



# Monitoring Mediascapes

A Premise of Wisdom-Based  
EU Media Governance

Editors Epp Lauk, Martín Oller Alonso  
& Halliki Harro-Loit

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## **Monitoring Mediascapes. A Premise of Wisdom-Based EU Media Governance**

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# LISTS

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## Abbreviations

**BD** – Bibliographic database

**CMM** – Capability of media monitoring

**CS** – Case study

**DIKW** – Data–information–knowledge–wisdom hierarchy/pyramid

**JMC** – Journalism, media and communication

**MIL** – Media and information literacy

**MM** – Monitoring mediascapes

**MRC** – Media related competencies

**MUP** – Media use patterns

**R&D** – Research and development

**ROs** – Risks and opportunities

**WJS** – Worlds of Journalism Study

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## Data availability statements

The Tables 1–3 and Figures 8–10 use the data from open sources, such as:

Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/home>

European Social Survey: <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

Human Development Index: <https://hdr.undp.org/>

Worldometer: <https://www.worldometers.info/>

OECD Library: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/>

Reuters Institute Digital News Reports: <https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>

The statistical data that support this study are openly available in DataDOI at <https://doi.org/10.23673/re-385> as a bibliographic database called: *Bibliographical data of media and journalism research related to risks and opportunities for deliberative communication in 14 countries (in 2000–2020): Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Sweden.*

The data used in the single country descriptions is available in the country-specific databases:

|          |                                                                               |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Austria  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-381">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-381</a> |
| Bulgaria | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-382">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-382</a> |
| Croatia  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-383">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-383</a> |
| Czechia  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-384">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-384</a> |
| Estonia  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-386">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-386</a> |
| Germany  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-387">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-387</a> |
| Greece   | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-388">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-388</a> |
| Hungary  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-389">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-389</a> |
| Italy    | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-390">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-390</a> |
| Latvia   | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-391">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-391</a> |
| Poland   | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-392">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-392</a> |
| Romania  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-393">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-393</a> |
| Slovakia | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-394">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-394</a> |
| Sweden   | <a href="https://doi.org/10.23673/re-395">https://doi.org/10.23673/re-395</a> |

The relevant information for examining the 14 EU countries in this book is openly available in the country reports (called Case Studies) listed below by authors. The links to the texts have been added.

Avădani, I. (2022)

**ROMANIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**

<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0017>

Berglez, P., Nord, L. & Ots, M. (2022)

**SWEDEN. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**

<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0019>

Eberwein, T., Krakovsky, C. & Oggolder, C. (2022)

**AUSTRIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities**

<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius006>

Gálik, S., Vrabec, N., Gáliková Tolnaiová, S., Čábyová, L., Pravdová, H., Hudíková, Z., Višňovský, J., Mináriková, J., Radošinská, J., Švecová, M., Krajčovič, P. & Brník, A. (2022)

**SLOVAKIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**

<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0018>

Głowacki, M., Gajlewicz-Korab, K., Mikucki, J., Szurmiński, Ł. & Łoszevska-Ołowska, M. (2022)

**POLAND. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**

<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0016>

Harro-Loit, H., Lauk, E., Kõuts, R., Parder, M.-L. & Loit, U. (2022)

**ESTONIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**

<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0010>

- Kreutler, M. & Fengler, S. (2022)  
**GERMANY. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0011>
- Peruško, Z. & Vozab, D. (2022)  
**CROATIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius008>
- Polyák, G., Urbán, Á. & Szávai, P. (2022)  
**HUNGARY. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0013>
- Psychogiopoulou, E. & Kandyla, A. (2022)  
**GREECE. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0012>
- Raycheva, L., Zankova, B., Miteva, N., Velinova, N. & Metanova, L. (2022)  
**BULGARIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius007>
- Rožukalne, A., Skulte, I. & Stakle, A. (2022)  
**LATVIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0015>
- Splendore, S., Garusi, D. & Oller Alonso, M. (2022)  
**ITALY. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0014>
- Waschková Čísařová, L., Jansová, I. & Motal, J. (2022)  
**CZECHIA. Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities.**  
<https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius009>



Scientific monitoring is going to be terrifically important, because whatever steps we take ... we will have to monitor those steps in order to know if they're actually working.

**Naomi Oreskes**  
From *azquotes.com*

Naomi Oreskes (1958-) is Professor of the History of Science and Affiliated Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Harvard University. A world-renowned geologist, historian and public speaker, she is a leading voice on the role of science in society and the reality of anthropogenic climate change (*eps.harvard.edu*).

# 1

## Capability of monitoring mediascapes in 14 European countries

### AN INTRODUCTION

Epp Lauk & Martín Oller Alonso

#### WHY IS MONITORING MEDIASCAPES WORTH THE EFFORT?

This book focuses on the capability of different European countries to collect relevant data, carry out research and analysis and finally assess the risks and opportunities associated with media development in terms of the societies' potential for deliberative communication.

The strengthening of ultra-right and populist political forces in Europe, and events like Brexit and Russia's aggression in Ukraine, demonstrate that the unity of European nations and their common goals and values are not self-evident. These developments sound alarm bells about the vulnerability and risks relating to informed decision making in contemporary democratic societies. The European Democracy Action Plan<sup>1</sup> emphasises the need to strengthen European democracy by "1) promoting free and fair elections, 2) strengthening media freedom and 3) countering disinformation". These aims would be achieved by "preserving open democratic debate", and empowering citizens "through education and increased media literacy" in addition to various regulatory and technological means. These tasks presuppose the existence of favourable conditions for deliberation in the public space and raising deliberative communication to become the focal point. In the current study, deliberative communication (see Chapter 2 for the concept) is perceived as a precondition for successful deliberative democracy, where collective decisions are made as results of public discussion in which citizens can participate on equal terms and for which they are provided with trustworthy infor-

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<sup>1</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/european-democracy-action-plan_en)

mation. In this way, deliberative communication functions as an intrinsic component of democratic decision making processes.

As most people receive their information about societal activity from the media, their ability to function well in true deliberative processes largely depends on the kinds of media they use, the type and quality of the content the media offer, and the excellence of their performance. For the electorate, possessing reliable information is vital for resultative argumentation and discussion, and informed choices. Regardless of rapid ICT development and the emergence of efficient and novel ways of information gathering and distribution, quality journalism has remained the most reliable information producer. Quality journalism appears in the news media, both offline and online, and therefore it is important to examine the health and resources of the news media regularly to reveal developments that generate potential risks for successful deliberative communication. Furthermore, systematic collection, analysis and application of adequate knowledge to withstand these risks (or to convert them into opportunities) will, in the long run, improve the conditions for the development of deliberative democracy.

However, media developments, especially rapid transformations – structural and technological – accompanying political and economic changes in societies, inevitably challenge deliberative ideals. Here, a question arises: What factors and in which configurations induce either or both risks and opportunities (ROs) for deliberative communication? This is a question about the quality, sufficiency and limits of the existing knowledge necessary to identify and explain specific RO factors that influence the implementation of deliberative communication. If this knowledge is acquired from existing research on news media transformations, the scope and quality of the publications, reports and interpretations of the gathered data reflect the capability of monitoring mediascapes (CMM) of any country. Hence, a direct relationship exists between identifying ROs for deliberative communication and assessing the CMM of European countries. We characterise the core concept of the CMM as the capacity (resources, motivations, expertise) of the relevant agents to observe and analyse the evolution or transformations of news media that trigger societal changes, subsequently producing risks and opportunities (ROs) for deliberative communication. This book demonstrates that the CMM could be considered a key factor for understanding how media transformations create risks and opportunities for deliberative communication. The book *Monitoring Mediascapes* presents the research process and results of the first stage of the *Mediadelcom* project, which assesses the developments of the CMM (see Chapter 2 for the definition) through the critical analysis of both the quantity and quality of the existing research and data in 14 EU countries during the 2000–2020 period. The term ‘mediascapes’ in this study encompasses not only media content, its providers and distributors (media industry structures, journalists, other media professionals, etc.), but also the consumers of this content, their media competency and the ways in which they use media.

## WHAT IS MEDIADELCOM?

Mediadelcom is an acronym for the Critical Exploration of Media Related Risks and Opportunities for Deliberative Communication: Development Scenarios of the European Media Landscape<sup>2</sup> EU-funded research project, lasting from February 2021 to February 2024. The coordinator of the project is the University of Tartu, Estonia. The consortium consists of teams of scholars from 14 EU countries: five from 'old Europe' (Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy and Sweden), and nine 'newcomers' from Central and Eastern Europe, joining the EU in 2004 or later (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) (see Table 1 in Appendix).

The leading argument of the Mediadelcom project is that political and cultural spaces evolve best if specific policies enhance the conditions for deliberative communication. The overall objective of the Mediadelcom project is to identify configurations of risks and opportunities (ROs) for deliberative communication arising from the transformations that the news media in European countries have undergone in the 21st century. Comparison of these configurations enables the project team in the next stage of the project to outline the scenarios of how the news media would enhance or obstruct the evolution of deliberative communication in Europe.

A sizable literature review on the approaches and topics in journalism, media and communication (JMC) and related fields of research was conducted to identify areas of risk discourse. These discourses usually appeared in connection with information disorder or fake news, business models of news, the precariousness of journalism labour, decreasing autonomy and media freedom, low levels of media literacy, echo chambers and increasing platform monopolies, just to name a few. Based on identified risk discourses, four domains of research were defined to guide monitoring: journalism, the legal and ethical regulation of news media, media usage patterns, and media-related competencies. A system of categories was worked out for monitoring and analysis. In the context of Mediadelcom, journalism, media and communication studies (JMC) as the object of research is defined (and limited) by two aspects. First, JMC embraces the studies in the four mentioned domains. The second aspect is the researcher's identity, seen through involvement in national and international associations and conferences according to the researcher's self-identification with a discipline (journalism, communications, etc.). This is mainly relevant when the estimate of the number of researchers in a country is in question.

The Mediadelcom project argues that a good media policy is a precondition for the progress of deliberative democracy. This book introduces the idea of wis-

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<sup>2</sup> Grant Agreement No 101004811.



dom-based media governance (see Chapter 9 and Conclusions) as a premise for developing favourable conditions for efficient deliberative communication. The main difference for Mediadecom between media policy and governance is that the latter focuses on collective coordination. The notion of governance depicts networks of public, private and civil society actors operating on a mainly consensual basis.

