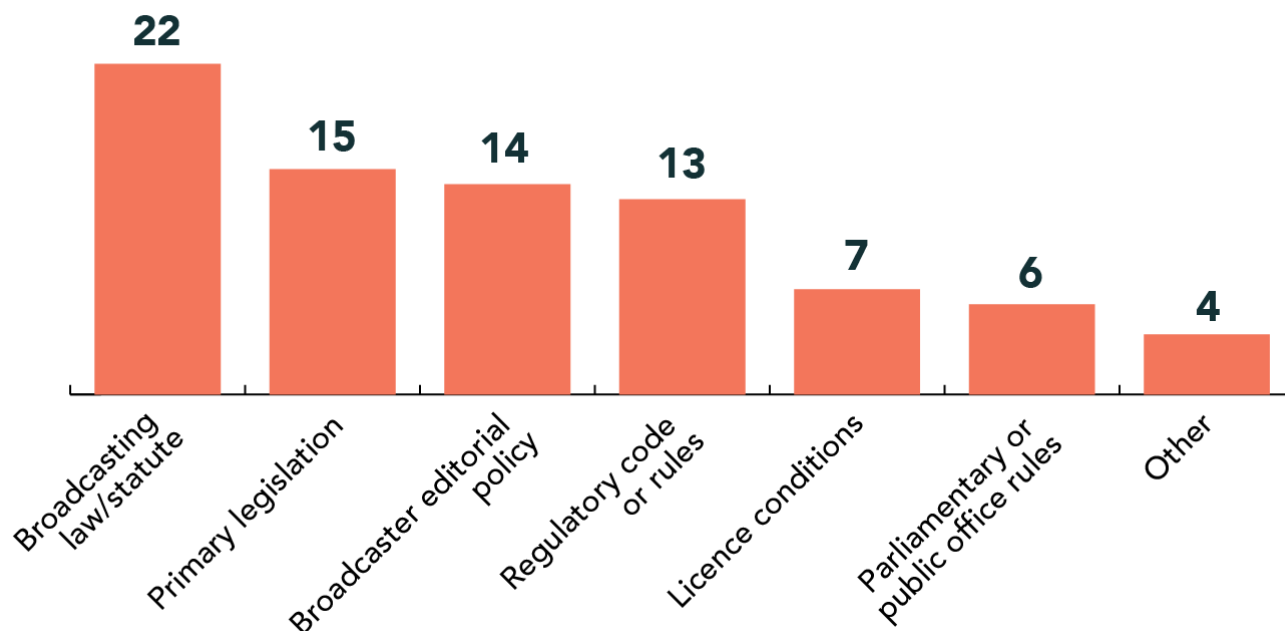
A category not appearing in the text of a survey response did not mean that this was not a constraint on politicians presenting programmes. Rather, a mention in the text suggested that that category was a major influence of regulation of the practice. It is likely that specific rules around election times for example, might have appeared even more frequently had there been a specific question about it, or an option in Question 3. This is demonstrated by broadcasters' editorial policy appearing more times in Figure 2 below, than is mentioned in the text of the responses.

Another way of assessing the presence in each country of various legislation, regulation and codes restricting politicians is to assess the answers given to Question 3, '*What types of regulation or legislation cover these programmes?*'. Seven options were provided: primary legislation, broadcasting law/statute, regulatory code or rules, licence conditions, parliamentary or public office rules, broadcaster editorial policy, and other.

²⁴ Some of the eight countries which had mentioned primary legislation or regulation not permitting serving politicians to present news programmes also mentioned other regulations restricting this practice. These answers are included in Figure 1.

Figure 2 shows the number of times each option was ticked or marked in the survey responses.

FIGURE 2
LEGALISATION, REGULATION OR CODES RESRICTING POLITICIANS AS PRESENTERS



As can be seen, broadcasting law was the most common (22 times), followed by primary legislation (15), broadcaster editorial policy (14), regulatory codes or rules (13 times), licence conditions (7), parliamentary or public office rules (6), and other (4).

It is clear from both Figures 1 and 2 that, within almost all European countries included in this study, a wide range of legislation, regulation and codes create a media context in which it is very difficult for serving politicians to present news and current affairs programmes.

There are important variations between countries, such as in Norway and Finland where the general code of journalist practice or the editorial policies of the broadcast companies determine the restrictions in the practice. This contrasts for example, with Germany, where a key restriction stems from the constitutional principle that broadcasting must remain independent of the state, and with France, where a key restriction flows from freedom of communication legislation which prohibits political advertising programmes.

