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**Ana Azurmendi** Universidad de Navarra

**Mercedes Muñoz Saldaña** Universidad de Navarra

**Félix Ortega Mohedano** Universidad de Salamanca

**Title: Civic Participation and Independence from Political Power: Two Requirements of Public Service Broadcasters in Spain**

**Título:** Independencia de los políticos y participación de los ciudadanos, dos demandas del Servicio Público Audiovisual en el entorno digital en España.

**Keywords:** Public Service Media Independence; Civic Participation; Media Governance; Young People and Adults' Perceptions of Spanish Public Service Broadcasters

**Palabras Clave:** Independencia de la Televisión Pública; Participación de los ciudadanos; Gobernanza de los Medios; Percepciones de jóvenes y adultos sobre la Televisión Pública.

### **1. Introduction, Goals and Methods**

In March 2014, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court ruled that Länder (state) governments had "too much weight in public radio and television" and that each public service media company in the Länder had to change the members on their broadcasting councils. In accordance with the Interstate Broadcasting Agreement of 1991 (Staatsvertrag für Rundfunk und Telemedien), these councils meet in plenary sessions and their function is to represent viewers' interests, guarantee internal plurality and ensure a balance of interests (Kleinsteuber 2010). However, the Constitutional Court's decision stated that the broadcasting councils of German public service broadcasters were overly politicized, despite being regulated by law. This is an example of the difficulty of ensuring that public service broadcasters (PSBs) are independent from political power and of how the democratic-constitutional system can be used to try to achieve this. In fact, the challenge of guaranteeing the independence of public service broadcasters is shared by many other European countries and Spain is no exception (Almirón, Capurro and Santcovsky, 2010, p. 205).

A number of European institutions (European Parliament 2013, European Commission 2016 and 2007, Council of Europe 2011) and academics (Humphreys 2016, Bustamante 2016, Hartz 2016, Fernández Alonso and Fernández Viso 2012b, Iosifidis 2011) have highlighted the essential role played by independence from political power in guaranteeing that public service broadcasters comply with their mission of providing a public service. Although independence may develop in many different areas (governance, funding, organization and control), some experts (Hartz 2016, Hasebrink 2012, Carpentier 2011) have indicated that another way of achieving this objective is by using the decisive influence of another specific factor: civic engagement in the decision-making of public service media outlets.

In this context, the research study was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To obtain evidence of demand from citizens (young people and adults) for the independence of Spanish public service broadcasters and of citizen assessment of the level of independence of these broadcasters.
2. To obtain evidence of citizen perception of:
  - a) opportunities to participate in the governance of public service broadcasters.
  - b) their use of channels of participation.
3. To analyse the relationship between public participation in the decision-making bodies of public service broadcasters (as a governance tool) and the reputation of those broadcasters.

The work method involved carrying out a quantitative study (the survey) and a documentary-structural analysis of the Spanish national public service broadcaster and the 10 regional public service broadcasters to be able to take the third methodological step of finding a correlation between the independence of these public service broadcasters and their reputation, as backed by evidence in both cases. To this end:

1. We carried out a field study with the support of the Qualtrics research platform on a random sample of 1,000 people selected with quotas for age, gender and autonomous community (region) in cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, including young people and adults from all regions except for the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla). The survey was taken in April-May 2017.
2. We studied existing channels for civic engagement in Spanish public service broadcasters, i.e. companies with an Advisory Board in which viewers participate or are at least represented: the Spanish Radio and Television Corporation (Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española, RTVE), Catalan Media Corporation (Corporación Catalana de Medios Audiovisuales, CCMA), Radio and Television of Andalusia (Radio y Televisión de Andalucía, RTVA), Castilla-La Mancha Media (Radiotelevisión de Castilla-La Mancha, RTVCM), Radio and Television of the Balearic Islands (Radiotelevisión de las Islas Baleares, IB3), Radio and Television Corporation of Galicia (Corporación de

Radio y Televisión de Galicia, CRTVG), Radio and Television of the Principality of Asturias (Radio y Televisión del Principado de Asturias, RTPA), Radio and Television of the Canary Islands (Radio Televisión Canaria, RTVC), Aragon Radio and Television Corporation (Corporación Aragonesa de Radio y Televisión, CART), Canal Extremadura Television and Telemadrid.

3. Based on the classification of public service broadcasters used by Fernández Alonso (2012) and that of the European Audiovisual Observatory (2016) on their independence and credibility, we aimed to determine if the broadcasters where civic participation included decision-making or executive competences in governance were the ones with the highest levels of public credibility and independence from political power.

The results of this study form part of the R&D&I Project on Societal Challenges *Transformation of regional television: weakening of the public service and prospects for technological development in a context of crisis* (2013-2017) IP Ana Azurmendi CSO2013-42270-R.

## **2. Qualtrics surveys on the civic engagement, independence from political power, and reputation of Spanish public service broadcasters, i.e. RTVE and regional broadcasters**

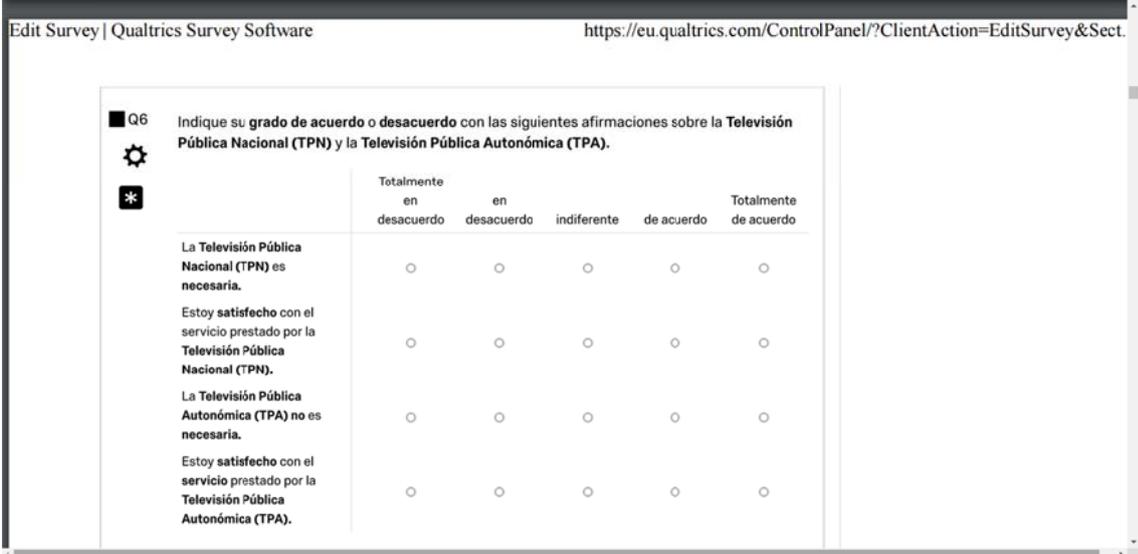
The fieldwork was based on a 39-item survey. It was distributed randomly using the Qualtrics platform through associate online panels in Spain in collaboration of ESOMAR-Qualtrics for analysis of data quality. The sample was designed with proportional quotas calculated based on National Census Statistics of 1 January 2017 and 2016-2031 population projections from the National Statistics Institute. Our target population consisted of individuals over 14 years of age distributed in proportional, representative, calculated quotas for gender, age and income in all Spanish regions. The autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla were excluded and only taken into account in the calculation of cities with over 10,000 inhabitants. The survey was carried out on 6 April and 8 May 2017, and a total of 1,095 responses was received. After sample selection quality control, with responses screened out based on time factors and quality control for coherence, we finally accepted 1,000 valid surveys.

Of the 39 survey questions, we have analysed the 12 directly related to the objectives of this study. In the survey (Appendix 1), see Q. 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 25, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37, as well as a full analysis of the responses in Appendix 2.

### **2.1. Need for public television and viewer satisfaction**

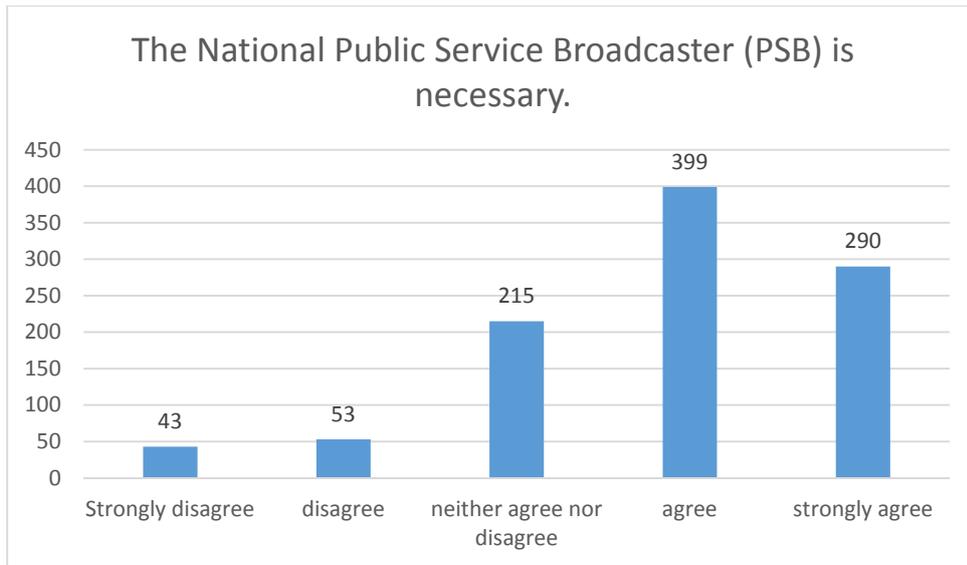
To provide some context for the questions on the independence of Spanish public service broadcasters (PSBs), we analysed the results of the survey from two perspectives: the actual need for these PSBs and the level of viewer satisfaction with

these broadcasters. Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed with a number of statements on these topics.



**Q. 6** Please indicate your **level of agreement or disagreement** with the following statements about the **National Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)** and **Regional Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)**.

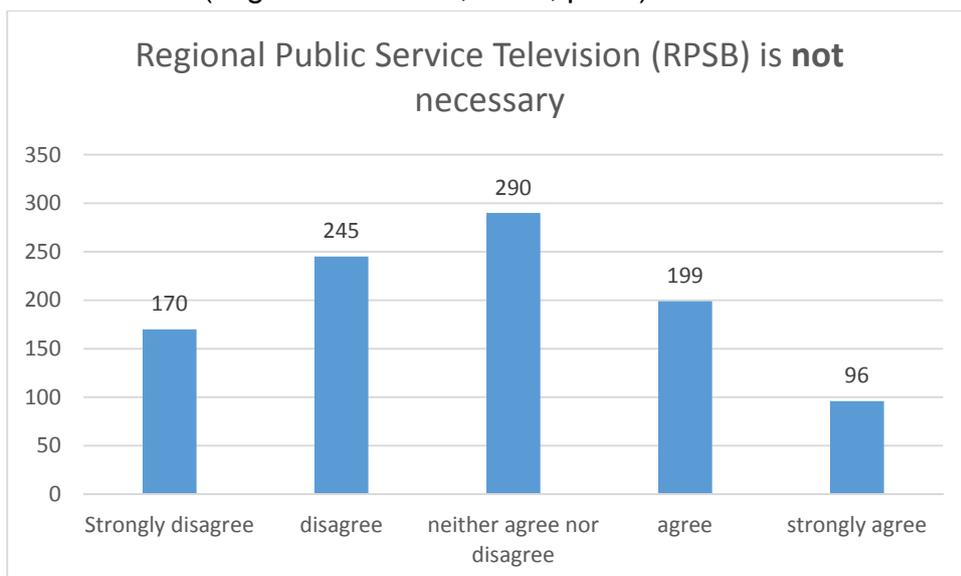
	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
The <b>National Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)</b> is <b>necessary</b> .					
I am <b>satisfied</b> with the service delivered by the <b>National Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)</b> .					
The <b>Regional Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)</b> is <b>not necessary</b> .					
I am <b>satisfied</b> with the service delivered by the <b>Regional Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)</b> .					



**Figure 1.** Perception of the need for the Public Service Broadcaster. Survey results.

A large majority (68.9% of respondents) said that the national PSB was necessary, compared to a very small percentage of respondents (4.3%) who disagreed or strongly disagreed (5.3%).