European policy visions depict evidence-based policy as dynamic and complex actions involving all relevant stakeholders (van Woensel, 2021), but often overlook the practical implementation of decisions. As Durrant et al. (2023) demonstrate, instead of focusing on implementation, there is a unidirectional “push” to get research findings accepted as “knowledge products” in policy and practice spheres (termed “research dissemination”). Durrant and colleagues advocate a more sophisticated “knowledge mobilisation” approach, emphasising relational interactions (including interaction between actors), the integration of diverse knowledge forms and adaptability to local contexts. Mediadecom suggests that wisdom-based media governance is an approach that takes evidence into consideration as well as dialogue and co-operation between stakeholders as agents.

This kind of media governance presumes an agreement on which questions need to be asked to create awareness of the impact of change in both the media and in society's communication culture. Therefore, a strong capability of monitoring mediascapes (CMM) is a vital precondition for facilitating good media policy. The CMM starts with the question: What is known and what is not known about news media transformations in European societies? To answer this question, four essential issues need to be clarified: (1) How have freedoms of information and of speech been implemented? (2) How have professional journalism and journalists changed? (3) How do people use news media? (4) How have media competencies developed across segments of society? The *Monitoring Mediascapes* research task examines how JMC research in 14 EU countries has responded to these questions. The empirical basis for this book comes from 14 country reports (Case Study 1) that identified and analysed main information and knowledge sources (scholarly publications, projects, reports, etc.), monitoring actors, national databases and scholarly journals in the four domains (journalism, legal and ethical regulation, media usage patterns, and media related competencies), as well as funding systems of JMC research. An important task of the country reports was to identify the information and knowledge gaps.

## WHAT ARE THE NOVELTIES OF MEDIADECOM AND THE BOOK?

The study carried out by the Mediadecom project is unique in many respects. CMM as a concept is empirically tested for the first time and consolidated for future research efforts. The CMM in 14 countries is examined from the point of

view of sufficiency and quality of data and knowledge on the media systems applying a holistic approach, which discloses various factors and their combinations that influence each country's monitoring capacity. The book diachronically analyses the institutionalisation and the disciplinary development of the field of JMC research in 14 countries (see Chapter 4), showing how important the length and continuity of research tradition are for successful CMM. Also, recognition of the JMC as an independent discipline raises its status and chances for securing research funding. Further, various configurations of structural conditions (institutionalisation, funding, technological and legal frameworks; see Chapter 9) determine the efficiency of the CMM.

Agent-oriented analysis (see Chapter 3 and 9) is employed to assess the activities of various agents (politicians, media professionals, media researchers, educators, regulators, etc.). The quality of both research and monitoring clearly depends on the agency of human resources, i.e. on the competencies, qualifications and motivation of researchers, primarily academics. Our study emphasises the agency aspect, which has, so far, remained an almost neglected area in JMC research.

The Mediadecom team adapted the DIKW pyramid which defines the differences between and hierarchy of data, information, knowledge and wisdom, and enables researchers to assess the quality and usefulness of studies available for monitoring purposes and also to identify the ROs for developing a wisdom-based media policy, as suggested by the project (see Chapter 2).

An important concept elaborated in the current study is monitoring governance concerning coordination mechanisms, cooperation and networking between the various agents (researchers, institutions, etc.) involved in monitoring (see Chapters 2 and 9).

As English has largely become the dominant lingua franca of academic publishing and interaction, knowledge produced in English-speaking countries finds its way to international forums much more easily than knowledge coming from other languages, especially those of small countries. The transnational character of Mediadecom is one of the project's peculiarities: in addition to international sources, the data and information used comes from a vast number of national language sources. In the Mediadecom country reports<sup>3</sup>, and in this book, knowledge based on sources in languages other than English becomes available internationally. The transnational framework of the project once again demonstrates the importance of including in the consortiums of large research projects

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<sup>3</sup> All 28 country reports are available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10062/89296> (for the 14 Case Studies on National Research and Monitoring Capabilities 2000–2020) and <http://hdl.handle.net/10062/89316> (for the 14 Country Case Studies on Critical Junctures in the Media Transformation Process in Four Domains of Potential Risks and Opportunities 2000–2020).

those (peripheral) countries which individually are unable to carry out such large-scale studies.

A central proposition of this book is that contemporary democratic societies ought to cultivate a culture of deliberative communication through the implementation of wisdom-based media governance (see Chapter 9). In a mediatised society, wisdom-based media governance presupposes a meticulous monitoring of mediascapes because, as it stands, there is no comprehensive overview available of the capability of monitoring mediascapes across Europe. Building on the results of the Mediadelcom research, we propose that proactive media governance would frame the reactive media policies that inevitably accompany a crisis. A proactive media governance requires the establishment of a media monitoring system in EU member states to detect emerging risks and to analyse continuously the resilience of society's communication culture. The core objective of wisdom-based media governance is the transformation of disparate and clustered information into distinct knowledge and wisdom. It transcends merely providing information to experts, leveraging knowledge to benefit governments, journalists, researchers, stakeholders and the public. The analysis of the CMM helps to identify the risks resulting from media transformations, and the conditions for the opportunities to mitigate these risks. The purpose of the CMM is to continuously renew the research agenda and to review the efficiency of monitoring methodologies to ensure that they give a valid picture of the changes in mediascapes and the potential risks. In this way, a robust capability of monitoring mediascapes serves as the foundation for the development of effective media policies.

## MEDIADELCOM CHALLENGES

The Mediadelcom project involves 14 of the 27 EU member countries – large and small, wealthy and less wealthy, and with dissimilar democratic frameworks and media cultures. It is a theoretically and methodologically challenging task to compare 14 countries against any criterion, let alone the capability of monitoring their mediascapes. Regardless, this is the ambition of the current book. Among the selected countries, there are those with better conditions for monitoring research and media development, such as Germany, Austria and Sweden, which all have more opportunities than risks relating to their CMM and deliberative communication and can be viewed as 'best practice' cases. However, bearing in mind the quality of democracy, our study is biased towards identifying and analysing risks both for the capability of monitoring the media, as well as the conditions for deliberative communication.

Another challenge appears when comparing the countries. How, for example, to compare Germany (with its 16 federal states) and Estonia? The former is immeasurably larger than the latter in many respects (e.g., the population of Estonia, 1.35 million, is less than that of Munich, Germany's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city). When making

such a comparison the importance of contextual factors appears clearly. Consequently, in the course of our research exercise, clear-cut country groups did not take shape because each country could appear in several groups.

In many countries there are significant gaps in data collection and availability, which undermines the possibility to detect ROs at the national level. There is insufficiency of relevant data, information and scholarly interest on numerous important aspects of journalism and media and communication (JMC), which makes an assessment of the monitoring capability of some countries difficult.

A general observation is that comprehensive data on the democratic roles of news media — crucial for deliberative communication discourse — are often less routinely produced compared to basic statistics on media reach and ratings, which are easier to interpret and have an immediate use for marketing purposes. Although the body of existing information and knowledge about media transformations has expanded rapidly, especially during the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this knowledge is fragmented and dispersed (Kraidy, 2018; Mihelj & Staney, 2019). Moreover, many research findings are primarily circulated in national languages, notably in the ‘third wave’ European democracies (Štetka, 2015). None of the existing studies has asked whether or how media research has been affected by national research policies and higher education systems, or how countries have funded and used media research. No research yet exists that would summarise the results of hitherto national and cross-national studies on the media and news ecosystems from the perspective of ROs for deliberative communication. Mediadelcom endeavours to help alleviate these knowledge gaps by mapping and analysing relevant research and information sources in the 14 countries under investigation within the 2000–2020 time frame.

## WHAT DOES THE MEDIADELCOM PROJECT NOT DO?

When reading this book, it is good to keep in mind that the Mediadelcom project does not aim to measure the extent to which single countries fulfil ideal preconditions for deliberative communication, nor does it analyse or compare the status of deliberative democracy in EU countries. The task, instead, is to detect and examine media related ROs for conditions and values inherent to deliberative communication. The project serves as a raster for holistic analysis rather than as a normative goal.

The monitoring is representative only for the defined four (traditional) domains of the JMC, where deliberative communication primarily takes place, with the temporal limit of the initial two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see Mediadelcom Bibliographical database<sup>4</sup>). This leaves out several JMC research areas in their broader meaning, such as social media and platformisation, policies and practices

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<sup>4</sup> <https://datadoi.ee/handle/33/515>

of media entrepreneurship, convergence developments of the media industry with other branches of entrepreneurship, digital culture, media innovation policies and practices and many other new fields. The EU's media policy and respective documents are represented in the country reports to the extent that they influence the ROs related to research and monitoring in member states. Although one of the main ideas resulting from the study is the concept of 'wisdom-based media governance', the project does not delve into an analysis of the EU's media policy, which could be the topic of another research project. The above statements and explanations can be seen as the limitations of the Mediadelcom study. On the other hand, this study can also be viewed as an attempt to bring a new perspective to JMC research and perhaps also the beginning of an additional direction in JMC studies.

## CONTENT AND CHAPTER SYNOPSES

As previously mentioned, this book focuses on the capability of 14 European countries to collect relevant data, carry out research and analysis and finally assess the risks and opportunities associated with media development in terms of the societies' potential for deliberative communication. The empirical analysis is based on the results of the Mediadelcom project. We explained in the previous section why media monitoring can enhance the conditions for deliberative communication – a precondition of deliberative democracy.

The book takes a critical approach to research policy related to the four domains, consistency of data collection, and data overproduction, knowledge formulation and knowledge usage in media policy formulation. The book aims to show whether poor data, lack of data, restriction of access to relevant data sources and finally lack of knowledge of the media create risks for a good information and communication environment for deliberative communication. In addition, the traditions and development of media research, the financing of research projects and the competitiveness of media researchers internationally and nationally are discussed. The book raises several important questions: For what purpose is data collected, for example, in the interests of advertising sales or also in the interests of society? Are the data collected by public authorities or private companies? What kind of data are collected systematically and allow research studies to assess the dynamics of change? Where are the gaps in data, information and knowledge?

Spread across eight chapters, of which Chapter 1 is the Introduction, the book addresses these fundamental questions at various levels. The book includes a theoretical analysis (Chapter 2), a methodological exploration (Chapter 3), a diachronic review (Chapter 4) and empirical examination of the four domains (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8). After presentation and discussion of the results, the Con-

clusion to Chapter 9 suggests broadening the extant media policies from evidence-based to wisdom-based.

