

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Switzerland

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Freedom of expression is guaranteed under Article 16 of the constitution, while Article 93 explicitly guarantees the independence of broadcast media. The penal code prohibits public incitement to racial hatred or discrimination, spreading racist ideology, and denying crimes against humanity. The law does not specifically prohibit anti-Semitic speech or Holocaust denial, though there have been convictions for such expression in the recent past. In addition, it is a crime to publish information based on leaked “secret official discussions,” particularly regarding banking information. In January 2011, Swiss authorities arrested a former banker after he gave information on wealthy tax evaders to the antisecrecy organization WikiLeaks. A number of alleged violations of secrecy by the press were being investigated during the year, including disclosures by Agence France-Presse (AFP) on the purchase of new fighter jets by the Swiss military. No sentences were imposed for such offenses in 2011. A 2006 transparency law has not been used extensively due to a lack of awareness of its existence and provisions. Members of the press rarely suffer attacks or physical harassment in the course of their work.

Large publishing houses control most of the print sector, and such concentration of ownership has forced many stand-alone newspapers to merge or shut down. Broadcast media are dominated by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG SSR), which is obliged to carry content in each of Switzerland’s four official languages—French, German, Italian, and Romansh. Because of the country’s linguistic divisions, most private stations are local or regional. Swiss viewers also have extensive access to cable television and foreign channels.

The internet, which is generally unrestricted, was accessed by approximately 85 percent of the population in 2011.

2012 SCORES

PRESS STATUS

Free

PRESS FREEDOM SCORE

12

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

4

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

3

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

5

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