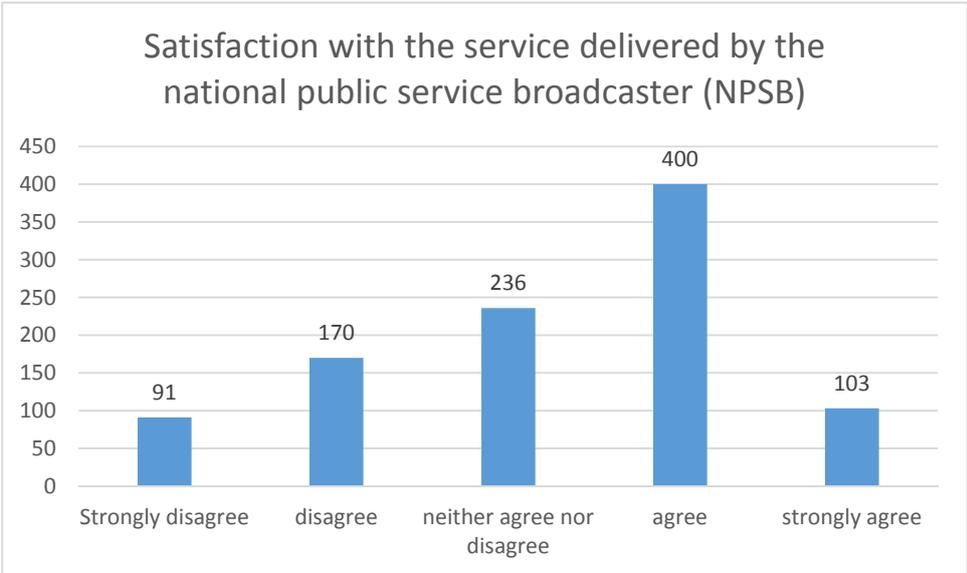
The percentages varied depending on the regional public service broadcaster. The survey included a question expressing a negative opinion (Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement “The Regional Public Service Broadcaster is not necessary”). A question expressing a negative opinion about the national public service broadcaster was not included because there was no climate of opinion in this direction, unlike the situation with the regional public service broadcasters (Miguel de Bustos, 2012, p. 27).



**Figure 2.** Perception of the need for the Regional Public Service Broadcaster. Survey results.

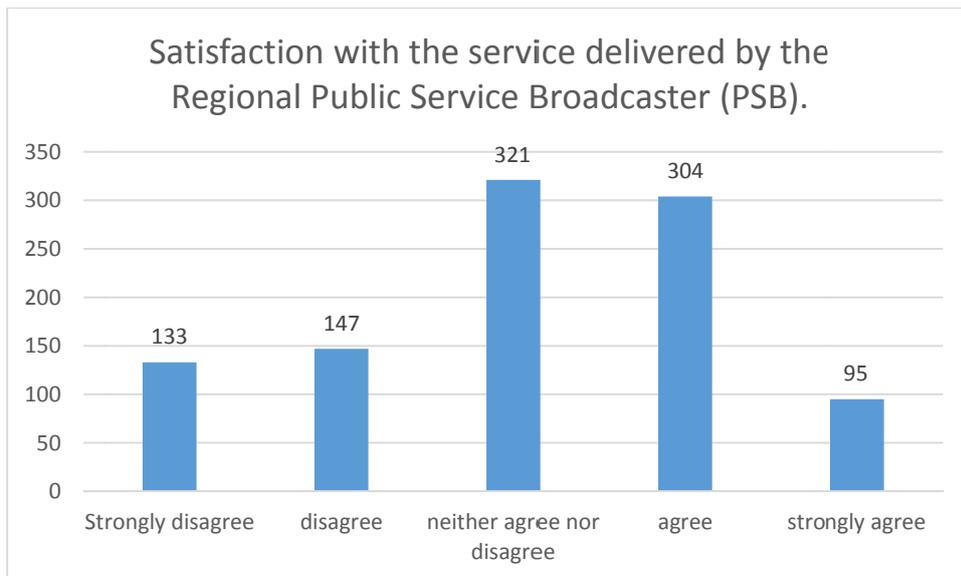
Nearly half of all respondents (41.5%) disagreed with the statement, whereas almost one third (29.5%) agreed. At the same time, a very similar percentage (29%) said they neither agreed or disagreed, a position which could, bearing in mind the wording of the question and the leading opinion at the time, be interpreted as non-opposition to the existence of the regional PSB. The combined group of respondents who disagreed with the statement or who neither agreed nor disagreed represented about 70% of the total, i.e. an overwhelming majority accepted the existence of the regional PSBs. This is a significant result in light of the perspective taken by most of the news items in the media on the topic, especially online and print media outlets.

Besides the perceived need for PSBs, this section also examined the level of viewer satisfaction with the activity of these PSBs. Response to the statement, “I am satisfied with the service delivered by the National Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)” indicated that the majority of respondents (50.3%) said they were satisfied, whereas slightly more than one fourth (26.1%) indicated their dissatisfaction. Once again, a high percentage (23.6%) said they neither agreed nor disagreed.



**Figure 3.** Satisfaction with the service delivered by the public service broadcaster. National. Survey results.

The question on viewer satisfaction with the regional PSB showed relevant variations compared to the results for the national PSB: fewer respondents were satisfied with the regional PSB (39.9% compared to 50.3% for the national PSB); more viewers were dissatisfied (30% compared to 26.1%); and the percentage of viewers who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied was also higher (32.1% compared to 23.6%).



**Figure 4.** Satisfaction with the service delivered by the Regional Public Service Broadcaster. Survey results.

## 2.2. Call for the independence of public service broadcasters, especially in terms of politics

This research study shows that the majority of people viewed independence as one of the most important attributes of both the national and regional PSBs. More than half of respondents (53.9%) said that independence was more of a priority than impartiality, pluralism and neutrality, whereas slightly more than one fourth (26.4%) said they thought independence was important, but not as important as those other attributes.

■ Q13 Dentro de los **valores propios** de la **Televisión Pública** (imparcialidad, pluralismo, neutralidad, etc) ¿cómo valora el principio de la **independencia**?

⚙️  Prioritario

⚙️  Importante, pero secundario

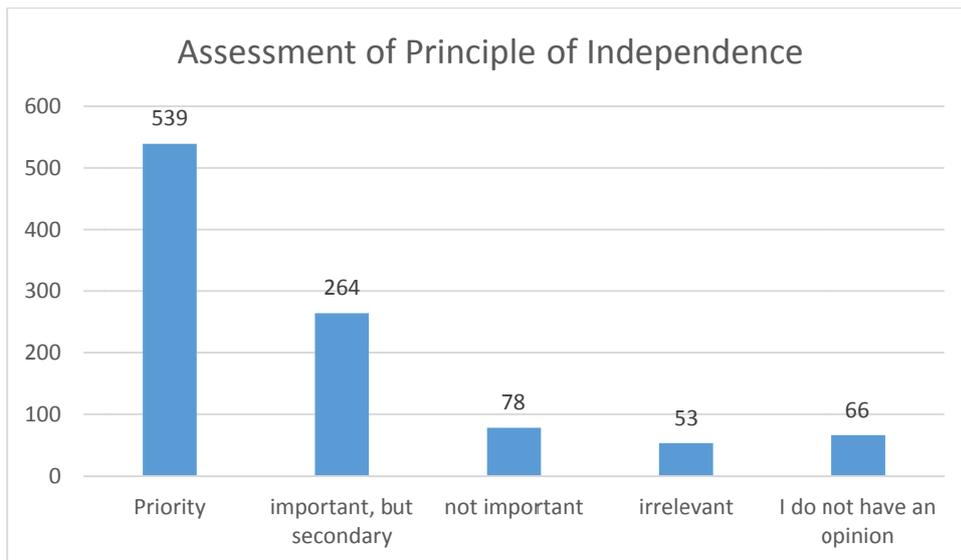
⚙️  Nada importante

⚙️  Irrelevante

⚙️  No tengo opinión

Q. 13 Among the **PSB's core attributes** (impartiality, pluralism, neutrality, etc.), where do you rank the concept of **independence**?

- Priority
- Important, but secondary
- Not important
- Irrelevant
- I do not have an opinion



**Figure 5.** Assessment of principle of Independence. Survey results.

Despite this overwhelming opinion regarding independence and the percentages obtained, an analysis of the other percentages qualifies this result. When the respondents were asked to indicate in percentages the importance of the values of impartiality, pluralism, neutrality and independence, the results for impartiality (31%) and neutrality (25%) were higher than those for independence (22%). These four concepts are very similar, though each refers to a different aspect of PSBs.

Impartiality is generally applied to information. Impartial information is understood to be found in news items that provide only an account of all the newsworthy facts and that do not have an underlying political agenda that determines what items are published and from which perspective. Neutrality is used more often to refer to a non-partisan stance, i.e. the lack of political partisanship. From this perspective, it is closer to the notion of political independence).

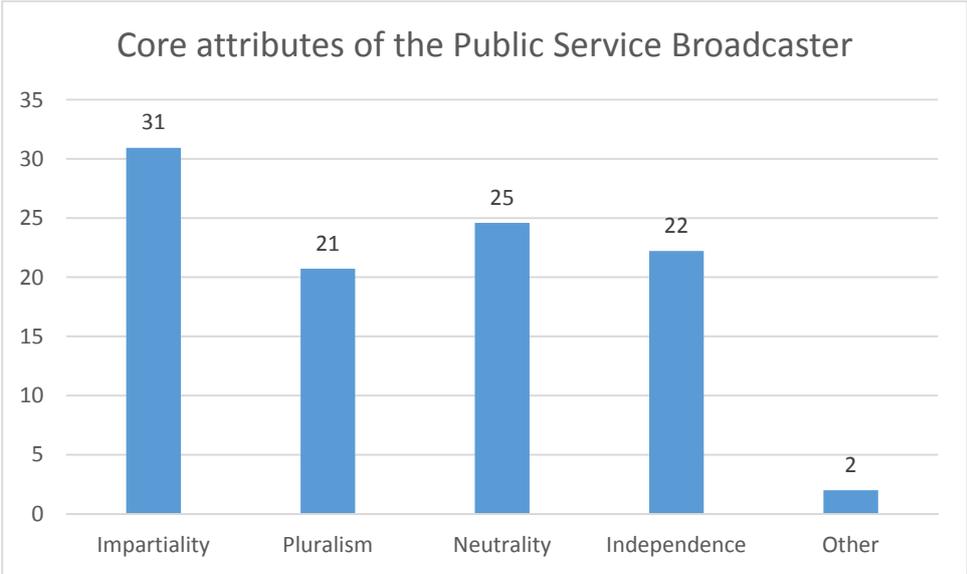
■ Q14 Distribuya en porcentaje la importancia de los siguientes valores propios de la Televisión Pública.

⚙️

Imparcialidad	0
Pluralismo	0
Neutralidad	0
Independencia	0
Otro indique: <input type="text"/>	0
Total	0

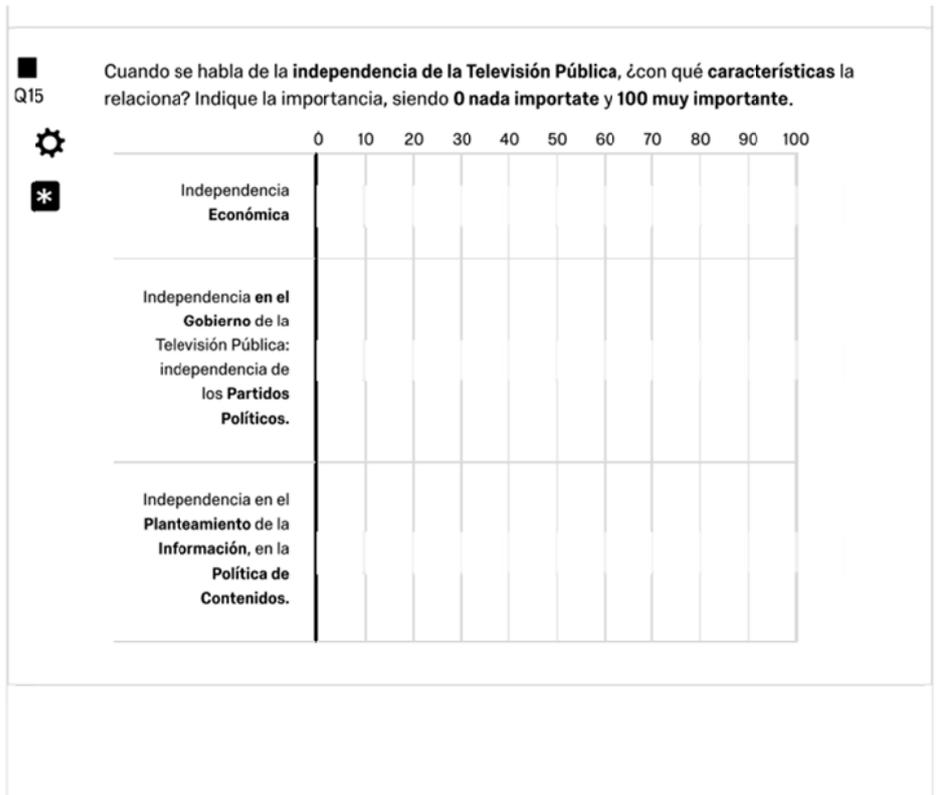
Q. 14 Please rank the importance of the following **core attributes** of the **Public Service Broadcaster** as a percentage.