Chapter 2, “Monitoring mediascapes: Key concepts and basic variables” co-written by Halliki Harro-Loit, Tobias Eberwein and Lars Nord, embarks on a journey to explore prerequisites and core values such as transparency, trust and truth, which underpin deliberative communication in our media-saturated societies. The chapter is centred on an exhaustive review of literature related to these critical aspects. Moreover, the authors introduce a model of awareness that considers the evolution of deliberative communication within the societal context. This model emphasises the prerequisites and values that constitute the normative framework for media monitoring. Furthermore, it involves a critical reassessment of existing data and knowledge associated with monitoring.

Chapter 3, “Mediadelcom’s approach and the methodology”, authored by Martín Oller Alonso, Halliki Harro-Loit and Epp Lauk introduces a novel method of diachronic and comparative qualitative meta-analysis for researching ROs for deliberative communication. Why? Because one of the core objectives of the Mediadelcom consortium’s work is to devise a diagnostic tool that serves as a multi-scenario construction model. The proposed method provides an assessment of the risks and opportunities linked to media monitoring and the degree of research focused on deliberative communication within the European Union. This methodological approach fosters the continuous creation of knowledge, wisdom and scientific understanding on a European scale.

Chapter 4, “A Diachronic Perspective on the Evolution of Monitoring Capabilities in 14 European Countries”, composed by Epp Lauk, Martín Oller Alonso, Zrinjka Peruško, Tobias Eberwein and Christian Oggolder, endeavours to explore the monitoring capabilities of 14 EU countries by delving into the evolution of the field of JMC, the institutionalisation of the discipline, and the funding and governance of the research activities in these countries. Using diachronic approach, the chapter points out some universal trends in the capability of monitoring mediascapes, as well as the uniqueness of each country.

Chapter 5, “Monitoring legal regulation and media accountability systems” by Marcus Kreutler, Evangelia Psychogiopoulou, Michał Głowacki, Anna Kandyla, Jacek Mikucki, Gábor Polyák, Petra Szávai and Ágnes Urbán, adopts a dual-perspective strategy of the law and accountability. The chapter starts by examining monitoring capabilities within the legal and accountability subdomains. The chapter then merges the perspectives to contrast the situation across the 14 countries scrutinised by Mediadelcom. This methodology underscores the linkages between law (regulation) and accountability systems, enabling an exhaustive analysis of monitoring abilities in each subdomain. Ultimately, scrutinising the monitoring of legal and ethical regulation is paramount for understanding the current state of the freedoms of expression and information, the accountability structures in place, and the prospective risks and opportunities.

Chapter 6, “Journalism: Collaboration is the key to monitoring”, developed by Lenka Waschková Čísařová, Sergio Splendore, Martín Oller Alonso, Iveta Jansová, Jan Motal, Peter Berglez, Lars Nord, Christina Krakovsky and Nadezhda Miteva, embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the domain of journalism from 2000 to 2020. Over the span of the two decades, the authors bring into focus both commonalities and disparities in the data available across the 14 countries. The co-authors investigate multiple facets of journalism, which encompass the conditions of: the market, production, public service media, working and organisational as well as professional culture and journalistic competencies.

Chapter 7, “Assessing media usage research from the perspective of access, trust and news consumption”, written by Ragne Kõuts-Klemm, Lilia Raycheva, Alnis Stakle, Iveta Jansová, Mart Ots and Neli Velinova, examines the research on patterns of media usage, as it can shed light on the risks associated with the media’s deliberative role within specific societies. These risks could stem from a lack of access to relevant content, the poor quality of media provision and manifest low trust in media, a diminished interest in communal matters or inadequate skills to use and evaluate media content. To assess the risks and opportunities arising from the monitoring of audiences’ media usage (or the absence thereof), the authors focus on three key indicators: access to media, relevance of news media and trust in the media. The competency of audiences in media usage, another factor significant to participation in deliberative communication, will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 8, “Monitoring media users’ competencies”, is composed by Slavomir Gálik, Norbert Vrabc, Ioana Avadani, Anda Rožukalne, Ilva Skulte, Alnis Stakle, Filip Trbojević, Peter Krajčovič and Lora Metanova. The chapter departs from the presumption that how people understand and evaluate media content depends on their media-related competencies. Thus, the concept employed to examine user competencies derives from interaction between media and users. The authors examine studies of institutional, strategic and legislative contexts of media-related competencies, users’ cognitive abilities (rational argumentation, knowledge and understanding of communication contexts, etc.), digital and technological skills, data protection skills, etc. Finally, risks and opportunities for monitoring and studying user competencies are identified.

Chapter 9, “Risks to the capability of monitoring mediascapes across Europe”, authored by Halliki Harro-Loit, compares the 14 investigated countries according to risk level – low, medium, high – estimated on the basis of configurations of conceptual and operational variables (as defined in Chapters 2 and 3). Lastly, the chapter examines the risks and opportunities tied to monitoring capability and the utilisation of knowledge to foster the growth of deliberative communication.

## Note

The book has a minor deviation from the strict academic convention of referencing. The purpose of the 14 country reports (Case Study 1) was to serve as the main, holistic material for the comparisons of countries in the chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. As each of the 5 chapters (4–8) consists up to 10 subsections and each paragraph in every subsection had multiple Case Study citations the risk was that the texts of chapters 4–8 would be oversaturated with Case Study citations. So, the chapters are not only based on country reports but also use excerpts from these texts without explicitly referencing them as sources. All other, non-Case Study sources are referenced in the usual way.

For presenting the authorship and accessibility of the Case Studies, we have added a list of the country reports in alphabetic order together with the names of the authors and the links to the texts (see p. ix).

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## Monitoring mediascapes: Key concepts and basic variables

Halliki Harro-Loit, Tobias Eberwein, Lars Nord

In an age of information-saturated societies, deliberative communication is an essential precondition for democratic processes and, ultimately, safeguarding social cohesion. However, a few current and emerging trends are endangering the evolvement of deliberative communication. These include economic and political challenges (such as the recent upsurge of ultra-right movements in various European democracies) as well as technological trends that facilitate the diffusion of misinformation and hate speech online. Under such circumstances, it becomes increasingly important to monitor effectively processes of deliberative communication and provide early warning about dangerous developments. One principal aim of the Mediadecom project is to contribute to the realisation of these tasks, thus not only pointing the way forward for socially relevant research initiatives in the field of media and communication, but also to advance the sound development of democratic societies in general.

In the introduction to this anthology, we explained why media monitoring can improve conditions for deliberative communication. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the concept of media monitoring capabilities and to examine the relationship between media monitoring and deliberative communication. The largely theoretical reflections presented in the subsequent chapters of this book will offer a framework for a detailed comparative analysis of media monitoring in the Mediadecom countries.

The primary purpose of any monitoring initiative is to analyse and evaluate developments and changes in the field under investigation, using the indicators derived from the theory. In this sense, monitoring encompasses the collection of relevant data, the processing and storing of this data, its evaluation and the production of documentation in the form of reports or articles. The scope, duration and frequency of monitoring and reporting are determined by the aims of moni-

toring as well as by the available resources (funding, time, competencies, etc.), access to data and the methods and tools that can be allocated to monitoring (Woźniak, 2022). Ideally, reports and other outputs should be passed on to decision making agents, as this enables them to suggest a practical application of the monitoring.

But what is necessary to carry out a monitoring initiative for the purpose of observing deliberative communication effectively? What specific variables need to be considered? What possible challenges must be overcome? To answer these and other relevant questions, a systematic approximation of the concept of media monitoring in the context of deliberative communication is required. This chapter examines the necessary theoretical background for such an undertaking, providing a brief introduction to the concept of deliberative communication, and an overview of previous monitoring projects in the field of media and journalism research. We also explain our understanding of the capability of monitoring risks and opportunities (ROs) emerging from the news media transformation and respective research, as defined by Mediadelcom. The main part of the chapter discusses the assorted variables related to media monitoring capabilities that are explored in further detail in the following chapters of this book. The concluding paragraphs summarise our theoretical premises regarding the monitoring of ROs for deliberative communication and make a connection with the subsequent empirical study.

## DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION

Historically, the idea of deliberation and its possible benefits for societies has been regularly addressed in political philosophy and political science (see also Nord & Harro-Loit, 2022). Liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill refers to the idea of ‘government by discussion’, where different opinions are expressed on equal terms and consensus is sought through rational argumentation. Political thinker Robert A. Dahl associated the deliberative ideal with ‘enlightened understanding’, underlining the importance of the exchanging of views among citizens for increased public knowledge of what is going on in society. Finally, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas is a central figure in contemporary thinking about deliberation as a form of communicative action, arguing that democracy revolves more around transformation than the aggregation of preferences (Elster, 1998; Habermas, 1987; 2023).

More recent academic writing on deliberation demonstrates a rapidly growing field among social sciences, at least when deliberation is discussed in contexts of democratic processes. One of the most important publications in this area of research, *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, provides a concise and general definition in its introduction, according to which deliberation can be understood as: “Mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting on

preferences, values and interests regarding matters of common concern” (Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 2).

The introductory chapter to *The Oxford Handbook* includes a systematic summary of how both thinking about deliberative ideals has developed and how standards for good deliberation have evolved over time (Bächtiger et al., 2018). The authors argue that the concepts of mutual respect and absence of power as core standards of deliberation have remained unchallenged in relevant analyses, while other standards have gradually become more contested.

Some key reflections can be made based on the definitions discussed above. Firstly, deliberation obviously requires communicative interaction between people involved in the process, or endogenous changes of preference resulting from this mutual communication (Przeworski, 1998). Non-mutual communication is exemplified by one-sided information, campaigns and propaganda, while the forms of personal communication – such as talking, public conversations and dialogues on various platforms – meet the standard.

Secondly, deliberation as described here is built upon the principle of weighing and reflecting on preferences, values and interests. To reach the standard of deliberative communication, participants in a dialogue need to be committed to well-established deliberative attitudes based on values of rationality and impartiality, while guided by non-strategic motives. Implicitly, such conditions also call for one or all of the following to be absent from communication: self-interest and interest group pressures, selective attention, inadequate information.

Thirdly, as Oliver Escobar (2011) points out, the quality of public communication is essential, but often overlooked:

Communication is so central to our lives that we take it for granted. Some assume that if we manage to get the ‘right people’ in the room, meaningful dialogue will simply happen. Obviously, that is not necessarily the case, especially when a process is truly inclusive and brings together a range of perspectives. (p. 12)

Escobar also argues that society should not be afraid of conflict, but be cautious of confrontation, polarisation, oversimplification, avoidance, exchanging monologues and pre-packed arguments.