Finally, in three countries, Armenia, Finland and Malta, there is no specific legislation or regulation of serving politicians presenting programmes. In Armenia and Finland, there has been no case of this happening. In Finland, traditional media in-house ethical guidelines forbid employing, or giving open airtime, to an active politician. Malta is discussed below.

No 'significant' debate regarding serving politicians presenting programmes

None of the 34 countries suggested there had been significant debate about the issue of politicians presenting news programmes.²⁵ 30 countries suggested that there was 'little' or 'no debate' in their countries. Four replied that there was 'some' debate.

Countries where there was 'some debate' included:

CZECH REPUBLIC	"Debate arises regularly in the periods preceding elections, when well-known television personalities or presenters stand as candidates for particular political parties, or when elected politicians present their own programmes on private and regional services"
MOLDOVA	"The debate [...] is more prominent during electoral campaigns, when some party members, acting as moderators of political talk-shows or debates, try to manipulate public opinion"
PORTUGAL	"Political commentary programmes featuring active politicians in the role of "commentators" or "analysts" have expanded significantly. This raises recurring debate regarding the continuous prime-time visibility granted to active politicians (e.g. Members of Parliament, mayors) and whether this creates an unfair electoral advantage, as well as concerns over the lack of transparency regarding political affiliations or conflicting interests."
SLOVAKIA	There has been some public and political debate in connection with the media activities of Minister of Culture Martina Šimkovičová and MP Peter Kotlár on TV Slovan, [where] videos showed [Kotlar] appearing together with Ms Šimkovičová as a presenter or content creator." However, it should be noted that TV Slovan is an internet-based video platform, not a national broadcaster, and the programmes were not news and current affairs.

The main reason for the absence of significant debate about politicians presenting news or current affairs programmes is that there are very few examples of politicians doing so. In 26 countries the responses showed clearly that there were no such cases, and in another three countries, it was strongly implied. In a further three countries, the practice was described as 'rare', 'extremely rare', or 'very unique'. In two countries, clarification was sought without a reply, although no mention was made in these two instances of the practice.

In Iceland, a serving MP (Páll Magnússon, who had previously worked in the media) hosted a radio and a TV show on a commercial media service provider. Magnússon co-hosted the radio show every week for a period in 2018-19, and was the solo host of a weekly TV show for less than two months in 2021. The programmes were interview-based, and the guests were mostly serving politicians. The TV show was only intended to have a short run since it was specifically meant to air in the run-up to the 2021 parliamentary elections in Iceland which took place on 25 September 2021. The Icelandic Media Commission did not act against the broadcasters as it is not against the law for MPs to present programmes and it did not receive any complaints regarding the shows based on the legal acts it supervises (for example, impartiality in the Media Act (art. 26)).

²⁵ None of the replies to Question 5, 'Does the issue of politicians presenting broadcast programmes currently attract public, political or regulatory debate in your country?' suggested this.

In a second country (Malta), according to the survey response, there have been recent instances where MPs have presented interview programmes, although these were according to the regulator “not the norm”. These have taken place on stations owned by Malta’s two main political parties, but not on the public service broadcaster. Malta is highly unusual, however, in permitting political parties to own broadcast licences, unlike the UK and many other European countries. The programmes, broadcast last autumn/winter, were weekly and based on interviews mainly with ex politicians or ex officials whose careers were in the public sphere. The content focused on questions of a biographical nature - their successes, failures, careers, personal life, and their beliefs. The regulatory authority did not intervene as there are no provisions in the legislation or guidelines of who can or cannot be presenters.

In a third country (Romania) a prospective candidate presented a political programme on a commercial radio station, and was given a warning. In the Czech Republic, the regulatory authority (RRTV) reprimanded a regional broadcast service for airing a lifestyle magazine programme presented by a candidate standing in local council elections during a pre-election period. RRTV has also received a complaint concerning an entertainment programme about nature presented by the mayor of a regional town, and another complaint concerning a comedy series on a crime theme in which one of the leading roles was played by a candidate for the Senate. There was no case in the Czech Republic of a serving politician presenting a news or current affairs programme.

In none of the surveys, did the respondents comment on the importance or relevance of any distinction between news and current affairs for their regulatory context.

So, in summary, in thirty-five of the thirty-seven countries, no examples were given of a serving political figure having a presenter role in a news or current affairs programme on a national television channel. However, in two countries (Iceland and Malta) serving Members of Parliament have presented interview programmes, mostly with former politicians. In the first case, the last time this took place was in 2021, and in the second case, the programmes were broadcast on stations owned by Malta’s main political parties. There are also a few examples of acting or aspiring politicians presenting different types of non-current affairs programmes on regional, commercial, or web-based channels.