- Impartiality
- Pluralism
- Neutrality
- Independence
- Other (please indicate):
- Total



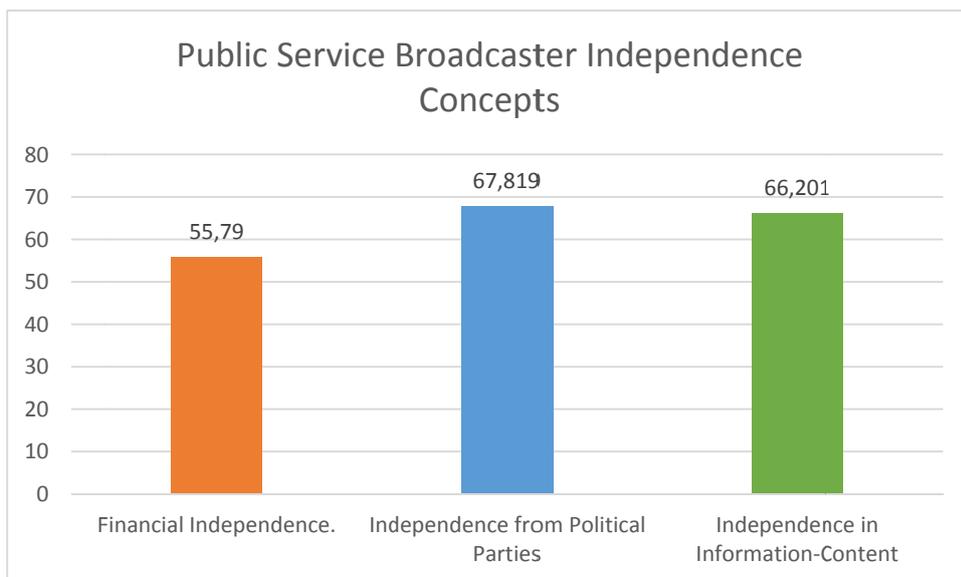
**Figure 6.** Distribution in percentages of the core attributes of the Public Service Broadcaster ranked from 0 (least value) to 100 (maximum value). Means of the responses obtained from 1,000 respondents.

This interpretation is corroborated by the results of Question 15, given that the option with the highest score in the question (“What concepts do you connect with independence when talking about the independence of the Public Service Broadcaster? Please indicate the importance, where 0 is not important and 100 is very important”) was independence from political parties in television governance (67.8 out of 100). Therefore, the most important item ranked in the call for the independence of PSBs was the demand that PSBs be independent from political parties. In second place (66.2 out of 100) was the notion that PSBs should maintain editorial independence, an attribute that is the result of independence from political parties in television governance. In third place was financial independence (55.8 out of 100), which can be interpreted as a criticism of the current public funding system of PSBs.



Q. 15 What concepts do you connect with independence when talking about the **independence of the Public Service Broadcaster**? Please indicate the importance, where **0 is not important** and **100 is very important**.

**Financial** independence.  
Independence **of PSB Governance**: independence from **Political Parties**.  
Independence in the **Approach to Information** and **Content Policy**.



**Figure 7.** Public Service Broadcaster Independence Concepts, from 0 (least important) to 100 (most important). Means of the responses obtained from 1,000 respondents.

### 2.3. Perception of the lack of independence of PSBs and private media outlets

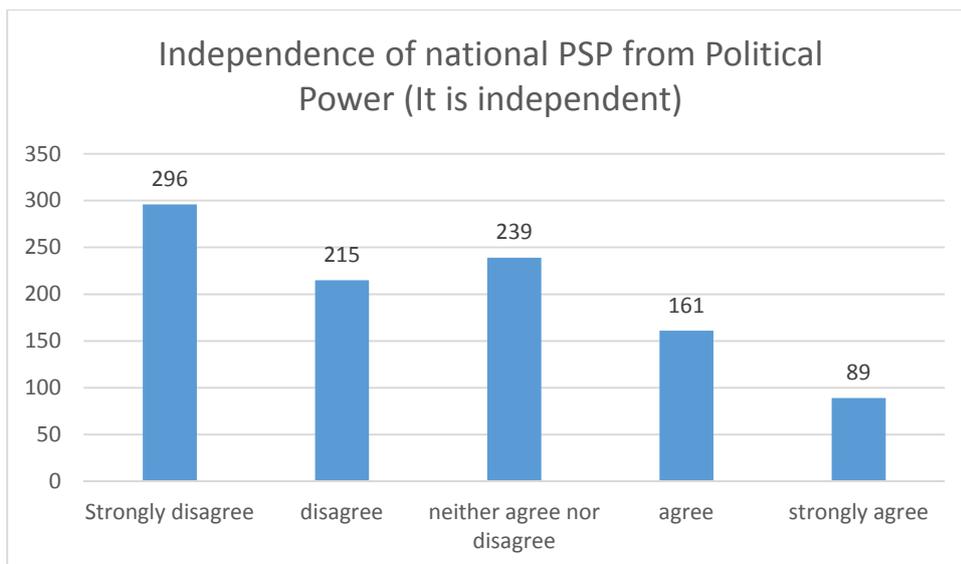
After analysing citizens' assessment and strong demand for the independence of public service broadcasters, it is worth asking the following questions: What is citizens' perception of the real independence of public service broadcasters? Are there differences between national and regional public service broadcasters? (Q. 16.4)

Slightly more than half of respondents (51.1%) said they thought that the national PSB (RTVE) was not independent from political power, whereas one fourth said they thought it was (25%).

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
The <b>National Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)</b> is independent from political power					
The <b>Regional Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)</b> is not independent from political power					

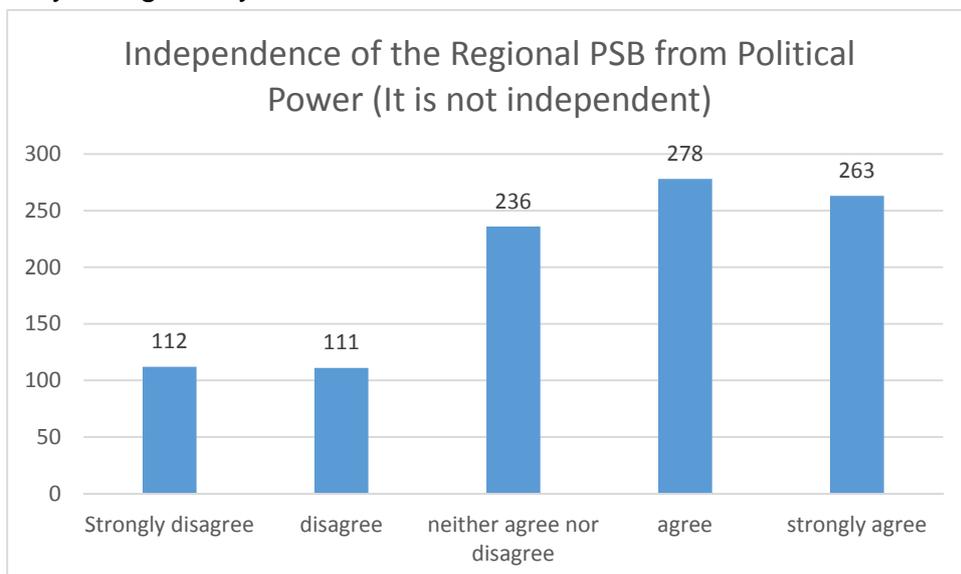
■ Indique su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones.  
Q16

	Totalmente en desacuerdo	en desacuerdo	indiferente	de acuerdo	Totalmente de acuerdo
La Televisión Pública Nacional (TPN) debería volver a tener publicidad en sus emisiones.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tener publicidad le daría más independencia económica a la televisión pública.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A mayor participación ciudadana mayor independencia en el gobierno de la televisión pública.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La Televisión Pública Nacional (TPN) es independiente del poder político.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La Televisión Pública Autorómica (TPA) no es independiente del poder político.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**Figure 8.** Assessment of the Independence of the National PSP from Political Power. Survey results.

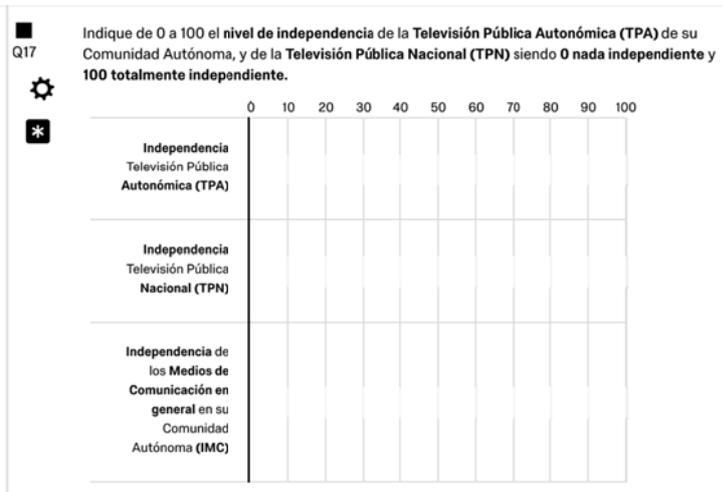
Citizen perception of the independence of regional PSBs was very similar, given that slightly more than half respondents (54.1%) said they thought regional PSBs were not independent from political power, whereas a bit more than one fifth (22,3%) said they thought they were.



**Figure 9.** Assessment of the Independence of the Regional PSB from Political Power.

This majority opinion on the lack of independence of PSBs was expressed once again and coincided with the perception of the independence of regional PSBs, which were perceived as being even less independent. Although the survey question called for simultaneous assessment from 0 to 100 of the level of independence of the regional PSB where the respondent lived, RTVE and all the other media outlets in the respondent's region, the differences were maintained. However, of note is that the

regional PSBs were seen to be only slightly less independent than other regional media outlets.

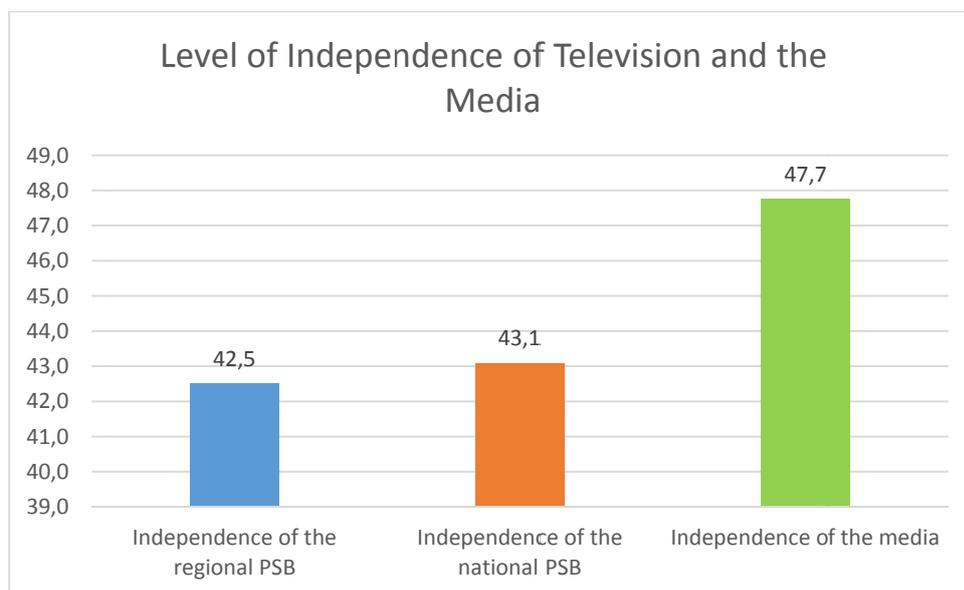


Q. 17 Please indicate from 0 to 100 the **level of independence** of the **Regional PSB** in your region and the **National PSB**, where **0** is not independent and **100** is completely independent.