It is important to note that most of the literature on deliberation is, to a large extent, closely linked to the model of deliberative democracy. Explicit reference to the concept of ‘deliberative communication’ is relatively rare in both media and communication studies as well as in political science. When communication is addressed in a deliberative context in academic work, it is usually done as part of an overarching reflection on deliberative democracy. A possible distinction between deliberative communication and deliberative democracy is that the latter has a close relationship to forms of democratic decision-making, while the former does not pre-suppose such closeness (Englund, 2006).

The distinction between the two concepts also emerges from the many analytical levels of deliberation. Deliberative communication can take place on various levels in many forms. On either the supra or macro level, deliberative democracy is defined as a model of democracy in which collective decisions are made after arguments have been weighed through public discussion, with no barriers to citizens' participation on equal terms. Deliberative communication can also take place on other levels. On the meso-level, deliberation can occur in more specific forms such as round tables, plenaries or meetings where a group of citizens deals with a specific issue. Such forums provide space for open and free discussion, while encouraging the emergence of possible solutions (for example, in so-called 'deliberative polls'). On the micro level, less organised and spontaneous deliberative communication can take place whenever several people meet to discuss an issue in accordance with the principles described above.

In this study of media monitoring capabilities, deliberation is approached from a more pragmatic perspective. Deliberative communication is interrelated with media monitoring in the four research domains analysed within the Mediadecom project: legal and ethical regulation, journalism, patterns of media use, and media-related competences. Such a perspective enables holistic analysis of how media monitoring capabilities across the countries participating in the study can indicate either or both risks and opportunities for deliberative communication. The objective of the project is not to measure the extent to which particular countries fulfil commonly defined standards of deliberative communication, but to examine the media related ROs of values associated with the concept of deliberative communication. In this study, these values serve as a raster for holistic analysis rather than a normative goal.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following illustration of ideal conditions for deliberative communication is suggested for this project:

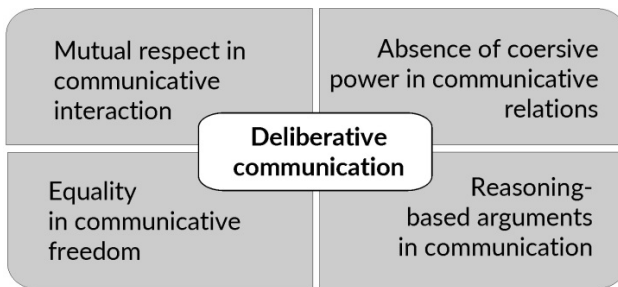


Figure 1. Basic ideals of deliberative communication. *Source: Nord & Harro-Loit, 2022.*

Mutual respect in communicative interaction means that participants in a discussion are open to hearing other participants' arguments and will try to understand without immediately dismissing them as irrelevant or false. In short, this

means that participants are trying to perceive the topic in question from other points of view. The absence of coercive power in communicative relations refers to conditions under which every participant in the discussion feels that they can express their views and opinions without any threat of sanction or forced choices (Bächtiger et al., 2018, p. 6). The principle of equality in communicative freedom requires everyone to be equally free to demonstrate their opinion. The concept of reasoning-based arguments in communication is associated with the necessity for rational–critical debate and “the authority of the better argument”. Consequently, true deliberative processes are free of persuasion, vested interests, and hidden agendas.

The question of to what extent these basic ideals are nurtured across mediascapes is a relevant starting point for a study that intends to monitor ROs for deliberative communication. How far are these aspects in the focus of recurring research initiatives? Which actors contribute to this research, and who influences their research agendas in the long term? Are the results of the research eventually applied in policy-making processes, leaving an imprint on social reality? The review of existing monitoring initiatives in media and communications comes to ambivalent conclusions, as demonstrated in the following section.

## MONITORING MEDIASCAPES: PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Monitoring media transformations around the globe has been a popular objective of media and communication researchers for a long time. There are a considerable number of media-related monitoring projects providing international comparisons. These are repeated at specific time intervals, use many methodological approaches, and include various sets of countries (see also Harro-Loit & Eberwein, 2024). In the context of the Mediadelcom project, it is important to provide a systematic inventory of all monitoring initiatives focusing on media or relevant media-related aspects, and to single out those projects that directly relate to media-generated ROs. For this task, at least five dimensions need to be examined:

- The first dimension is related to the sample of the monitoring project and the possibility of comparison between countries. This can be labelled ‘horizontal’, denoting the number of countries included in the study and the geographical coverage of the study (e.g., regional, European, global).
- The second dimension focuses on the aspect of change over time, highlighting those projects that allow diachronic comparison within one country or across countries. This dimension can be labelled ‘vertical’. Monitoring projects with a vertical dimension differentiate recurring time intervals – some renew their data annually, others at intervals of several years (such as the Worlds of Journalism Study).

- The third dimension describes the methodology that is used for data collection and assessment. Most monitoring projects aiming to assess the media system (e.g., political conditions, ownership, etc.) have created sets of indicators to capture the topic examined. In many cases, the indicators are translated into questionnaires. Most monitoring projects rely on experts who provide answers to these questions, either by using their practical knowledge on the subject or by actively consulting available datasets, including the use of metadata (previous academic analysis) and other available documents. Some projects also include further experts who review the results of the research (e.g., the Media Pluralism Monitor), others make use of expert panels. In the case of expert interviews, it may become possible to include informal information about media and the actors involved in their production. Interviewees often refer to insider knowledge acquired through discussions with colleagues, their personal media use, or just rumours. The quality of the analysis and assessment of data depends on how well the selected experts know the subject area of the study. If the monitoring is interdisciplinary in nature (e.g., including law, journalism studies, and audience research) and the country is large, the assessment of existing information can become challenging.
- The fourth dimension concerns the public accessibility of the collected data and analysis. Some monitoring projects (e.g., the European Social Survey) provide detailed databases of the surveys conducted, and experts in different countries are responsible for carrying out the analysis by focusing on various topics. Other monitoring projects prefer to present only the results of the analysis (such as the Euromedia Ownership Monitor (EuROMo) project).
- The fifth dimension answers the question of who commissions the research and provides the financial backing. Several monitoring projects are funded by the EU or global institutions such as the United Nations. The largest international project in the field of journalism studies (Worlds of Journalism Studies) conducts recurring surveys of journalists and is not funded by any international organisation, relying on the initiative of national researchers to find the resources to carry out research.

Table 3 (appendix) provides (an inevitably incomplete) list of international monitoring projects that can be divided into two top-level categories: (1) monitoring initiatives that directly focus on media, and (2) monitoring initiatives that include relevant aspects of media (such as projects that monitor the state of democracy and include questions on freedom of speech etc.). Our list of monitoring projects also provides an overview of issues that are worthy of monitoring across nation states, such as freedom of both the press and speech, media pluralism and ownership (transparency), media usage, digital literacy, and democracy.

The inventory shows that only a few of the existing monitoring projects explicitly consider media-related risks:

- The EU-financed Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM) examines risks to media pluralism in four main thematic areas: fundamental protection, market plurality, political independence and social inclusiveness (see, e.g., Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, 2022). The dimension of fundamental protection is divided into five sub-categories: protection of freedom of information; journalistic profession, standards and protection; independence and effectiveness of the media authority; universal reach of traditional media; and access to the internet. The dimension of market plurality is divided into five sub-categories: transparency of media ownership; news media concentration; concentration of online platforms and competition enforcement; media viability; and commercial and owner influence over editorial content. The dimension of political independence is split into five sub-divisions: political independence of media; editorial autonomy; audiovisual media, online platforms and elections; state regulation of resources and support for the media sector; and independence of PSM governance and funding. The dimension of social inclusiveness differentiates between access to media for: (1) minorities, (2) local and regional communities (3) community media, (4) women, (5) media literacy, and (6) protection against illegal and harmful speech. The corresponding list in Table 3 (Appendix) reveals that the MPM covers a wide range of risks closely related to preconditions for deliberative communication (such as free and equal access to information, freedom of speech, media-related competencies, as well as journalistic profession and standards). The methodology of the MPM combines document analysis with expert interviews. A limitation of the MPM's methodological approach is that the Monitor does not assess the availability of access to, or the quality of information on, the issues evaluated.
- The Euromedia Ownership Monitor (EurOMo) specifically examines the transparency of media ownership in Europe (Euromedia Research Group, 2022). Also funded by the EU, the project predominantly draws on publicly accessible data on ownership, while also highlighting missing information (or information that is not available to the public). EurOMo combines and presents the available data in visually understandable graphs. Continuous funding for an annual renewal of its analysis is not yet secured, however. The global Media Ownership Monitor can be seen as a complementary project evaluating risks related to market influence and media concentration (Global Media Registry, n.d.).
- In comparison with the previously mentioned monitoring projects, the *World Press Freedom Index*, by the NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2022), is probably more widely disseminated among diverse audiences given that rankings are more likely to translate into news. The focus of the research is very concise: the project specifically monitors press freedom (and not freedom of expression). For this purpose, the project uses a set of indicators as the basis for a regular survey that is carried out by na-

tional experts. The number and qualifications of the participating experts are not publicly presented. A limitation of the study's methodological approach is related to its case sensitivity. It is unfortunate that the analysis does not explain changes to country rankings across longer time periods. It is important to note, however, that the scores assigned to each country offer more meaningful insights than the ranking, although news media tend to prioritise the latter in their coverage.

In addition to the few monitoring projects that are directly related to the assessment of ROs for deliberative communication, several research projects focus on specific media-related aspects that are also relevant for Mediadelcom. One of these specific areas of monitoring is media usage. A valuable example of a global survey on media usage is offered by the annual *Digital News Reports* (Newman et al., 2022). This research initiative is coordinated by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism which publishes annual public reports with detailed findings. The survey is biased toward a population that uses digital news. For some countries, focus groups and personal interviews are included to generate additional data from industry sources. A clear limitation of the study is that not all European countries are covered (e.g., information on the Baltic States is wholly absent).

Among the fields relevant for a study of deliberative communication, monitoring media literacy seems to be most complicated. The *Media Literacy Index*, for example, compiles data from different sources to assess the resilience potential of media users to withstand the impact of fake news (Open Society Institute Sofia, 2022). Additionally, the monitoring approach focusing on media usage and media-related competences among children and young people (as in the EU Kids Online project, initiated by Sonia Livingstone) has gained several grants and can therefore be considered a topic area that is solidly covered (see, e.g., Smahel et al., 2020).

