Politics and Public Service Media

The 13th biennial RIPE conference is sponsored by the Taiwan Public Television Service Foundation (PTS) and hosted by the School of Communication at National Chengchi University in Taipei. Our theme focuses on the politics and politicization of public service media (PSM). The organizers welcome proposals for papers analyzing how political forces, trends, processes, and influences affect PSM structures, operations, and performance. There is particular interest in challenges for maintaining independence and ensuring sustainability in a shifting policy and technological environment. RIPE@2026 will convene experts and scholars from around the world, especially including the Global South, in a collaboration to advance understandings that matter for theorization and practice.

Elaboration of the Theme

Many have observed that politics are an inevitable aspect of public service media policy with significant implications for practice. PSB was established partly on a political foundation in the early decades of 20th century, mainly in Europe, with a mission to serve people as citizens rather than consumers, to preserve and promote cultural diversity, to care about the interests of disadvantaged and minority groups, and above all to maintain an independent stance vis a vis both the state and market. Today, PSB has become PSM and is challenged by digitalization, platformization, international media companies, escalating costs for content rights, especially in sports, public value testing requirements, and uneven competitive performance. Promoting cultural diversity and encouraging tolerance across sociocultural aspects are under attack by far-right political movements.

In the Asia-Pacific region, public broadcasting is navigating development challenges in a context of shifting geopolitical dynamics. Lacking European traditions, Taiwan PTS confronts unprecedented challenge to its budget, its international news role, the intended purposes of the Taiwanese Language Channel, and neo-colonialism dispute over some historical related programs. The Conservative party has been especially active in holding PSM accountable. The rise of commercialization and digitalization has been complicated and complex.

For the first time, the RIPE@2026 conference will focus attention on the politics of PSB/PSM, a critical area of contemporary discourse in a globally inclusive dialogue. The conference welcomes paper proposals relevant to six aspects of crucial importance that although distinct are interconnected.

Topics of specified interest

1. Political Dynamics, Media Capture, and PSM Autonomy

The conference welcomes empirical and theoretical exploration of the complex and often fraught relationship between PSM and the political sphere. Topics of interest include but aren't limited to:

- Critical examination of the diversity of political actors—including governments, political parties, and civil society organizations—and their interactions that affect PSM.
- Research about negotiations, challenges, and the defense of PSM autonomy that clarify broader power dynamics related to threats of political interference and state capture. This matters greatly for safeguarding journalistic integrity and maintaining independence.
- Political challenges to funding and how PSM organisations are coping.
- Governance and relations: legislative frameworks, appointments to governing and bodies and managerial roles, best practices in governance, and the nature of state interventions.
- Understanding how regional bodies like ASEA (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) contribute to or influence national media policy discussions.
- The role and practices of civil society organizations and public advocacy in both defending and challenging PSM independence.

2: Geopolitics, Global Power Shifts, and the Evolution of PSM

The conference welcomes papers that analyze overarching global trends, pressures, and influences that are shaping the establishment, funding, and developmental trajectories of PSM in countries around the world. Topics of interest include but aren't limited to:

- Examination of the complex interplay of power and politics over time, especially illustrating how global forces transcend national borders to influence the domestic media landscape's fundamental architecture.

- Legacies of colonial broadcasting and how they have been adapted or repurposed. This may relate to the geopolitical experience of decolonization and the Cold War that have influenced the establishment and subsequent evolution of PSB / PSM in newly independent states.
- The role of international regulations, standards, and control over digital infrastructure (e.g., internet cables, satellite frequencies) for enabling and constraining PSM's ability to operate across borders.
- Case studies of the impacts of foreign aid, technical assistance, and ideological alignment from major powers that have shaped PSM infrastructure, training, and content priorities.

3. Policy-Making and Regulatory Regimes in a Shifting Media Environment

The conference welcomes papers investigating how media policies are formulated and implemented across varying political systems in time and space. Topics of interest include but aren't limited to:

- Examination of media-government relations to understand how media institutions are conceptualized as partners in national development and operate under varying degrees of state control.
- Comparative analysis of public media policy frameworks across different countries and regions, especially in Asia and countries of the Global South.
- The role of various stakeholders in policy-making: governments, regulators, industry, civil society, and political parties.
- Challenges and trends in media regulation: content standards, market competition, and accountability in the digital environment.
- Technological convergence and its implications for traditional regulatory boundaries and PSM operational models.

4. PSM in the Digital Age: Navigating Disinformation and Platform Power

The conference welcomes papers focused on advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) that are fundamentally reshaping the public sphere, creating an "algorithmic era" where information flows, content curation, and public discourse are increasingly influenced by automated systems. Topics of interest include but aren't limited to:

- Research on PSM's proactive and reactive strategies for combating AI-empowered information manipulation.