**Independence of the Regional PSB.**

**Independence of the National PSB.**

**Independence of the media in general** in your region.



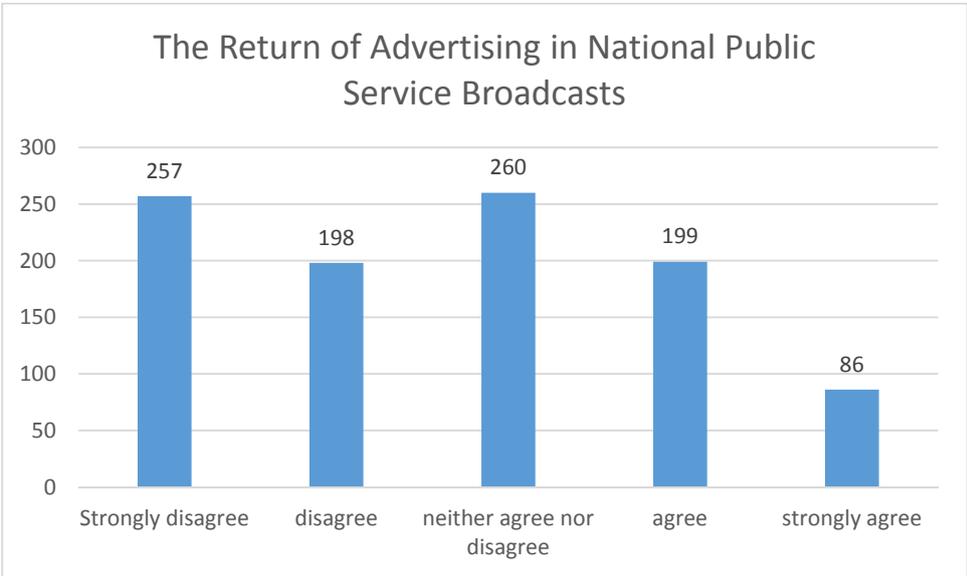
**Figure 10.** Assessment of the level of independence of the regional PSB where the respondent lives, of the national PSB, and of the other media outlets where the respondent lives. From 0 (least independent) to 100 (most independent).

#### 2.4. The return of advertising to RTVE in relation to independence

Assessment of the independence of PSBs took on greater weight starting with Question 16, where respondents were asked: about their level of agreement or disagreement with statements on the presence of advertising on PSBs; the direct

relationship between civic engagement and PSBs’ independence from political power (RTVE and each regional PSB), and their perception of these PSBs’ independence from politics.

Nearly half of all respondents (45.5%) said they were against the return of advertising to RTVE (in 2010, advertising was discontinued on RTVE, but was never discontinued on regional PSBs). However, a high number of Spanish citizens, represented by more than one fourth of the respondents (26%), neither agreed nor disagreed. It makes sense to include this group with the block of respondents in favour of the return of advertising, given that it at least reflects a lack of opposition to this return (under no circumstances could “neither agree nor disagree” be interpreted to mean the respondent is opposed to the return of advertising). As a result, more than half of all respondents (54.5%) were not opposed to the return of advertising to RTVE and, of that number, 28.5% were in favour of the return of advertising to the national PSB. (Sub-question Q. 16.1)



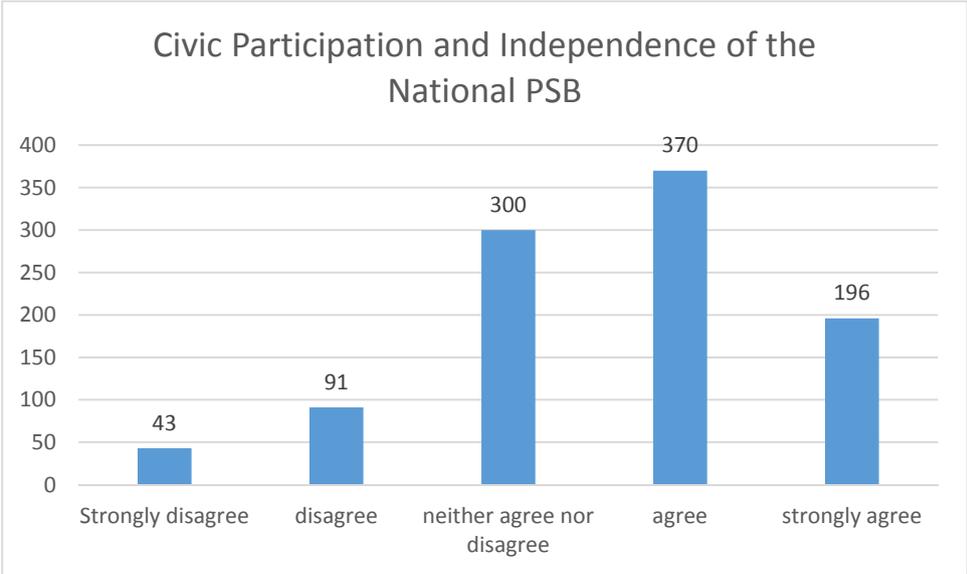
**Figure 11.** Assessment of the return of advertising in national public service broadcasts. Survey results.

In the opinion of the majority (nearly half of all respondents, 48.1%), the return of advertising would mean greater financial independence of RTVE. However, for one fourth of respondents (26.2%), not even the return of advertising would solve the problem of PSBs’ lack of financial independence. The respondents who said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (12.3%) should be interpreted along the same lines.

**2.5. Demand for civic engagement in relation to the independence of PSBs**

Without overlooking the importance of the above information, the most interesting information to emerge from the survey is probably related to the connection

established by the respondents between civic engagement and PSBs' independence from political power (Q. 16.3). More than half of all citizens surveyed (56.6%) felt that increased civic participation would also mean more independent PSB governance. We understand this to be relevant because very few opportunities are currently available for such participation in public, private, and national and regional PSBs. Therefore, this interest in participation does not arise from a tradition of the PSBs or any advertising they have done, but from factors unrelated to the development of Spanish PSBs. One of these factors is the growing democratic demand for greater civic participation in all areas of politics.



**Figure 12.** Level of agreement or disagreement with the statement, “The more citizen participation, the more independence in the governance of PSBs”. Survey results.

If the independence of PSBs is considered by the majority of respondents to be the PSBs' priority attribute and civic engagement is perceived as an additional aspect of the independence of the PSB, it is noteworthy that a considerable number of respondents said that the most necessary place for citizen participation in RTVE (60.3% of respondents) and regional PSBs (61.9%) was news programmes.

Q33 ¿En qué tipo de **contenidos** de la **Télevisión Pública Nacional (TPN)** le parece más necesario aumentar la **participación ciudadana**?

Información

Ficción

Entretenimiento

Otros (indique alguno)

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Q34 ¿En qué tipo de **contenidos** de la **Télevisión Pública Autónoma (TPA)** le parece más necesario aumentar la **participación ciudadana**?

Información

Ficción

Entretenimiento

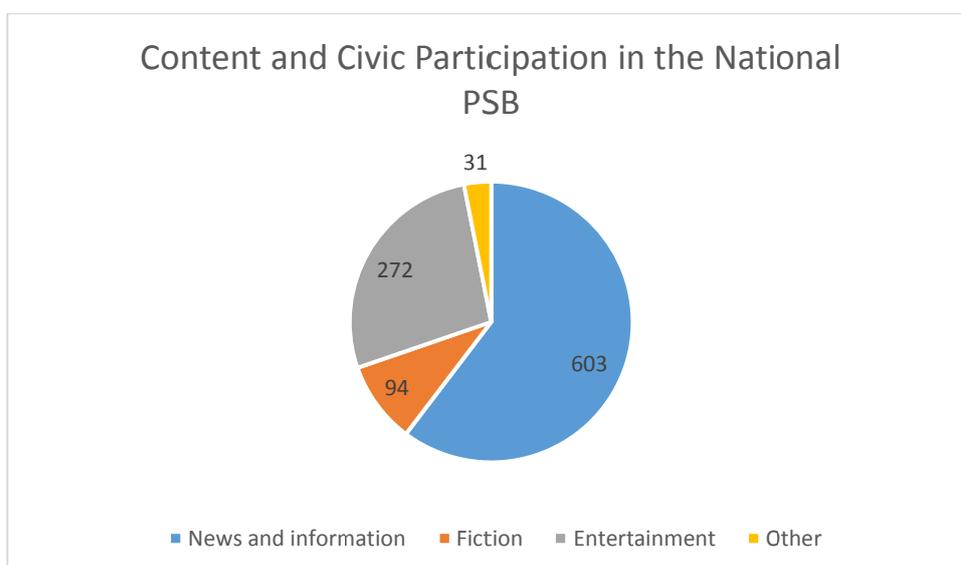
Otros (indique alguno)

Q. 33 In what kind of **National PSB content** should the amount of **civic participation** be increased?

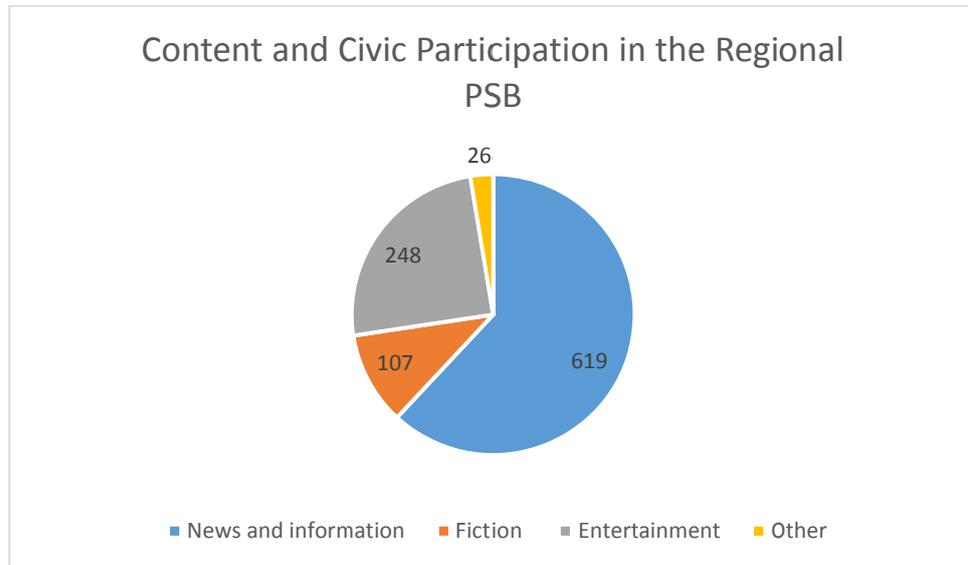
- News and information
- Fiction
- Entertainment
- Other (provide examples)

Q. 34 In what kind of **Regional PSB content** should the amount of **civic participation** be increased?

- News and information
- Fiction
- Entertainment
- Other (provide examples)



**Figure 13.** National PSB content in which civic participation should increase. Survey results.



**Figure 14.** Regional PSB content in which civic participation should increase. Survey results.

When asked to indicate possible forms of civic participation in regional PSBs, a considerable percentage of respondents agreed that this participation should involve contact with political parties (48.9%), though the percentage of those who said they neither agreed nor disagreed (32.8%) was also very high.

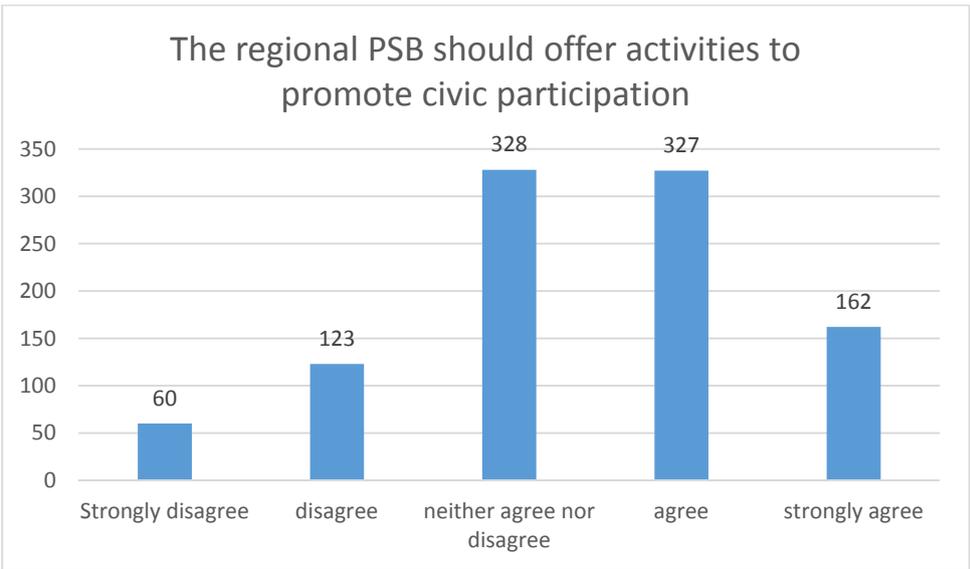
**Q35**

En relación con otros **servicios a la ciudadanía** que debería ofrecer la **Televisión Pública Autónoma (TPA)** además de los tradicionales (información, entretenimiento,...) manifieste su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

	Totalmente en desacuerdo	en desacuerdo	indiferente	de acuerdo	Totalmente de acuerdo
La TPA debería ofrecer <b>Actividades</b> para el <b>fomento de la participación ciudadana</b> en el desarrollo de la comunidad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La TPA debería <b>favorecer el contacto</b> con los <b>partidos políticos e instituciones autonómicas y locales</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La TPA <b>no</b> debería <b>favorecer servicios de carácter educativo</b> de proximidad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La TPA debería promover la <b>lengua y cultura propia</b> de la Comunidad Autónoma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