In addition, there are several international monitoring projects that – while only indirectly related to media and communication studies – offer relevant insights for a study into deliberative communication. For example, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project uses a comprehensive questionnaire for experts to assess characteristics of political regimes around the world. The project includes indicators such as media censorship, media corruption, harassment of journalists, and internet penetration (V-Dem Institute, 2022). Similarly, the Eurobarometer surveys commissioned by the European Parliament regularly examine the habits of media consumption among EU citizens, their trust in different media sources, as well as attitudes regarding the threat of disinformation (European Parliament, 2022). The comprehensive European Social Survey also includes indicators of media use, internet use, and social trust (ESS, 2022). However, assessment of the ROs for deliberative communication is certainly not their core interest.



## AGENDAS AND CAPABILITIES

The overview of earlier media monitoring projects reveals several topic areas worthy of attention, including press freedom and freedom of speech, media market and ownership conditions, but also media usage. In other words, the implementation of values such as freedom, transparency and diversity is obviously worth keeping an eye on. In the context of the Mediadelcom project, we use the notion of ‘monitoring agenda’ (instead of monitoring initiative) to describe this phenomenon. The term monitoring agenda implies that specific aspects related to news media are sufficiently important at the societal level to allocate attention and resources for the gathering of further knowledge about them, usually with the purpose of influencing either or both the process and the values of the practice in question.

When defining the idea of a research agenda (from the point of view of individual researchers), Ertmer & Glazewski (2014) describe some of the elements that are also helpful to the definition of monitoring agenda:

As a noun, a research agenda comprises a framework that allows you to attack a topic from multiple vantage points. /.../ Typically, your research agenda will include a set of questions, issues, or problems, all of which relate to a common theme or topic. /.../ As a verb, a research agenda comprises the actions you take to organize your interests and work. (p. 55)

The agenda setting of (news) media-related monitoring concerning deliberative communication involves not just the observation of media-related changes in society, but also the recognition of (early) signs concerning risks and opportunities (consequences) for deliberative communication. Potential risks are assessed from the perspective of their probability, while realised risks are evaluated from the perspective of their significance and diachronic development. The latter is related to the identification of when and how most influential changes happen which affect the developmental trajectory of the media and media usage.

In practice, funders (at both the EU and national levels) usually decide about monitoring priorities. The final agenda-setting process is complicated. For example, we should take into consideration that institutional configurations as well as environmental pressures such as competitive research funding, the drive to ‘publish or perish’, and the increasing tensions between teaching and research foci, etc., affect career progression of individual researchers (Santos & Horta, 2018). They, therefore, influence the monitoring agenda-setting process.

In media and communication studies, popular topics rise every little while, and numerous researchers tend to follow. For example, when the traditional business model of journalism collapsed, a popular topic was the future of the media

industry (including the search for feasible business models). The spread of disinformation brought about the founding of fact-checking centres and the wide-ranging investigation of relevant topics. The COVID-19 pandemic focused investigators' attention on research into health-related news content, etc. Concurrently, new problems might cause erratic funding for traditional study topics and longitudinal research ('start-stop funding' or 'under-funding' of certain topics) and might create a rupture in the accumulation of knowledge.

The overview of existing monitoring projects in media and communication research also underlines the significance of different phases of the monitoring process. This includes (1) the selection of methodology and scope (sample); (2) the collection, storing, and assessment of data and information; (3) analysis and knowledge production; (4) the implementation of acquired knowledge (usually labelled 'dissemination'). From the point of view of wisdom-based media policy, the aim of this process is the creation of evidence-based knowledge (see the following section).

In the *Mediadelcom* project, we use the notion of 'capability' to describe and assess the monitoring process, defining it both from the individual (agent) as well as from the institutional (structural) perspective. At the individual level, capabilities can be understood as "the potential but also the actual power of what a person is able to do and achieve in terms of valued choices" (Gangas, 2019, p. 3). In other words, an agent's potential, and actual ability, to respond to a certain situation and act according to coordinated purposes. However, it is possible to distinguish inner capabilities (agents' readiness and motivation) and external capabilities (social conditions that enable the agents to actualise the capabilities) (Gangas, 2019, p. 115).

The notion of capability has central importance for the monitoring of (news-related) mediascapes relating to deliberative communication, as *Mediadelcom* uses an agent-oriented approach that is linked to the structural conditions determining the actions and interaction of the agents. For our purpose, thus, the monitoring of mediascapes concept also takes into consideration the institutional (structural) preconditions for the capability of monitoring.

The concept of capabilities of monitoring mediascapes (CMM) concerning deliberative communication is here defined as the ability, possibilities and resources, and motivations of various agents to observe and analyse the developments of the media over space and time, and the changes in society emanating from the media transformations, as well as related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication. With this definition, the *Mediadelcom* study has a conceptual starting point that can be translated into various operational variables in the next step.

## MONITORING MEDIASCAPES: BASIC VARIABLES

The preceding sections of this chapter have attempted to provide a brief introduction to the idea of deliberative communication and an initial overview of previous research initiatives intending to monitor current media transformations, before introducing the concept of CMM concerning deliberative communication, as developed within the Mediadelcom project. The analysis shows that a systematic monitoring of media-related ROs that influence deliberative communication needs to take into account several specific variables that affect the state of deliberative communication in democratic societies. The following section is going to highlight the most important of these variables, which will also serve as a conceptual framework for the empirical analysis of the subsequent chapters of this book. They include: the elemental differentiation between structures and agents, a more specific clarification of our understanding of media monitoring governance, the introduction of the heuristic tool of ‘information hierarchy’, and a brief discussion of relevant context factors of media monitoring (particularly technological and economic influences).

### STRUCTURES AND AGENTS

The capability of monitoring mediascapes (CMM) depends on the structures available to monitoring initiatives as well as the action, interaction, motivation, and competencies of different actors with various agencies. The structural conditions are related to the institutionalisation of media research (e.g., setting up academic and non-academic units in which media research can be realised as well as the regulation, financing, functionality and status of these research organisations; see also Chapter 4 of this book).

Margaret Archer offers a useful concept that relates agents and structure. In her attempt to develop a Realist Social Theory (Archer, 1995), she models ‘structure’, ‘culture’ and ‘agency’ as distinct strata of social reality, each of them possessing distinctive emergent properties which are real and causally efficacious, but irreducible to one another. While agency is used as a generic term describing the ‘people’ who constitute parts of society, structure includes certain roles and positions in institutional and systemic settings, and culture comprises the values, beliefs and ideologies behind them. Within this view on social reality, Archer also differentiates varying forms of agency (see also Archer, 2017). For example, she defines Corporate Agents as organised interest groups that are actively involved in forming and reforming structures. They are conscious of certain strategic aims and coordinate their activities to make them real (e.g., journalists’ unions, media organisations, etc.). Primary Agents, on the other hand, lack these qualities. They “neither express interests nor organise for their strategic pursuit” (Archer, 2017,

p. 25). This does not mean, however, that collectives of Primary Agents have no influence on social structures at all. Primary Agents also react to their structural context, and every passive Primary Agent can become an active Corporate Agent, based on their relationships with other collectives.

To synchronise the theoretical assumptions discussed above, we propose a model that distinguishes the kinds of agent involved in news media monitoring, enabling us to focus on their interactions and considering the structure and culture around them as drivers of ROs for deliberative communication (see also Figure 2):

- **Agents:** A systematic analysis of media monitoring capabilities needs to take into account both Corporate Agents and Primary Agents (including their competence and motivation to implement norms and values of deliberative communication), as well as the lack thereof.
- **Relationships:** The analysis also needs to assess the scale of relationships between these agents (e.g., the level of cooperation, motivations that either support deliberative communication and public interest or private interests, the extent of the application of the acquired knowledge, as well as competence requirements that determine the quality and trust concerning media research).
- **Structure:** Additionally, the analysis also needs to pay attention to specific structural conditions. This would include an assessment of disciplinary development (e.g., recognition of JMC as an independent discipline, foundation of learned societies, the existence of specialised academic journals, conferences, interest groups; see Tight, 2020) as well as the availability of various research organisations (e.g., in academia, among NGOs, but also in media companies and other private entities).

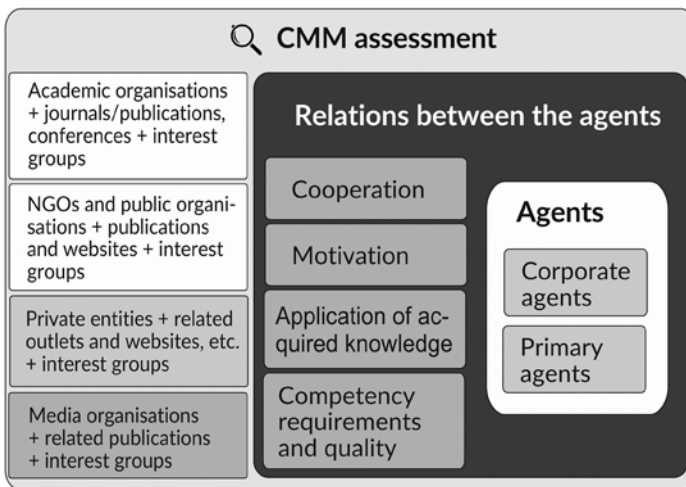


Figure 2. Agent-based model for the capability of monitoring mediascape assessment.

Creating a CMM agenda involves both corporate and primary agents: media policy decision-makers, researchers, analysts as well as several agents in various roles (e.g., producers and users of content, etc.). A valuable initiative would be to conduct a broad analysis of relevant and diverse agents who are able to map problems and monitor prioritisations from the point of view of public need.

Professional media monitoring agents can be found among media researchers and educators in academic and non-academic organisations (NGOs, public and state organisations, private companies), as well as freelancers and students. All of them are human capital of the monitoring capability. In addition, the directors of these international and national institutions are important actors, as are state representatives and politicians who decide on research funding (agenda). These actors commission what kind of information will be collected, for how long the knowledge production will take place, and how the collected knowledge will be used. A further relevant group of actors are media organisations, as well as the social media and platform companies, who own precious data on media usage.

Relationships between agents are important as they are the basis for any dialogic communication and cooperation. The problem that academic knowledge is often not sufficiently applied in media governance processes and, more general, in the development of democratic societies has been addressed for years (e.g., Jensen, 2012). Quite often, a better dissemination of academic research results has been proposed as a recipe to solve this problem (e.g., European IPR Helpdesk, 2015). However, more fundamental attempts to motivate relevant actor groups to indulge in processes of dialogic communication and support cooperation between involved parties have so far been neglected.