- The political implications of algorithmic bias, transparency deficits, and content moderation practices (often driven by proprietary AI) for PSM impartiality, pluralism, and ability to foster informed public debate.
- Ethical frameworks, internal governance models, and professional standards for AI use within PSM organizations.
- Research on beneficial developments for PSM in harnessing AI.
- Political implications of algorithmic curation and content moderation for PSM's visibility and impartiality.
- Understanding how various nations, particularly those in the diverse and technologically advanced Global South and Indo-Pacific regions, grapple with these challenges and opportunities.

5. Trust, Neutrality, and Public Legitimacy: The Political Battleground

The conference welcomes papers on public trust, the perceived neutrality, and PSM legitimacy and effectiveness that are increasingly contested in politically polarized societies. Topics of interest include but aren't limited to:

- Work on conceptualizing and achieving political neutrality and impartiality in diverse political contexts.
- Factors contributing to the erosion of public trust in PSM, including perceived political bias or capture.
- Factors accounting for higher trust in PSM news and information than media in the commercial sector where trust has remained strong or increased.
- The role of PSM in fostering media pluralism and providing diverse perspectives in fragmented information environments.
- Accountability mechanisms for PSM: transparency, public complaints, and independent oversight.
- Case studies of PSM navigating political attacks and efforts to delegitimize its public service mission.

6. Emerging Agendas: Sustainability, DEI, and the Future Mandate of PSM

The conference welcomes papers focused on how developments in sustainability goals (environmental, social, and economic) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies are increasingly integral to PSM contemporary mandates and challenged on ideological grounds. Topic of interest include but aren't limited to:

- Integrating environmental and social sustainability goals into PSM operational practices and content strategies.

- DEI policies and practices in PSM: representation in content, workforce diversity, and inclusive governance.
- Political challenges to sustainability and DEI mandates.
- PSM's role in fostering civic engagement and public discourse on climate change, social justice, and other issues of critical importance, especially for countries in the Global South.
- Future proofing PSM: adapting mandates to address emerging and evolving societal needs to maintain both political and popular support.

Submission Requirements

Abstracts for RIPE conferences are submitted through the RIPE Ex Ordo Platform. Each submission should include two parts:

1. A **title page** listing the working title, author name(s), job title(s), organizational affiliation(s) with location, and the corresponding author's email address; and
2. A **main document** containing the working title, an abstract of no more than 600 words, two relevant conference themes, and up to six keywords.

To ensure an impartial review process, please do not include any identifying information (such as names or affiliations) in the main document. All submissions will undergo a double-blind peer review conducted by the conference's scientific committee.

The deadline for abstract submissions is 28 February 2026. Review decisions will be finalized in March, and notifications of acceptance will be sent on 1 April 2026. Accepted authors are expected to submit their full papers by 1 August 2026.

The conference website will be launched in the beginning of December 2025, and the link to RIPE Ex Ordo Platform for submitting the abstracts will be announced here in January 2026.

Selection Criteria

Submissions will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Relevance: The abstract's alignment with the overall conference theme and its fit within one or more of the six designated themes.
2. Scholarly Quality: For empirical studies, the soundness of the theoretical framework and methodological rigor; for conceptual papers, the originality and significance of the concepts and arguments presented.
3. Practical Contribution: The extent to which the paper offers implications or insights for public service media (PSM) practice.
4. Presentation Quality: The overall clarity, coherence, and quality of the abstract.
5. Diversity of Perspective: Special consideration will be given to papers addressing PSM issues in the Global South.

Approximately 60 papers will be selected for presentation at the conference. The conference language is English.

Registration and Fees

Conference registration website will open in April 2026, including the information of participation fees. Please note that RIPE does not provide financial support for personal travel expenses, except for invited keynote speakers. The conference registration fee will include two dinners (welcome reception and gala dinner), 3-day lunches, coffee breaks, and all conference sessions and materials.

Conference Schedule

The RIPE 2026 Conference will span two and a half days, from October 21 to 23, 2026. A welcome reception will be held on the evening of October 20, prior to the start of the conference.

Day 1 (October 21) will take place at Public Television Service (PTS), Taiwan, while Days 2 and 3 (October 22–23) will be hosted by National Chengchi University (NCCU). A gala dinner will be held on October 22. The afternoon of the final day will feature a guided city tour for all participants. Depending on interest, an optional social program will be offered on October 24, the day following the conference, at an additional cost for those who wish to participate.

Contacts:

For answers to questions related to logistics or other practical matters not addressed here, you can send an email to either of the following addresses:

- The Conference organizer's email address: ripe2026nccu@gmail.com

- For information about the International Association of Public Media Researchers (IAPMR), please email: contact@iapmr.media