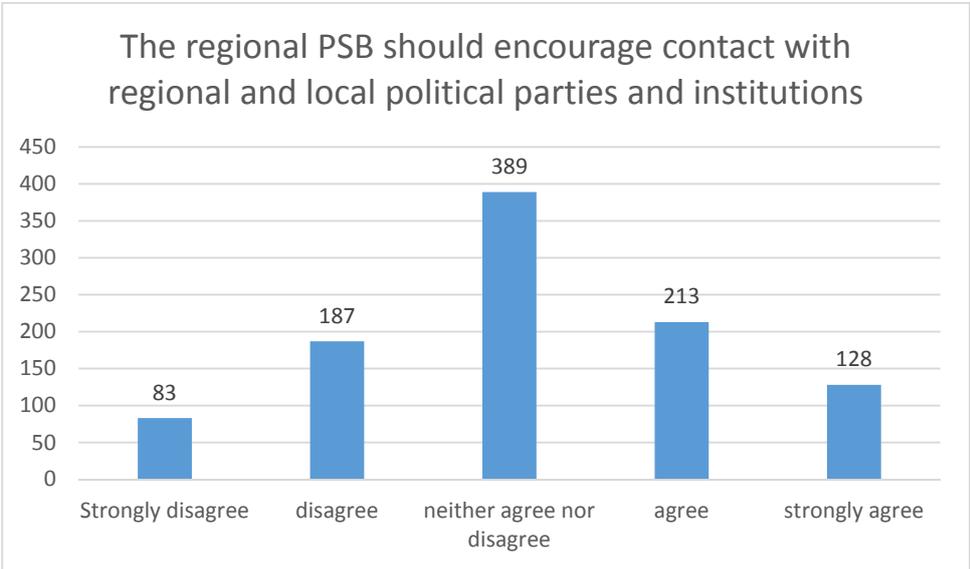
Q. 35 In relation to other **public services** that should be offered by the **Regional Public Service Broadcaster (PSB)**, in addition to traditional services (news and information, entertainment, etc.), please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
The regional PSB <b>should offer activities to promote civic participation</b> in community development.					
The regional PSB <b>should favour contact</b> with <b>regional and local political parties</b> and <b>institutions</b> .					
The regional PSB <b>should not favour community educational services</b> .					
The regional PSB <b>should promote the regional language and culture</b> .					



**Figure 15.** Level of agreement or disagreement with the statement that regional PSBs should offer activities to promote civic participation. Survey results.

Paradoxically, few respondents (34.1%) identified the regional PSB’s role of increasing citizen participation in politics by favouring contact with regional and local political parties and institutions.



**Figure 16.** Level of agreement or disagreement with the statement that regional PSBs should encourage contact with regional and local political parties and institutions. Survey results.

**2.6. Demand for participation through alternative channels and other formats**

One of the forms of civic participation in PSBs is through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. RTVE and the regional PSBs all have either institutional accounts or accounts for their most popular programmes. There is evidence of very limited civic participation through the accounts of the regional PSBs (Azurmendi, Llorens, López Vidales, Bas Portero, 2015), except for sporadic cases in which some transmedia programmes have included social media participation among their content features (as in the case of programmes such as “Em dic Manel!” and “The Land Rober Tunai Show” on the Catalan and Galician PSBs (Azurmendi, Muñoz Saldaña 2018).

Q25

Indique si es seguidor de alguna cuenta de **Facebook** y/o **Twitter** en la **Televisión Pública Nacional (TPN)** o **Televisión Pública Autónoma (TPA)**



	Sí	No	No recuerdo
Soy seguidor de alguna cuenta de <b>Facebook</b> vinculada a la <b>Televisión Pública Nacional (TPN)</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soy seguidor de alguna cuenta de <b>Facebook</b> vinculada a la <b>Televisión Pública Autónoma (TPA)</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soy seguidor de alguna cuenta de <b>Twitter</b> vinculada a la <b>Televisión Pública Nacional (TPN)</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soy seguidor de alguna cuenta de <b>Twitter</b> vinculada a la <b>Televisión Pública Autónoma (TPA)</b>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q. 25 Please indicate if you are a follower of any of the **national PSB** or **Regional PSB's Facebook** and/or **Twitter** accounts.

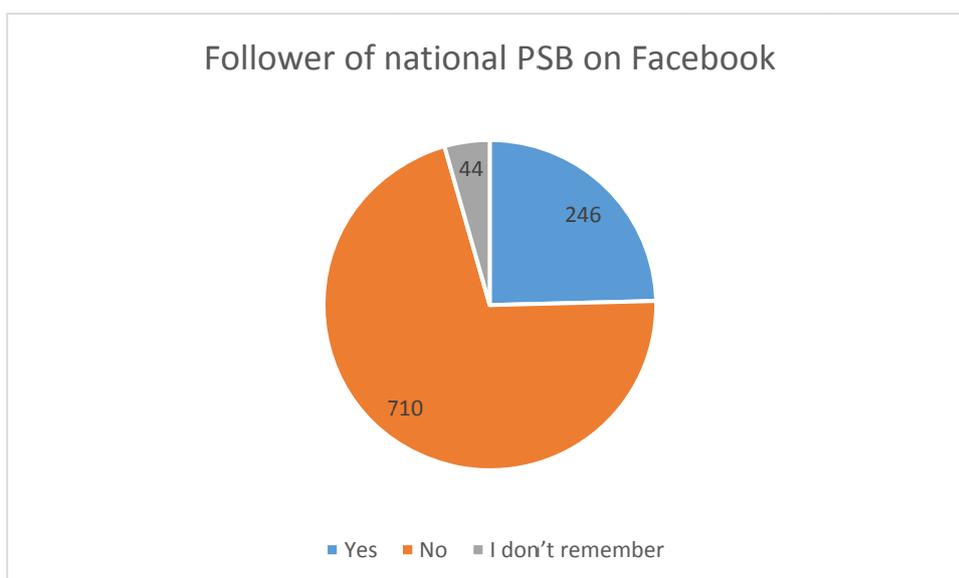
Yes No I don't remember

I am a follower of one of the **National PSB's Facebook** accounts.

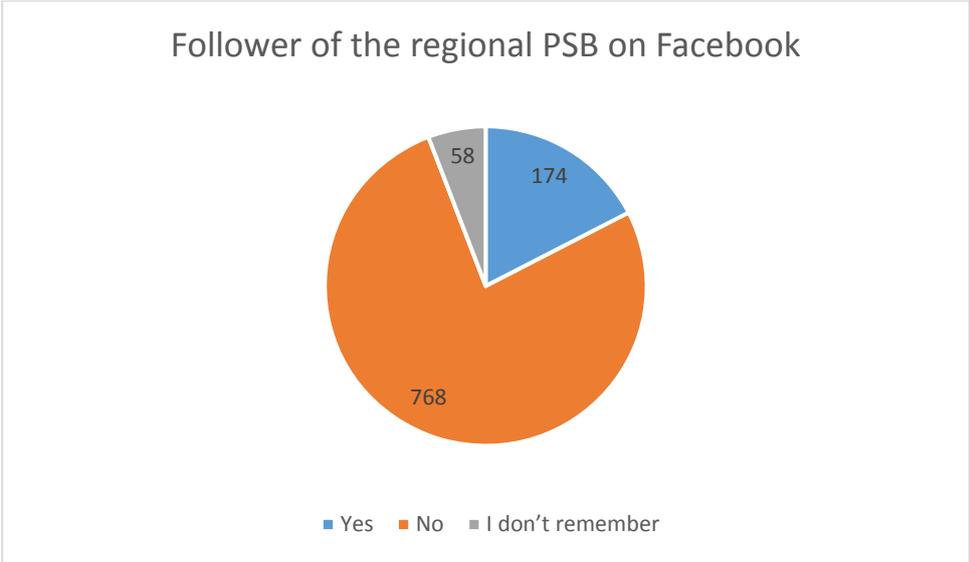
I am a follower of one of the **Regional PSB's Facebook** accounts.

I am a follower of one of the **National PSB's Twitter** accounts.

I am a follower of one of the **Regional PSB's Twitter** accounts.



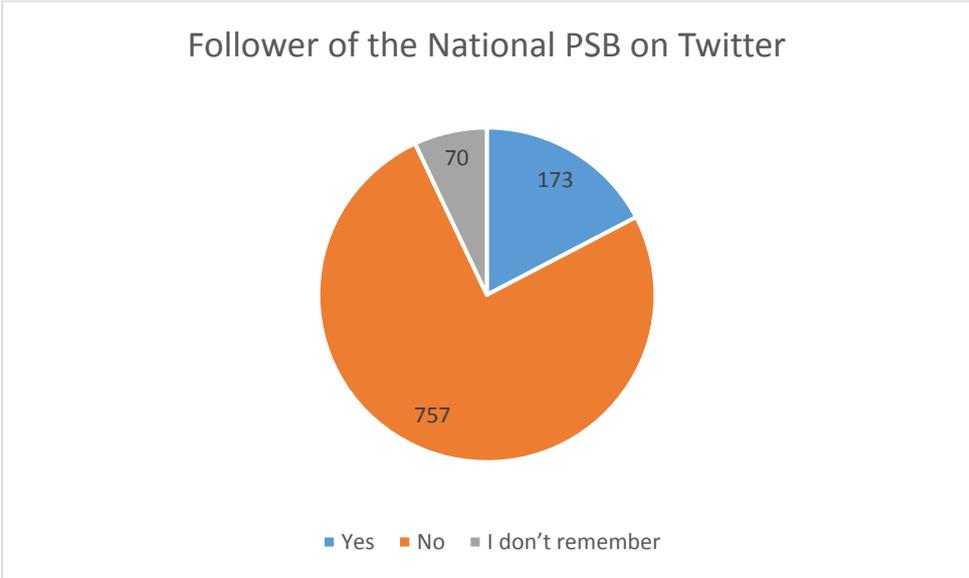
**Figure 17.** Following or not following any of the national PSB's Facebook accounts. Survey results.



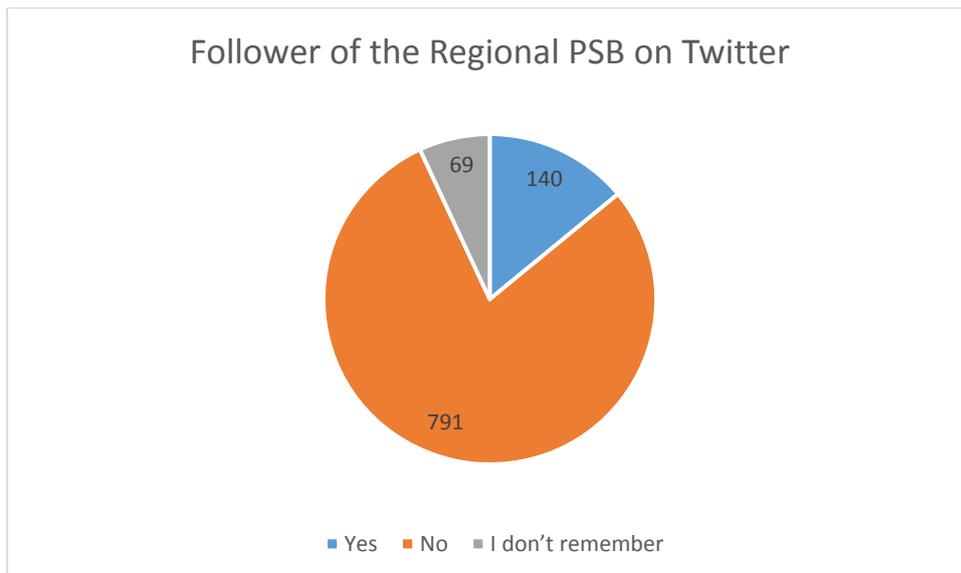
**Figure 18.** Following or not following any of the regional PSB's Facebook accounts. Survey results.

In terms of participation through Facebook, the overwhelming majority of respondents said they were not followers of the PSBs' social media accounts (71% in the case of RTVE and 76.8% in the case of the regional PSBs). About one fourth of respondents said they were followers of RTVE's Facebook account (24.6%), while 17.4% of respondents said they were followers of the regional PSB's Facebook account.

There was even less participation through Twitter, with 17.3% of respondents following RTVE's Twitter account and 14% following the regional PSB's Twitter account.