CONCLUSION

THE UK IS AN OUTLIER

This research reaches some strong conclusions on the differences between the UK and 37 countries across Europe with regards to the practice of serving politicians presenting news or current affairs programmes, and the legislative, regulatory or other restrictions shaping this context. Unlike the UK, 34 of 37 European countries either directly prohibit such a practice, or circumscribe it, usually in a robust manner. In only two countries (Iceland and Malta) have serving Members of Parliament presented interview programmes, mostly with former politicians.

Furthermore, the issue generates very little debate across our sample, and there are only minor examples of politicians presenting programmes, but none of the extent or type found in the UK. This demonstrates the extent to which the UK is an outlier in Europe with regards to the practice of political presenting news and/or current affairs programmes and the regulatory framework that surrounds it.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODOLOGY, SAMPLE AND LIMITATIONS

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

We were only interested in serving politicians who present news and current affairs programmes, and not interested in cases of former politicians (such as former Labour MP Ed Balls in the UK presenting ITV's Good Morning Britain) or TV personalities who become politicians (such as Éric Justin Léon Zemmour in France who was an editor and panellist on Face à l'Info, a daily show broadcast on CNews, from 2019 to 2021 and ran in the 2022 French presidential election). Nor are we including cases of the many politicians who regularly appear on interview or chat shows hosted by presenters or journalists. Nor are we interested in the many politicians who have their own sites on social media platforms, podcasts or regular video postings on their, or their parties' websites, which usually fall outside of the remit of regulatory authorities. We are only interested in politicians who are currently serving in their countries' parliaments, or other national or regional bodies.

Bearing in mind this context, we focused our attention on addressing the following Research Questions:

How do European jurisdictions regulate the use of serving politicians (or other active political party representatives) as television and radio presenters, and to what extent do they prohibit, restrict or permit such activity, particularly in news, current affairs and other factual programming?

Our chosen method was to send out a short survey to 44 members of EPRA. We selected only one authority for each country (some countries have more than one due to regional or language differences), and we did not include the United Kingdom,²⁶ the British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar or the British Crown dependency of the Isle of Man. The full list of countries and organisations to whom the survey was sent can be seen in Appendix 2. The surveys were sent out in early July, reminders were also sent out, and a deadline was set for 14 September 2026 for the surveys to be returned.

The first question in the survey (see Appendix 3 for full text) addressed the issue of whether politicians were, or were not, permitted to present programmes, or whether this was assessed on a case-by-case basis. Question 2 addressed the issue of what sort of programmes ranging from news and current affairs to sports and entertainment programmes politicians were allowed to present. Because of the situation in the UK, where politicians are allowed to present current affairs, but not news programmes, a distinction was made between the two genres, and a working distinction outlined (although we are aware that the distinction is difficult to make in practice).

²⁶ The survey was not sent to the UK, which provides the reference point for this comparative research. The UK regulatory position is well established and is set out separately in this report.

We were aware that in some European countries, there was primary legislation banning serving politicians from presenting programmes, whilst in others there was no general prohibition, but programmes were subject to other (indirect) legal or regulatory requirements governing media service providers. So, Question 3 drew the distinction between different types of regulation which governed programmes, including news and current affairs: primary legislation, broadcasting law/statutes, regulatory code or rules, licence conditions, parliamentary or public office rules, broadcaster editorial policy, and 'other'.

Question 4 asked for more details of the legal or regulatory basis for any prohibition or restriction, including where possible the relevant wording or citation. Because the issue of politicians presenting broadcast programmes is subject to considerable public debate in the UK, we asked in Question 5 whether the issue currently attracted public, political or regulatory debate, and finally Question 6 asked respondents to share any other information felt to be important to consider with respect to politicians' participation in TV broadcasts.

SAMPLE

Out of the 44 surveys sent out by email to media regulatory authorities belonging to the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA), 37 surveys or answers were received back. Most of the answers (34) came in the form of a completed survey, but three consisted of text in an email reply. Of the seven countries that did not participate, six countries did not reply (in part due to absences during the European holiday period), and one was unable to fill in the survey (no reason was given). The six countries who did not reply were Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and Ukraine.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are several limitations to this study. First, the inclusion of the seven countries not responding to the survey may have changed some of the results, but as far as we know, the legislative and regulatory context in most of those countries is not markedly different to the situation in the 37 countries who did reply. Second, some minor interpretation of the survey responses was necessary, as there was insufficient time for responses to all requests for clarification to be given. As far as possible, the details of the minor examples of politicians presenting programmes have been double checked. We did not include all regulatory authorities in EPRA in each country, so it is possible that there may be important regional or language variations.