The quality and usability of any monitoring initiative is defined by the decisions and competences (expertise) of the people who decide on the monitoring agenda, as well as the phases of information and knowledge processing. Therefore, the 'capability' of monitoring is directly related to the availability of human resources (competences and time) as well as financial resources.

Figure 3 distinguishes the agent-oriented stages of the monitoring process. Stages C, D and E indicate actions conducted by researchers and analysts ('knowledge agents'); stage A marks the actions conducted mostly by 'policymakers' and 'knowledge subscribers'. Stage F is implementation (monitoring governance and monitoring policy) and include heterogeneous actors whose function is to coordinate and manage monitoring and policy activities. A and B indicate actions that need negotiation between agents.

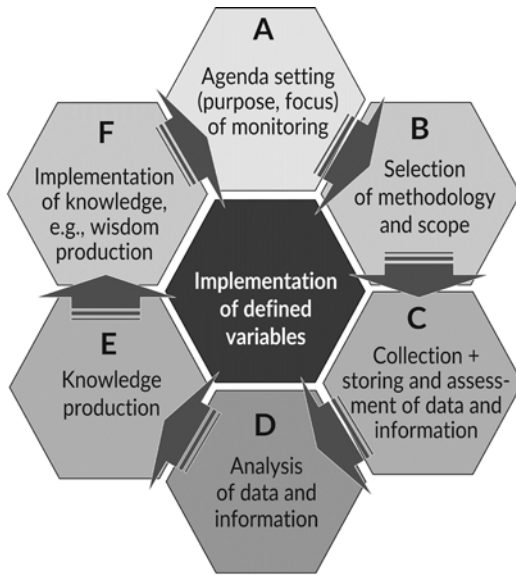


Figure 3. Agent-based stages of the monitoring process.

Although all the stages of the monitoring process depend on agenda setting (including negotiations and decisions about the purpose of monitoring), all the steps also benefit from an element of deliberation. In this context, we distinguish the phases of planning, knowledge production, knowledge implementation and wisdom production. To describe the wisdom production phase, we refer to the notion of ‘governance’, suggesting that involvement and dialogue between different agents not only increases the knowledge base for further policy decisions, but also enables advancement of public awareness and the prospects for deliberative communication in the media ecosystem.

## MEDIA MONITORING GOVERNANCE

Definitions of governance vary in social sciences, but generally refer to the inclusion of social forces and actors beyond national authorities. The most common is a broader definition that focuses on collective coordination in general, or as the Swedish political scientist Jon Pierre defines the concept: “Sustaining coordination and coherence among a wide variety of actors with different purposes and objectives such as political actors, corporate interests, civil society, and transnational organizations” (Pierre, 2000, pp. 1–3). Governance incorporates the notion of a network of various influences, claims and demands from different groups of interests in society as well as the guiding principles and values on which they are based (McQuail, 2007, p. 17). Or, as Meier (2018) puts it:

Basically, it is about a decentralization of politics. The notion depicts networks of public, private and civil society actors that operate on a mostly consensual basis. Governance processes are about voluntary negotiation, dialogue and agreement between relatively unconstrained actors. Experts play an important role in such networks. (p. 58)

The theoretical underpinning of the concept has its origin in academic disciplines such as economics and political science (Puppis, 2010). For example, corporate governance in economics draws on agency theory, focusing on the relationship between owners and management (Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004). Democratic governance in political science represents a more normative approach, describing the involvement of civil society in participatory and deliberative decision-making processes (Bevir, 2009). Such an approach has been criticised for its ‘problem-solving bias’, meaning that governance is not always in the public interest, as power relations can vary. There is a widespread belief – and this is considered a great advantage – among social scientists that the governance concept can be a useful tool for analysis as it is theoretically open and functions “within various theoretical contexts” (Bevir, 2009, p. 29).

The concept of governance has become increasingly popular in media and communication studies, especially when analysing changes in media policy-making and regulation. Governance in relation to media studies is commonly defined as “the sum total of mechanisms, both formal and informal, national and supranational, centralised and dispersed, that aim to organise media systems according to the resolution of media policy debates” (Freedman, 2008, p. 14). Media governance has been related to the various aspects of regulation and policy (Puppis, 2010) – monitoring bodies, press and advertising councils, public service value tests – that are used to make sure that media comply with the idea of “good citizenship” (Bardoel & d’Haenens, 2004).

In media and communication studies, governance can be perceived as an analytical concept with an integrated view on rules aimed at organising parts of the media system and considering both institutional perspectives and the role of agency, based on the possibility of actors to respond to existing rules (Puppis, 2010). Governance in the media sector includes many forms of ‘soft power’ and influence, as well as a new degree of distance between government and media (McQuail, 2017). One recommendation when studying governance in the media sector is to avoid general overarching discussions and instead focus in more detail on how different actors and institutions in society try to control the media by mapping, decoding, and interpreting the non-transparent processes that characterise governance (Moe, 2010).

In this book, we argue that the capability of monitoring mediascapes provides a good opportunity to analyse such governance processes. Media surveillance normally includes a wide range of activities performed by diverse stake-

holders such as public authorities, news media organisations, academia, market firms, NGOs and transnational institutions with varying interests and objectives. From various viewpoints and approaches, these stakeholders can be expected to evaluate various performances of news media, make them transparent to the public and hold media accountable (see Ots et al., 2024).

Ideally, media monitoring governance should increase public knowledge and wisdom on the consequences of media transformation as the process is intended to be planned, rational and deliberative. From this perspective, media governance provides opportunities to improve the conditions of deliberative communication by increasing public awareness of news media performance based on accurate, transparent and diverse monitoring instruments. On the other hand, media monitoring governance can also produce risks for deliberative communication. This reflects power relations in the governance process that allow some stakeholders to dominate monitoring procedures and perceptions – guided by certain assumptions, objectives, and values –, and in fact to perform as veto players with outstanding bargaining power in relation to other actors, influencing their behaviour and understanding (Klinger, 2012).

Meier (2018, referring to Freedman, 2008) points to the contrast between ‘governance’ and ‘policy’, a distinction that is applicable to the concept of media monitoring capabilities: In this sense, ‘governance’ refers to the sum of total mechanisms (coordination, network-building, control) that influence media monitoring, while the final purpose of ‘policy’ is to create instruments (legal, financial, etc.) designed to shape the performance of the monitoring system. In our proposition, we contend that wisdom-based media policy facilitates the formation of sound regulatory instruments. Consequently, both levels are contingent on the proficiency of media surveillance.

While in media monitoring governance the power shifts from state agencies and administrators to a network of agents, it is worth noting that most policy decisions (e.g., on funding) are usually taken by political actors. As suggested in Figure 3, to guarantee efficient monitoring, not all agents need to participate in all phases of the monitoring process. The core idea is that media monitoring governance should be accessible and sufficiently transparent to enable more deliberative discussions.

## MONITORING MEDIASCAPES: THE ‘INFORMATION HIERARCHY’

To assess media monitoring capabilities, it is necessary to determine the quality and the usefulness of the levels of information available for monitoring purposes. This objective becomes possible with the help of the distinction between data, information, knowledge and wisdom, as proposed by the well-known DIKW model (see, e.g., Ackoff, 1989; Frické, 2018; Rowley, 2007) that has found wide application within information science and knowledge management. This



hierarchical model, which has also been presented in the form of a “knowledge pyramid” (Kitchin, 2014), exemplifies the fact that data always precedes information, which precedes knowledge, which precedes understanding and wisdom (Figure 4). We adapted this model to the needs of the Mediadecom project by indicating each step in the process of media monitoring governance, guided by deliberative communication:

- ‘Data’ are “discrete, objective facts or observations, which are mostly unorganised and unprocessed, and do not convey any specific meaning” (Rowley, 2007, p. 170). Examples of useful data can be found in all instances of automatically recorded statistics on media usage, although the numbers themselves usually do not make much sense without context. Information systems generate, store, retrieve, and process data. A possible example would be a file comprising (raw) numbers which refer to observed events at different times (Aven, 2013). Editorial metrics include a lot of data; however, they need to be interpreted to generate meaning.
- ‘Information’ is “data processed for a purpose” (Rowley, 2007, p. 171). An important element of information comes from the fact that it can be stored and is persistent through time. To process information, data need to be contextualised. When data are processed and logically linked (e.g., to show an editorial board which media products were consumed and for how long), it becomes information. Information places “fewer intellectual demands on potential users than knowledge” (Adolf & Stehr, 2016, p. 29). While some authors (e.g., Frické, 2009, p. 140) propose that “[k]nowledge and information collapse into each other”, for the Mediadecom project we define information as any kind of organised, structured, categorised, or interpreted data that become visible, for example, on a map, on a timetable, in legal records or in current news.
- ‘Knowledge’, on the other hand, “demands synthesis of multiple sources of information over time” (Rowley, 2007, p. 173). It can be defined as contextualised information that is discussed and compared. However, the validation and acquisition of knowledge takes time. Examples are offered by the publications of academic media and journalism research or in-house reports by media organisations, which usually take much longer to be created, compared to the quick news production cycles of the digital age. At the same time, as Adolf and Stehr (2016, pp. 17ff.) point out, modern communication technologies ensure that access to knowledge and information becomes easier and can even subvert remaining proprietary restrictions. In this sense, knowledge provides a capacity to act: It creates, sustains and changes existential conditions. Social statistics, for example, are not merely mirrors of societal reality, they problematise social reality by showing that it could be otherwise, suggesting and representing capacities for action. Knowledge as a capacity to act contributes to what is constitutive for politics, i.e. to change, or to preserve and perpetuate. Thus, neither information nor knowledge is self-evident and free of context.

- ‘Wisdom’, eventually, can be seen as applied knowledge. The level of wisdom indicates the extent to which acquired knowledge is applied and leads to evidence-based decisions in media policy making. According to Adolf and Stehr (2016, p. 39), “[t]he ability to translate knowledge successfully into action varies across scientific fields. The development of knowledge is uneven, especially when judged with respect to its efficacy to have solved troubling problems or contributed to pressing human objectives.” Wisdom acquisition also takes time – and deliberative communication. Ideally, different types of agent need to be motivated to be actively involved in the process of wisdom acquisition.