**Figure 19.** Following or not following any of the national PSB's Twitter accounts. Survey results.



**Figure 20.** Following or not following any of the regional PSB’s Twitter accounts. Survey results.

**3. Channels for civic participation in Spanish PSBs are virtually non-existent, though RTVE, Catalonia’s TV3 and Andalusia’s Canal Sur lead the way**

As shown in a previous study (Azurmendi and Muñoz Saldaña, 2016), the channels for civic participation in Spanish PSBs are actually empty legal structures. There is no political tradition or will to try different models (Fernández Alonso, 2012), such as the British and German models, where different groups representing viewers’ interests interact with PSB management (the BBC’s Audience Councils and the broadcasting councils in each German Länder). Research on accountability (Alsius; Mauri-Ríos; Rodríguez-Martínez, 2011; Puppis, 2009; Díaz-Campo and Segado-Boj 2014) provides a complement to studies on civic participation from another perspective in that it describes “the media’s interest in responding to society for the activity it performs”. Civic participation is one of the indicators of accountability to the audience, along with professional self-regulation and information transparency (Suárez Villegas; Rodríguez Martínez; Mauri i de los Ríos; López Meri, 2017)

At present, RTVE and ten regional PSBs [Catalan Media Corporation (Corporación Catalana de Medios Audiovisuales, CCMA), Radio and Television of Andalusia (Radio y Televisión de Andalucía, RTVA), Castilla-La Mancha Media (Radiotelevisión de Castilla-La Mancha, RTVCM), Radio and Television of the Balearic Islands (Radiotelevisión de las Islas Baleares, IB3), Radio and Television Corporation of Galicia (Corporación de Radio y Televisión de Galicia, CRTVG), Radio and Television of the Principality of Asturias (Radio y Televisión del Principado de Asturias, RTPA), Radio and Television of the Canary Islands (Radio Televisión Canaria, RTVC), Aragon Radio and Television Corporation (Corporación Aragonesa de Radio y Televisión, CART), Canal Extremadura Television and Telemadrid] have

an Advisory Board, the body considered to represent viewers' interests. However, as its name suggests, its functions are advisory in nature. In fact, all these Advisory Boards are tasked with sending their opinions (on programming and any other matters under study by the board of directors) to the PSB's board of directors or governance.

An examination of the PSBs' corporate websites shows a lack of real activity of the Spanish Advisory Boards. There is no information about their meetings, the reports they have prepared or their interaction with the PSB governance bodies.

The PSBs' Transparency Portals could also be used as a channel of participation in addition to the Advisory Boards, but no additional resources have been made available on these portals to allow for any other form of participation besides access to information on PSB organization, accountability and financial resources.

Finally, the third channel of civic participation in PSBs is through the viewer or audience ombudsman. RTVE, Corporación Catalana de Medios Audiovisuales (CCMA) and Radio y Televisión de Andalucía (RTVA) have an ombudsman. Ombudsmen are responsible for receiving complaints from viewers and bringing them to the attention of the PSBs' boards of directors and are therefore mainly mediators between the general public and the PSB. Based on this perspective, their function as a channel for civic participation is highly limited. The reports published by these ombudsmen confirm viewers' acknowledgement of the effectiveness of sending their complaints and comments to the ombudsmen. The reports also indicate that the ombudsman's workload is gradually increasing. For example, the Report of the RTVE Ombudsman for the first quarter of 2017 highlighted the increase in the number of messages received from viewers in the first few months of 2017 compared to the last quarter of 2016 (1,138 compared to 1,980). This has been the general trend in PSBs with ombudsmen.

	4th 2016	1st 2017	DIFFERENCE
RECEIVED	1138	1980	842
MANAGED	1045	1877	832
<b>RNE</b>			
	41	83	42
<b>&amp; RTVE</b>			
	63	51	-12
<b>TVE</b>			
	886	1686	800
<b>NO COMPETITION</b>			
	55	57	2
<b>CLAN</b>			
	41	31	-10
<b>SPORTS</b>			
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>			
	46	27	-19
<b>PROGRAMMES</b>			
<b>NEWS</b>			
	187	251	64
<b>TECHNICAL</b>			
	15	14	-1

**Figure 21.** Source: Report of the RTVE Ombudsman.(Translated)

Of all the comments and complaints received from viewers, most were about TVE (886) and, of that number, 187 were about the news programmes.

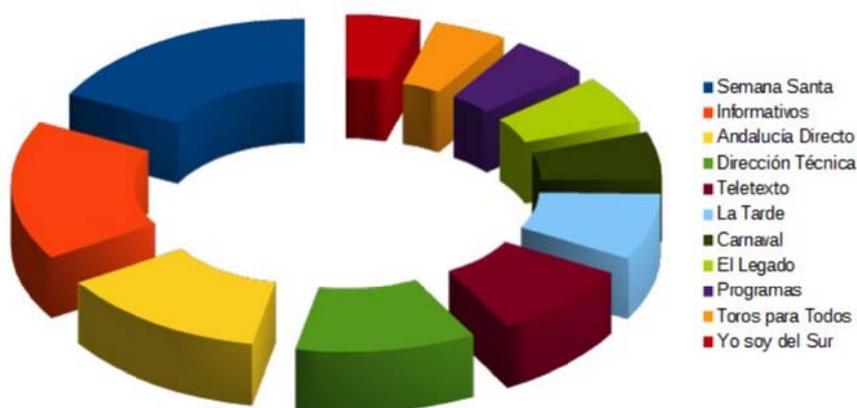
According to the 2015 Report (the last one published) by the Ombudsman of the Corporación Catalana de Medios Audiovisuales (CCMA), a total of 19,415 messages were received from viewers. Of all messages, 3,837 were about TV3. In this case, news programmes also accounted for most of the messages, along with the popular programme “El foraster”. In terms of social media, the Report indicates that TV3 had 3,749,761 followers on Facebook in December 2015, but details are not provided on specific accounts or how many of these people were followers of specific programmes, institutional accounts, etc. (however, a visit on 26.7.2017 showed that TV3 had 480,000 followers on Facebook). According to the 2015 Report, TV3 had 1,751,222 followers on Twitter, but more detailed information is not provided (a visit on 26.7.2017 showed that TV3 had 426,000 followers on Twitter).

Programme	Thanks	Query / comment	Complaint	Messages	Avg. Response Time (days)
El foraster	7	110	596	713	3.67
Telenotícies	7	383	182	572	9.61
Els matins	13	431	66	510	5.12
El Faro, cruïlla de camins	3	416	77	496	1.80
Info K	57	367	38	462	10.46
Divendres	2	242	44	288	5.95
Espai Terra	1	206	30	237	3.85
30 minuts	12	170	25	207	12.97
Oh Happy Day	5	154	24	183	1.06
Cites	8	132	29	169	2.58
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>2,611</b>	<b>1,111</b>	<b>3,837</b>	<b>5.84</b>

**Figure 22.** Source: Report of the CCMA Ombudsman. (Translated)

The 2016 Report of the Ombudsman of Radio y Televisión de Andalucía (RTVA) indicates that it received 588 messages from viewers, most of which were about Easter Week and news programmes, and 1,055 direct interactions on social media. However, no details are provided on the kind of social media or the accounts where these interactions took place.

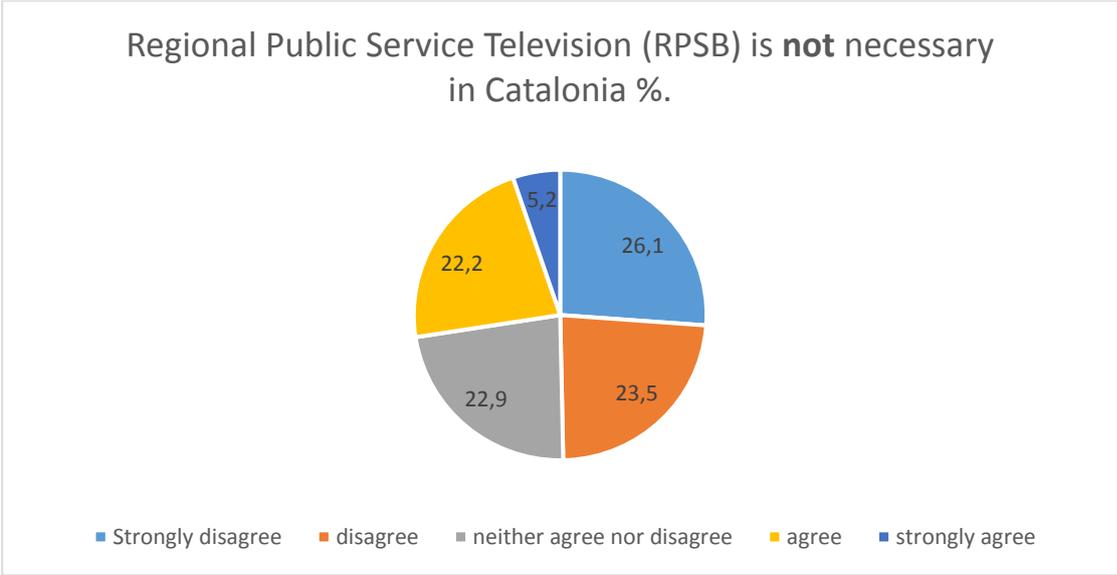
TYPE AND CONTENT OF MESSAGES RECEIVED BY CSTV					
The items are listed by the number of complaints received.					
	Complaints	Opinions	Suggestions	Petición Info	Felicitaciones
Easter Week	43		1		1
News programmes	40	5	6		2
Andalucía Dir.	32		1		3
Technical Management	27		4	9	
Teletext	22		1	4	
La Tarde Aquí	19	4	7		1
Carnaval	14			1	
El Legado	14		5	5	
Programmes	12	3	8	10	3
Toros p Todos	11	2	1		1
Yo soy del Sur					



**Figure 23.** Source: Report of the Ombudsman of Radio y Televisión de Andalucía (RTVA) (Translated).

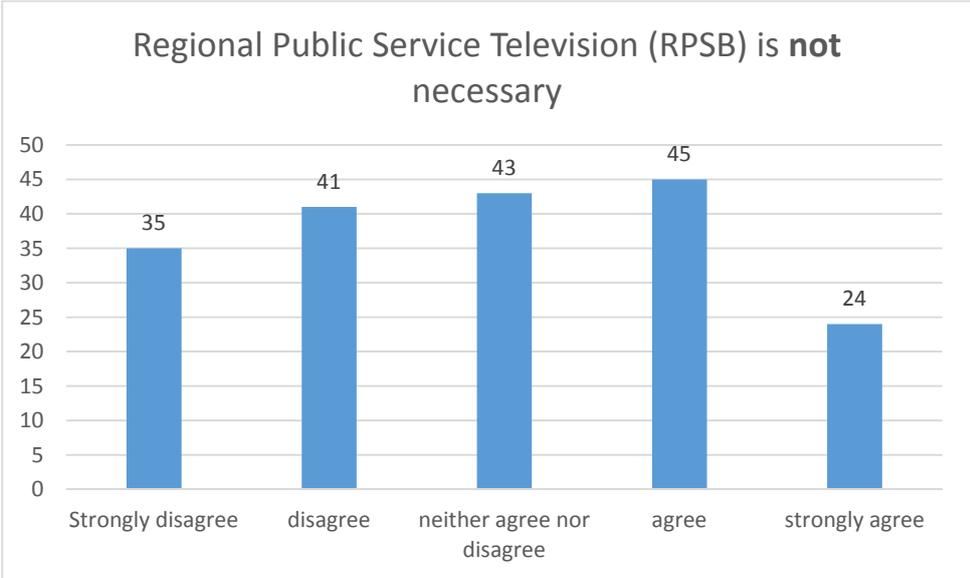
Based on these data on the presence of three PSBs in an additional channel for public participation, namely, the Audience or Viewer Ombudsman, we checked the level of viewer satisfaction in Catalonia and Andalusia, the regions where the regional PSB had an Ombudsman. We also checked for any notable differences between the viewer satisfaction data for these two regions and the data for the regions that did not have an Ombudsman.

To carry out this comparative study, we extracted the data on Qualtrics survey question Q. 6 separately for Andalusia and Catalonia. The data from these regions were aggregated to compare this part with the whole. All data for the regions and Spain as a whole were then expressed as percentages. Finally, we prepared the final comparative graphs. Because question Q. 6 was affirmative for the national PSB (“is necessary”) and negative for the regional PSB (“is not necessary”), comparison of the responses involved adding up the responses on the regional PSB that disagreed with the statement and comparing them to the aggregate responses on the national PSB that agreed with the statement.