It was not possible to establish which type of broadcast services fall within the jurisdiction of each authority belonging to EPRA. However, it is generally the case that EPRA members are responsible for overseeing the media landscape within their jurisdiction, encompassing broadcast, on-demand, and increasingly, to some degree online media services. They usually have authority over broadcast content that requires by law a licence or, in the case e.g. France, authorisation and therefore have to comply with a set of (higher) standards than elsewhere, for example Video on Demand. There are also some differences between jurisdictions, for instance the German Medienanstalten are not competent for public service media in Germany.

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF COUNTRIES AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES INCLUDED IN THE RESULTS

COUNTRY	AUTHORITY
Albania	Audiovisual Media Authority - AMA
Armenia	Commission on TV and Radio
Austria	Kommunikationsbehörde Austria KommAustria
Azerbaijan	Audiovisual Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Belgium	Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel - CSA
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Communication Regulatory Agency - CRA
Bulgaria	Council for Electronic Media - CEM
Croatia	Media Regulatory Authority - AEM
Cyprus	Radiotelevision & Digital Services Authority
Czech Republic	Council for Radio and TV Broadcasting
Denmark	Radio and Television Board, c/o Agency for Culture and Palaces
Estonia	Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority - CPTRA
Finland	The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency - Traficom
France	Autorité de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et numérique ARCOM
Georgia	Georgian National Communications Commission - GNCC
Germany	DLM, European Affairs
Greece	National Council for Radio and Television - NCRT
Hungary	Media Council of the of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority - NMHH
Iceland	Icelandic Media Commission - Fjölmiðlanefnd
Ireland	Coimisiún na Meán
Israel	Council for Cable TV and Satellite Broadcasting - CCSB
Italy	Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni - AGCOM
Kosovo	Independent Media Commission - IMC
Latvia	National Electronic Media Council - NEPLP
Liechtenstein	Office for Communications - AK

Lithuania	Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania - RTCL
Luxembourg	Autorité Luxembourgeoise Indépendante de l'Audiovisuel - ALIA
North Macedonia	Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services
Malta	Malta Broadcasting Authority - BA
Moldova	Audiovisual Council (CA)
Montenegro	Agency for Audiovisual Media Services
Netherlands	Commissariaat voor de Media (CvdM)
Norway	Norwegian Media Authority - Medietilsynet
Poland	National Broadcasting Council - KRRiT
Portugal	Regulatory Authority for the Media - ERC
Romania	National Audiovisual Council - CNA
Serbia	Regulatory Authority of Electronic Media - REM
Slovakia	Council for Media Services - CMS
Slovenia	Agency for Communication Networks and Services - AKOS
Spain	National Authority for Markets and Competition - CNMC
Sweden	The Swedish Agency for the Media
Switzerland	Federal Office of Communications - OFCOM
Turkey	Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council - RTÜK
Ukraine	National Council of TV and Radio Broadcasting

APPENDIX 3

TEXT OF SURVEY

1. Are serving politicians permitted to present programmes broadcast on television or radio in your country?

Please select one:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Case-by-case basis

2. Which categories of programming may they present?

- ☐ Please indicate all that apply:
- ☐ News programmes*
- ☐ Current affairs programmes*
- ☐ Political discussion/interview programmes
- ☐ Entertainment programmes
- ☐ Sports programmes
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Please briefly describe any relevant restrictions or conditions:

** **News** programmes generally refer to the factual, objective, and timely reporting of events as they happen, focusing purely on “who, what, when, and where.”*

****Current affairs** programmes generally provide deeper analysis, context, and commentary on recent events, exploring the “how and why” and often incorporating the opinions of journalists and experts.*

3. What types of regulation or legislation cover these programmes?

- ☐ Please indicate all that apply:
- ☐ Primary legislation
- ☐ Broadcasting law/statute
- ☐ Regulatory code or rules

- ☐ Licence conditions
 - ☐ Parliamentary or public office rules
 - ☐ Broadcaster editorial policy
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
-

4. What is the legal or regulatory basis for any prohibition or restriction?

Please provide the wording, citation or summary of the relevant legal, regulatory or policy provision(s), where possible.

5. Does the issue of politicians presenting broadcast programmes currently attract public, political or regulatory debate in your country?

Please select one:

- ☐ Significant debate
- ☐ Some debate
- ☐ Little or no debate

If relevant, please briefly describe the nature of the debate.

6. Please share any other information you feel is important to consider with respect to politicians' participation in TV broadcasts.

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