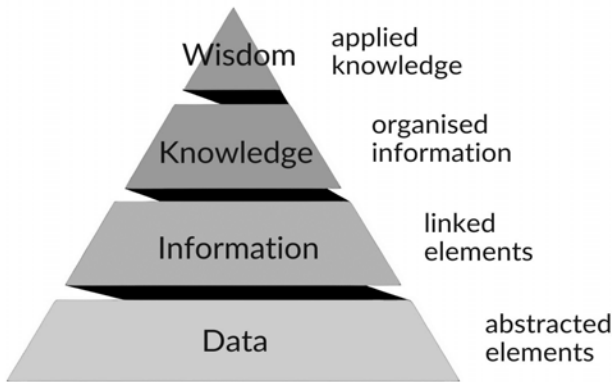


Figure 4. The DIKW (data, information, knowledge, wisdom) model of assessing media monitoring capabilities Source: based on Ackoff, 1989.

In other words, for an assessment of media monitoring capabilities, knowledge and wisdom have critical importance: The capability of media monitoring concerning the ROs for deliberative communication depends on whether, and to what extent, data and information can be collected and processed in a particular country to generate knowledge and wisdom about changes in the structure and the activities, competences, and interactions (relationships) of various agents.

However, several typical problems can aggravate this process. The previous discussion has shown that data are a necessary precondition to provide information. However, it is important to keep in mind that there are various uncertainties about the quantities and contexts of data that we know about (Aven, 2013). In many cases, the availability of information depends on public access to data and the varying motives of data owners. Access to data and information is a prerequisite to implement the production of knowledge. However, access is not always straightforward, in many cases dialogue between data and information providers and analysts (knowledge producers) is poor. Ideally, the obtained knowledge can

be applied in processes of political decision making and becomes wisdom. However, while it is important that media governance is finally based on wisdom, successful examples of such a knowledge transfer seem to be rare.

Another critical issue concerning media monitoring is the ability to trace media-related changes over time and generate a temporal dimension of knowledge. The diachronic dimension of media monitoring is particularly demanding because it requires longitudinal studies and analysis. However, such studies need stability (most of all resources) and address specific methodological challenges: As the media landscape changes, research methodologies in the field of media and journalism studies also need to be adapted (Stanyer & Mihelj, 2016). These and further obstacles to effective news media monitoring processes will be discussed in more detail based on the empirical study presented in the following chapters of this book.

## CONTEXTS OF MONITORING MEDIASCAPES

In addition to the basic variables discussed in the previous paragraphs, various context factors also have an impact on the efficacy of media monitoring capabilities. They include (but are not limited to) the specific technological conditions influencing the availability of research data, as well as different economic aspects (such as research funding and the availability of human capital for media monitoring). Both factors are closely related to the legal framework in the countries under study (see Figure 5), as the following discussion will illustrate.

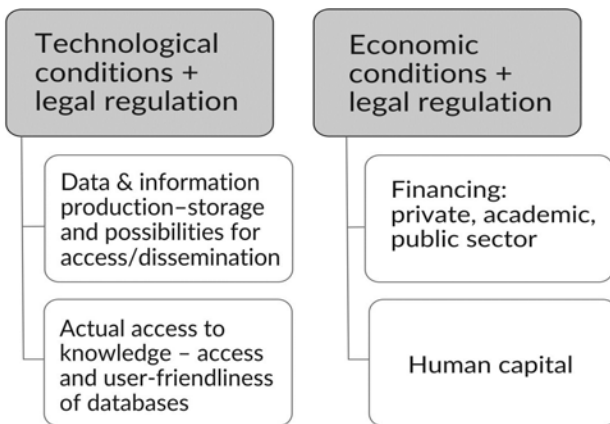


Figure 5. Technological and economic contexts of media monitoring.

Technology is not only a driver of media transformations (and, thus, a research object relevant for any study interested in the current challenges of jour-

nalism and news media); it also enables researchers to create various databases for the collection of relevant data and information (such as the media statistics for Nordic countries compiled by Nordicom or the *ETIS* database with information about Estonian researchers, institutions, projects and publications managed by the Estonian Research Agency). In the context of Mediadelcom, a key task will be to answer the question of how far such databases are beneficial to the aim of assessing media and communication research. The answer often depends on very practical issues, for example, whether search engines are designed in a way that suitable keywords make it possible to identify journalism and media research(ers) or even relevant grants in this field.

From a broader perspective, the question of access to various empirical data sources is crucial, even though it evokes ambivalent expectations: On the one hand, the trend towards open access policies in academic publishing, made possible thanks to the technological advances of the last decades, certainly facilitates the diffusion of information and knowledge (Norris et al., 2008). On the other hand, lots of relevant data in media and journalism are generated or compiled by commercial research institutions that offer their outputs for sale (Hofsäss et al., 2022). For example, data from audience research or editorial analytics are usually not openly accessible. In addition to selective access to commercially funded data, a misleading presentation of research findings in digital contexts can also create risks for media monitoring, as it influences the public awareness of what is going on in the media. However, from the perspective of public interest, information and knowledge on (news) media and related changes should be available to all relevant agents, including academic and state actors as well as those from the non-profit and commercial sectors. The problem of access to a considerable amount of information being restricted by private data owners for proprietary reasons contradicts this objective. It remains an ongoing task of the Mediadelcom study to review how far open access policies in the analysed countries have become commonplace and whether they proved a successful instrument to support knowledge production on media-related change processes in the four research domains tackled by the project.

The question of access to relevant data is also crucial for monitoring the economic contexts of media and journalism research, particularly the national (and transnational) systems of research funding. To provide a reliable assessment, it is necessary to take into consideration what kind of information is provided about the financial basis of higher education as well as the research carried out by other not-for-profit and private institutions. More specifically, it would be relevant to analyse which shares of public and private money are directly used for initiatives that monitor media and media-related aspects of society. As far as social sciences are concerned, such an assessment should also consider evaluation criteria that are accepted within this community of researchers, rather than being uniform across the whole field of academia. The assessment should not disregard or discriminate against any agent in the academic field based on their research ap-

proaches (e.g., theory-based vs. applied) or their geographical focus (national vs. international). So far, however, comparative datasets with relevant information are non-existent for media and journalism research – and it remains to be seen if the Mediadelcom researchers will be able to fill this void by relying on decentralised sources.

The availability of continuous funding for media and journalism research also has implications for the human capital that can be used for media monitoring. Basically speaking, as modern societies are knowledge societies, we can currently observe a growing relevance of (academic) experts in public discourses, accompanied by a larger share of employment in the knowledge field (Collins, 2014). While this development might well improve the preconditions for monitoring initiatives, it also introduces notable risks, such as increasing competition within academia as well as increasingly precarious working conditions, particularly for younger researchers (Murray, 2019), often followed by severe threats to their physical and mental health (Hanitzsch et al., 2023). Of course, such trends also have an impact on media monitoring capability.

For example, university professors and senior academic researchers must often devote large proportions of their work time to teaching, while much of the practical research activity is delegated to junior researchers and doctoral students (their formal status usually depends on national regulations). Especially in small countries (such as Czechia and Estonia), student research at the Bachelor and Master level often forms an important contribution to the empirical data collection relevant for monitoring media-related transformations. Unfortunately, most younger researchers are not in the position to enjoy stability of funding, which is not simply a matter of convenience for the individual researcher but can seriously affect the quality of their research. Lack of continuity in research funding has at least two dysfunctional consequences: First, when temporary work contracts are running out, researchers are forced to spend a lot of time unproductively, rather than focusing on relevant research activities. Second, because renewal is uncertain, researchers are unable to develop their own research program as a systematic, long-term action plan. Instead, they are obliged to divide their productive phases into discrete, one-year chunks, each of which is almost certainly expected to produce results that are publishable, even if not significant.

It seems indisputable that such (and possibly further) contextual factors of (media) research can have significant consequences for the capabilities of media monitoring in the countries covered by the Mediadelcom project and beyond. Hence, they will constitute another relevant aspect to be covered in the empirical study presented in the subsequent chapters of this book.

## CONCLUSION: A MODEL OF MONITORING MEDIASCAPES IN THE SERVICE OF WISDOM-BASED MEDIA GOVERNANCE

This chapter intended to provide a theoretical introduction to the idea of CMM and explore its relationship with deliberative communication. To achieve this objective, we compiled brief overviews on some of the key concepts relevant for our study (such as deliberative communication as well as the notions of agendas and capabilities of media monitoring) and introduced several basic variables and context factors that need to be considered in the course of a detailed analysis of the risks and opportunities for deliberative communication. These elements are assembled in Figure 6 below in an attempt to provide an analytical model for the empirical study that forms the core of this book.

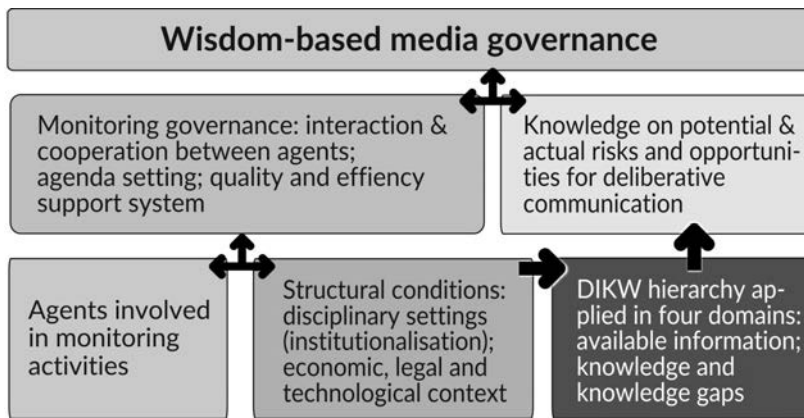


Figure 6. The Medielcom model for monitoring the media-related risks and opportunities of deliberative communication in the service of wisdom-based media governance.

The lowest level of Figure 6 is comprised of various basic conditions that can be understood as the starting point for the analysis: Each of the countries in the sample of the Medielcom project has a certain number of agents involved in monitoring activities, all of them equipped with certain competencies and motivations to act. All agents are united by their joint aim to highlight potential ROs relating to deliberative communication in the four research domains covered by Medielcom. They operate within specific structural conditions, among them the status of JMC discipline, economic, legal and technological conditions. Structural conditions can have an implicit (e.g., political system, journalism culture, etc.) or an explicit influence on the CMM. To reduce the complexity of the ‘structural conditions’ variability, only the most significant aspects will be taken into consideration in our empirical study. The DIKW hierarchy offers a useful concept to assess the availability, access to, and quality of relevant data, information and knowledge

in the research fields under study. For example, a lot of information but little knowledge in some areas might increase the potential risk that policymakers are unaware of growing threats related to specific changes in media regulation, journalism, media usage, or the population's media-related competencies.