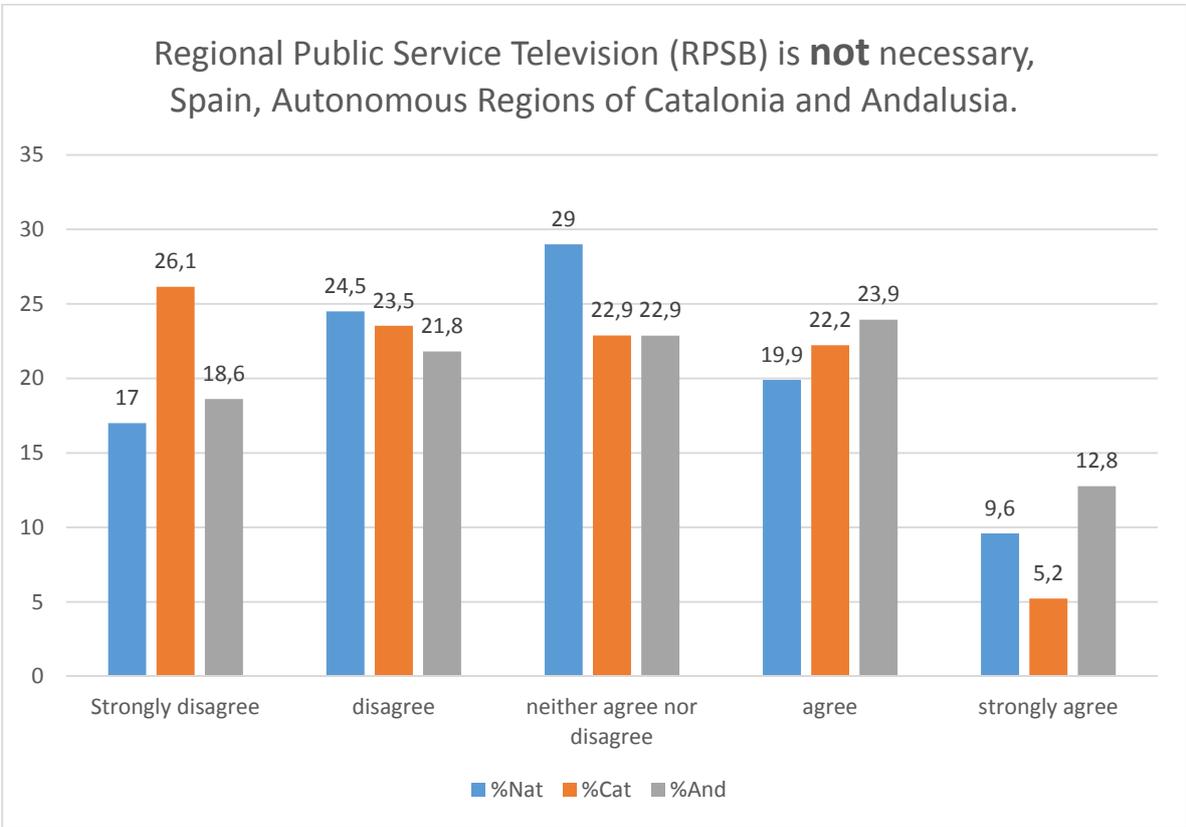
**Figure 24.** Catalonia. Agreement or disagreement about the need for the Regional Public Service Broadcaster. Percentage.

As a result, nearly half of Catalan respondents (49.6%) said they thought the regional PSB was necessary, whereas only 41% of respondents from all of Spain said they thought the regional PSB was necessary. Furthermore, more than one fourth of those who did not agree with the statement were adamant about it (26.1% “strongly disagreed” that the regional PSB was not necessary), whereas only a small fraction of respondents in Catalonia (5.2%) adamantly agreed that the regional PSB was not necessary. And if we understand that those who neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement were not opposed to the regional PSB, the total is a considerable majority (72.5%).



**Figure 25.** Andalusia. Agreement or disagreement about the need for the Regional Public Service Broadcaster. Percentage.

Close to half of the respondents in Andalusia (40.4%) said they thought the regional PSB was necessary. Of that number, 18.6% adamantly disagreed that it was not necessary (“strongly disagree”). Slightly more than one third of respondents (36.7%) agreed it was not necessary. Of this number, significantly more respondents of Catalonia (12.8%) adamantly agreed with the statement (“strongly agree” it was not necessary). What is relevant about the case of Andalusia is that there was only a slight difference in the number of respondents who said the regional PSB was necessary and the number who said it was not. We understand that the “neither agree nor disagree” option in response to the statement “the regional PSB is not necessary” (22.9% of respondents) can be interpreted as non-opposition to the regional PSB. From this perspective, the percentage of respondents in Andalusia who were not opposed to the regional PSB amounted to more than 63.3%. However, this figure was lower than the percentage of respondents in Catalonia (72.5%).

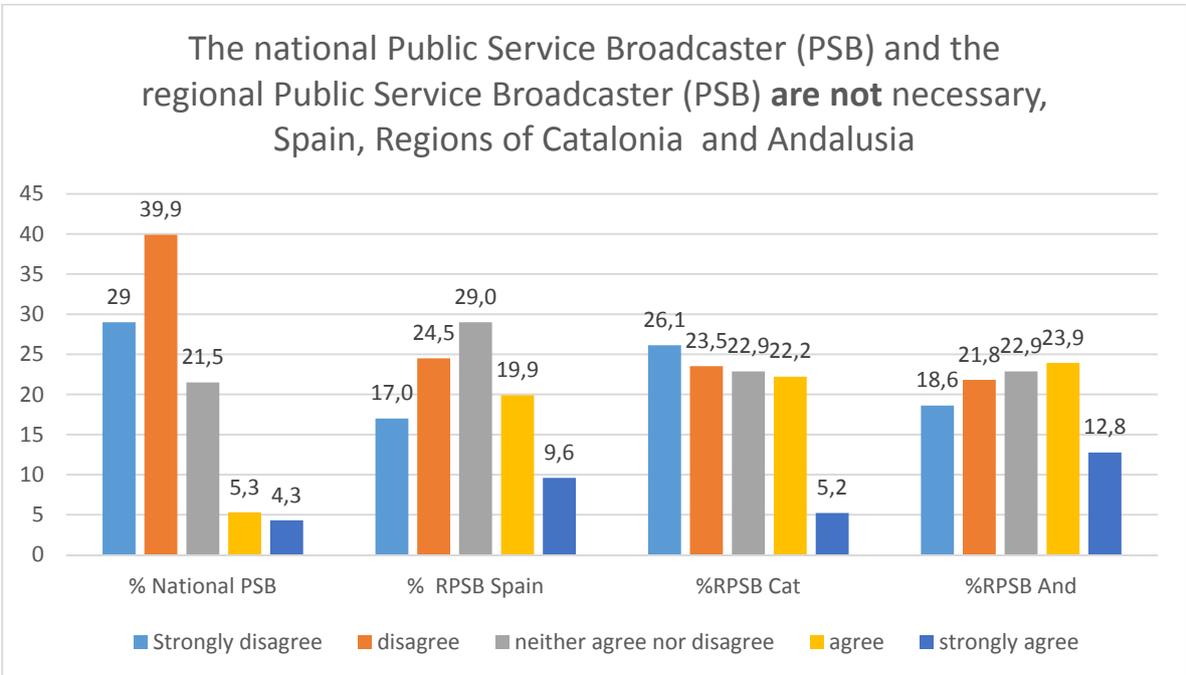


**Figure 26.** Comparison. Need for the regional public service broadcaster. Mean assessment of viewers from all regions compared to the assessment of viewers from Catalonia and Andalusia. Percentage.

After individual data for Catalonia and Andalusia were analysed and then compared with the mean of the assessment of the regional PSBs in each region, two findings stood out: the percentage of those who adamantly disagreed with the statement that the regional PSB was not necessary was significantly higher in Catalonia, and the percentage of “neither agree nor disagree” answers was notably lower in Catalonia

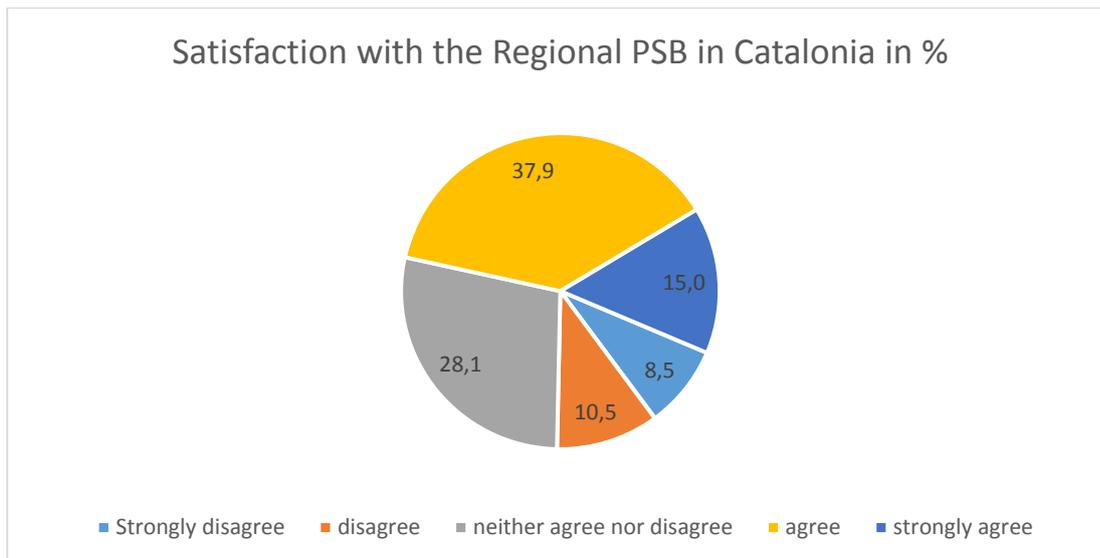
and Andalusia than in all the other regions. Furthermore, the results for Andalusia were surprising in that the percentage of respondents who adamantly agreed with the statement that the regional PSB was not necessary was much higher than in Catalonia and higher than the mean for the regions (12.8% in Andalusia, 5.2% in Catalonia and 9.6% in the regions).

However, when we compared these data to the responses about whether the national PSB was necessary, we observed that the percentage of respondents who considered it to be necessary was much higher (as much as 68.9%, of which 29% were adamant). At the same time, the percentage of respondents who said the national PSB was not necessary was very low (9.6%, of which 4.3% were adamant) compared to the percentages of respondents in Catalonia, Andalusia and the regions who said the regional PSB was not necessary.



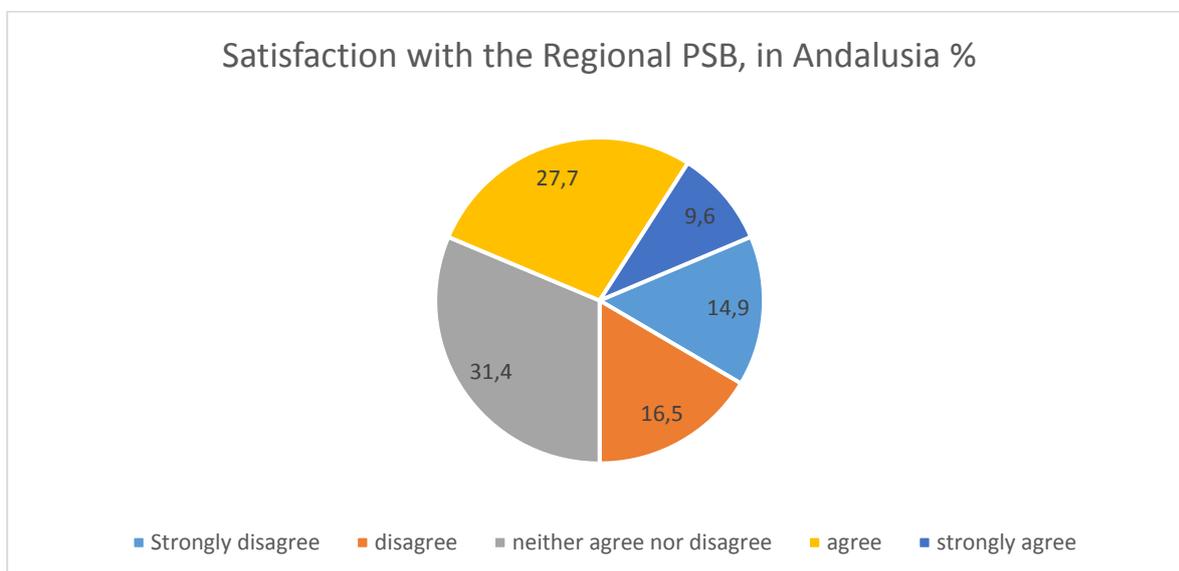
**Figure 27.** Comparison. Need for the regional public service broadcaster. Mean assessment of viewers from all regions of the need for the national PSB and the regional PSB compared to the assessment of viewers from Catalonia and Andalusia. Percentage.

In terms of satisfaction with the regional PSB service in Catalonia, slightly more than half of respondents (52.9%) said they were satisfied compared to one fifth who said they were not satisfied (19%). The number of respondents who chose the “neither agree nor disagree” option was too high (28.1%).



**Figure 28.** Satisfaction of viewers in Catalonia with the PSB of Catalonia. Percentage.

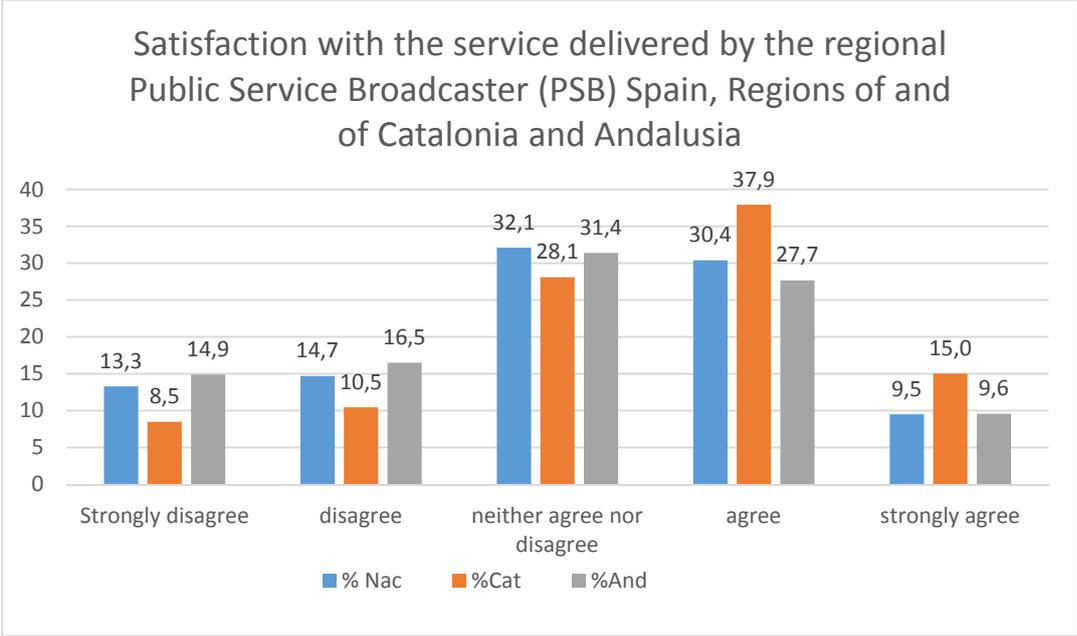
In Andalusia, 37.3% of respondents were satisfied with the regional PSB. This figure was very similar to the percentage who were not satisfied (31.4%). Significantly, 14.9% of those who were not satisfied adamantly disagreed with the survey statement (“strongly disagree”). Also of note was that the percentage of respondents who chose the “neither agree nor disagree” option (31.4%) was the same as the percentage of respondents who were not satisfied with the regional PSB.



**Figure 29.** Satisfaction of viewers in Andalusia with the PSB of Andalusia. Percentage.

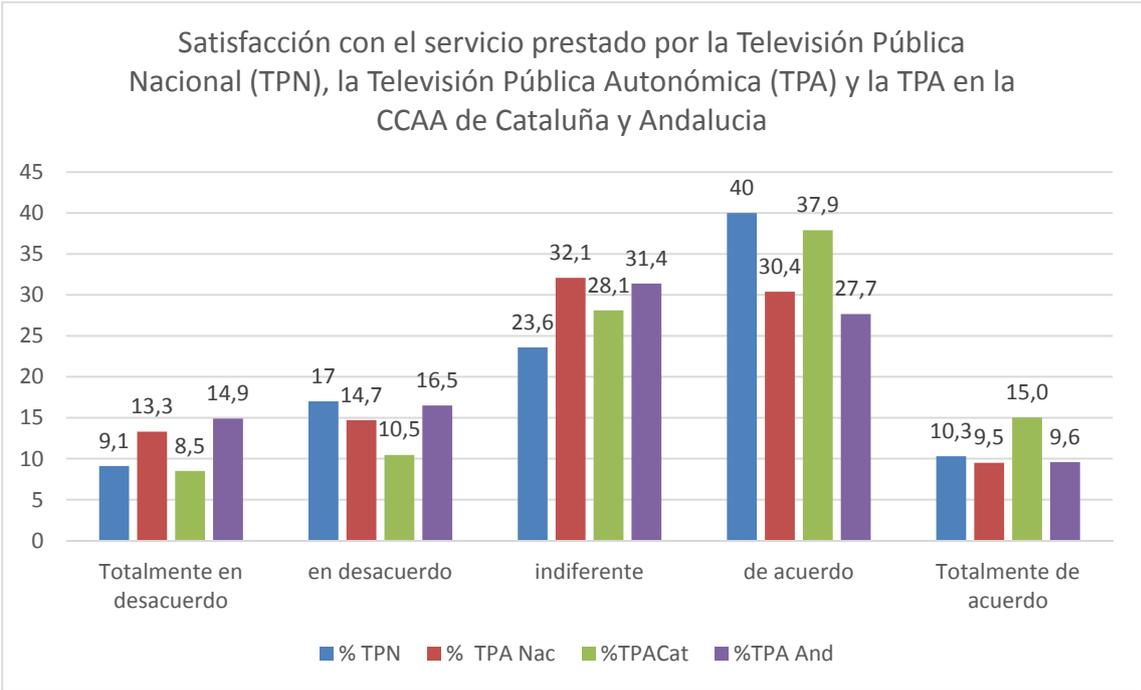
When the results on satisfaction in Catalonia and Andalusia were compared with those for the regions, two relevant facts emerged. First, many more respondents were satisfied with the regional PSB in Catalonia (up to 7.5 points higher) than were satisfied with the regional PSBs. Second, there was no difference between

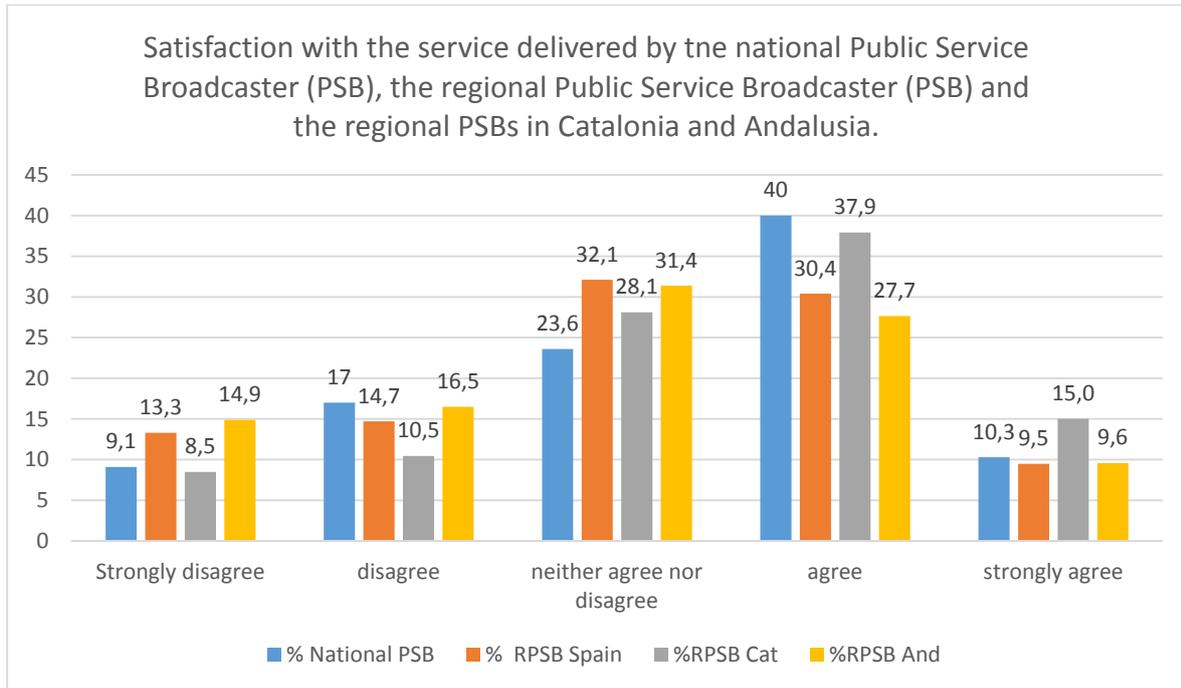
satisfaction with the regional PSB in Andalusia and satisfaction with the regional PSB in the other regions.



**Figure 30.** Comparison. Satisfaction of viewers with their regional Public Service Broadcaster compared to the satisfaction of the viewers of Catalonia and Andalusia with their regional Public Service Broadcasters. Percentage.

In the case of satisfaction, as with the concept of need, when the percentages of the national and regional PSBs were compared, the national PSB came out on top. A total of 50.9% of respondents said they were satisfied with the national PSB (RTVE) and, of that number, 10.3% were adamant.





**Figure 31.** Comparison. Satisfaction of viewers with the national Public Service Broadcaster and their regional Public Service Broadcaster compared to satisfaction of the viewers of Catalonia and Andalusia with their regional Public Service Broadcasters. Percentage.

The fact that responses about the need for and satisfaction with the regional PSB were so different in Catalonia and Andalusia, and that the results from the Andalusia survey were so similar to those of all the other regions would appear to indicate that having an audience or viewer ombudsman did not lead to an increase in satisfaction with the regional PSB. Although RTVE showed higher percentages than the regional PSBs in terms of the need for and satisfaction with the national PSB, it was also impossible to demonstrate that having an ombudsman was the cause or one of the causes of RTVE’s popularity. Given the fact that only three PSBs provide for civic participation through an ombudsman and that respondents in Catalonia and Andalusia provided such different answers, no sound estimates or conclusions could be drawn.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The majority of people considered independence to be one of the most important attributes of both the national and regional PSBs. More than half of respondents (53.9%) said that independence was more of a priority than impartiality, pluralism and neutrality, whereas slightly more than one fourth (26.4%) said they thought independence was important, but not as important as those other attributes.

2. Independence was mainly understood to mean independence from political parties in PSB governance (67 out of 100). But there was also considerable demand for editorial independence (66.2 out of 100), an attribute that is the result of independence from political parties in PSB governance. Respondents also said this independence should be financial (55.8 out of 100). This can be interpreted as a criticism of public funding of PSBs.

3. A considerable majority of respondents did not perceive the PSBs to be independent. Slightly more than half (51.1%) said that RTVE was not independent from political power and 54.1% said that the regional PSBs were not independent either. At the same time, one fourth (25%) said the opposite about RTVE and slightly fewer than one fourth (22.3%) said the opposite about the regional PSB.

4. It was not possible to demonstrate a real correlation between the PSB's positive reputation and civic participation in PSB governance and the use of existing civic participation channels.

However, the chance to participate was valued very highly. More than half of all respondents (56.6%) felt that increased civic participation would also mean greater independence of PSB governance. This interest in participation did not arise from a tradition of the PSBs or any advertising they have done, but from factors unrelated to the development of Spanish PSBs. One of these factors is the growing democratic demand for greater civic participation in all areas of politics.

5. Participation by being a follower of the PSB's Facebook and Twitter social media accounts was very limited. A considerable majority of respondents said they were not followers of any of the PSBs' institutional accounts or the accounts for specific programmes on Facebook (71% in the case of RTVE and 76.8% in the case of the regional PSBs). About one fourth of respondents said they were followers of RTVE's Facebook account (24.6%) while fewer respondents (17.4%) said they were followers of the regional PSB's Facebook account.

Twitter had even fewer followers. RTVE was followed on Twitter by 17.3% of viewers, whereas regional PSBs were followed by only 14% of viewers.

6. Although the satisfaction of users with public service broadcasters was initially considered a contextual aspect of the study, when user satisfaction was viewed in relation to the concepts of independence and participation, some relevant results were found. The majority of respondents (50.3%) said they were satisfied with the national Public Service Broadcaster, whereas satisfaction with the regional Public Service Broadcaster dropped to 39.9%. However, there was no clear pattern among the regions, given that satisfaction among users of the regional PSB of Catalonia was 52.9%.

There is a clear need to monitor and do advanced research on the public broadcasting service and socio-economic context in Spain. It is necessary to analyse the different hypotheses and variables in this study as part of the more extensive task of analysing and interpreting the challenges and opportunities this public service will face in the coming years. These challenges and uncertainties include changes in viewer use and consumer habits in response to the different platforms and media available, the need to ensure PSBs are more politically and financially independent, and that they provide better channels for participation, and the evolution of the real usefulness of the PSB as perceived by the different target age groups. All these challenges and uncertainties present opportunities for but also threats to the creation of a sound public broadcasting service, which is so necessary to guarantee our society's audiovisual and democratic health. We hope this study helps clarify the situation of PSBs and provides guidance for lawmakers and public administrators, as well as those doing media research. We will continue doing our research.

**Anexo:** Qualtrix survey questions

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