The conditions at the second level of the figure are related to questions concerning what a society should know about changes in media and journalism, the potential and actual ROs, and how this knowledge can be transformed into wisdom. These are questions about the action and interaction as well as the relations between the agents who finally decide on the agendas of media monitoring (and related aspects such as scope, methodology and knowledge production). The notion of a 'monitoring governance' offers an umbrella concept that describes and evaluates the quality and efficiency of typical support measures. However, monitoring governance is dependent on interaction, relations and cooperation between agents.

The third and highest level of the figure links the concepts of deliberative communication and CMM, which constitute the broader theoretical framework of our study. By bringing these two approaches together, the Mediadelcom project hopes to provide a useful model to support wisdom-based media governance and policy making, and, ultimately, to strengthen democratic processes and social cohesion.

Applying the model in an empirical study will make it necessary to combine descriptive research (level 1) with analysis and assessment (level 2). From a comparative perspective, this process will enable the Mediadelcom consortium to identify both good and bad practices. We hope that the suggested agent-oriented approach, according to which interaction and cooperation between different actors constitute a core element, will prove more useful than previous debates on the dissemination of (produced) knowledge. The final level (level 3) focuses on future outcomes. In the case of Mediadelcom these are possible policy recommendations that could frame the agenda of future monitoring projects with a specific interest in observing deliberative communication. The methodological implications of the Mediadelcom model of monitoring deliberative communication will be discussed in Chapter 2.

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# 3

## Mediadelcom's approach and methodology

Martín Oller Alonso, Halliki Harro-Loit, Epp Lauk

Mediadelcom is by nature a qualitative meta-study with a holistic approach. The project's empirical material comes from an enormous inventory of previous research and available information sources augmented by the existing information about knowledge producing institutions and agents. Based on the preliminary review of journalism, media, mediated communication and related studies, theories and methods, necessary theoretical concepts (deliberative communication, capability of monitoring media (CMM), monitoring governance, and theoretical grounding for an agent-targeted analysis) have been synthesised. Paterson et al. (2001, p.1) define a meta-study as “a research approach involving analysis of the theory, methods, and findings of qualitative research and the synthesis of these insights into new ways of thinking about phenomena”.

Mediadelcom uses “a new way of thinking” for developing a toolbox for diagnosing and identifying potential risks and opportunities (ROs) for deliberative communication that accompany news media's transformations. Furthermore, application of these theoretical-methodological concepts goes beyond explanations of research findings and enables us to propose a novel way for advancing media policy – wisdom-based media governance.

The Mediadelcom approach adopts the three-level structure suggested by Gary Goertz in his *Social Science Concepts* (2006). At the basic level, theoretical proposition (deliberative communication) is formulated using various theories (e.g., deliberative democracy, media governance, DIKW hierarchy etc.). The second level adds constitutive dimensions for the basic level – conceptual variables structured according to the four domains defined for empirical research (journalism, legal and ethical regulation, media usage patterns and media related competences of people). For detecting the risk levels of CMM (low, medium, high), specific conceptual variables were formulated (see Figure 18 in Chapter 9). The third is

the operationalisation level, at which operational variables were formulated as indicators for the empirical analysis within each domain of mediascape (Table 2 in Appendix).

The four domains each cover an area of research relevant for comparative qualitative meta-analysis and assessment of the sample countries' capability of monitoring mediascapes (CMM):

1) Journalism frames the ROs, which are related to transformations in news production and dissemination, the business of journalism and journalism as a profession, including professional skills and competencies. The umbrella concept relates to the questions of the sustainability of journalism, the potential agency of news media when acting in the capacity of watchdog, and how media act as socio-cultural glue ensuring that societal groups, institutions and citizens remain in dialogue.

2) The Media-related competencies (MRC) of lay members of society. Media users competencies affect the sustainability of journalism and the ways in which people use media.

3) Media usage patterns (MUP): Any availability or deficit in knowledge of the changes in both media usage and citizens' news engagement influences the decision makers' ability to devise informed resolutions. A risk can emerge if private companies have more and better data and knowledge on citizen's news consumption patterns than the public, a risk that is related to access to data. Media companies can acquire various data (e.g., metrics of visitors to their online output) that they often keep secret for business purposes. The news media's ability or failure to provide reliable information and analysis of facts and developments affects the ability of citizens and the electorate to make informed choices. ROs relating to media consumption are also affected by citizen engagement in deliberation.

4) Legal and ethical regulation of the media and the use of data. Here, the ROs relate to data protection legislation at EU and national levels, to informational self-determination, to freedom of information and expression, to media accountability and to access to information.

## HOW THE MEDIADELCOM APPROACH AND CMM ARE RELATED

The conceptual relationship between the Mediadelcom general approach and the CMM concept is explained in Figure 7, which illustrates the conceptual, methodological and empirical relations in more detail. The top level presents the main methodological concept of the Mediadelcom approach (based on the model of 4 domains). The middle level presents the conceptual and empirical contribution for the book (the theoretical framework, methodology for the Bibliographic database and the database itself, and 14 country reports (Case Study 1).

The lowest level depicts the results of the research based on the Medielcom holistic approach and presented in the current book: the analysis of the availability and sufficiency of relevant information and knowledge; diachronic analysis of the development of the CMM in the 14 EU countries; assessment of the risk levels and comparison of the countries based on this assessment. The novel outcome of this meta-study is formulation of wisdom-based media governance concept.

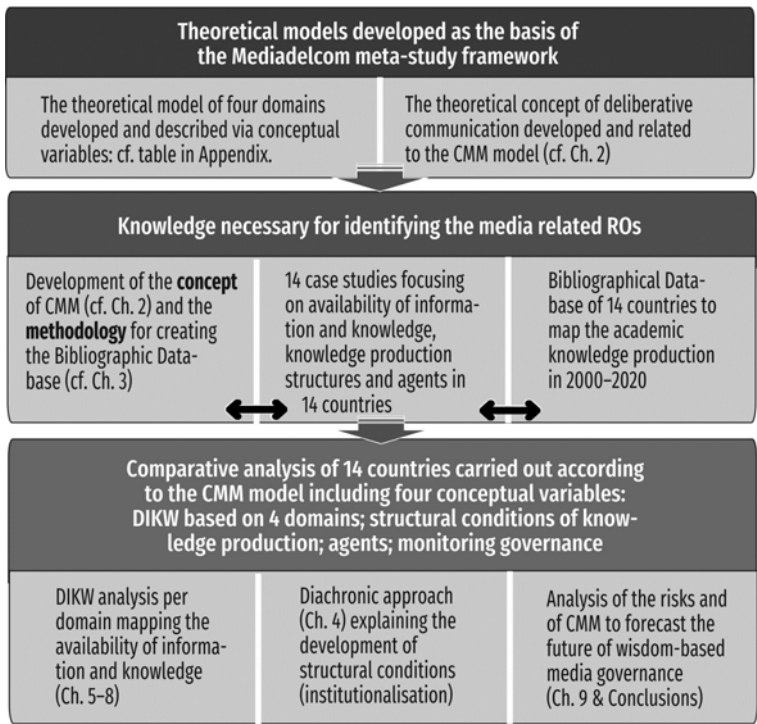


Figure 7. The theoretical and methodological components of the Medielcom approach and conceptual, methodological and empirical connections between the Medielcom general approach and the CMM.

We do not anticipate discovering the perfect situation for the analysis and study of deliberative communication in the participating countries. However, the Medielcom consortium will undoubtedly identify, which knowledge mobilisation and monitoring actors enhance deliberative communication.

Empirical material for Medielcom research and the current book was gathered by composing country reports (Case Study 1) that focused on the inventory of existing research in the four domains. The country reports also contain information about the main research traditions and institutions and their historical contexts and analyses for the current CMM situation in each country. The institutional mapping was further extended by identifying journalism and media

scholars who had conducted studies in at least one of Mediadelcom's four media domains.

Each of these case studies paid particular attention to the availability and quality of information and knowledge produced so far. Mediadelcom consortium team members additionally carried out expert interviews with scholars who have knowledge of media-related risks and opportunities in their countries and who have excellent experience in comparative studies, to provide explanations for the availability and quality of information and knowledge. The country reports also assessed the national capability of monitoring mediascapes.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW OF CMM RESEARCH: THE DATABASE

In parallel with the research for the country reports that comprise CS1, the teams identified the relevant research and sources for assessing CMM in their country and compiled a national bibliographic database. In the final stage, these databases were assembled into one Excel table with 5,622 entries, searchable using 20 variables. As a result, the database contains published academic articles, academic books and book chapters, various (research and industry) reports, and relevant doctoral dissertations. Non-academic publications were included only when there was no academic publication available on a particular RO-related topic.

Depending on the conditions and size of the countries and their communities of media scholars, the selection processes differed slightly. Some countries applied the "everything relevant we can find" method (e.g., Estonia, Latvia, Czechia, Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania). The countries with a very large number of research institutions and researchers applied stricter selection criteria, focusing on high quality (peer reviewed) and high impact (WoS/SCOPUS-referenced) sources, impactful edited books, and on selecting the most prominent authors (Italy, Poland and Germany). For example, the Austrian database does not include Austrian German-language publications that focus mainly on Germany and Switzerland. The German database does not cover all 16 federal states equally, rather, the selection is made according to the relevance of pre-defined domains in the research carried out by particular federal states.

As the data has specifically been gathered on the research done in the four mentioned domains on potential ROs to deliberative communication that stem from news media development, this database is **not representative** of all academic publications in the fields of media and journalism research. Consequently, generalisations and comparisons based on the consolidated database are limited. The single country databases make it possible to outline each country's monitoring capabilities, while the consolidated database enables us to demonstrate broader tendencies.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE REPORTS

While the country case studies can stand alone and count as valuable input for wisdom-based policy at the national level, the major aim of this book is to present a comparative analysis of the CMM in Europe.

At the first stage of the empirical analysis four expert groups were formed, with each group focusing on a specific domain (see the Notes at the end of the chapter). All the studies followed the two-dimensional structure of the variables, i.e. the operational and conceptual variables of the four CMM domains. As the empirical findings in the case studies were aggregated from multiple sources, the texts had to be reduced according to the given variables. The analysts had to take into consideration the possible biases of the authors of CS1 and ask for further explanations and additional sources if needed.

The analysis of the CS1 texts on journalism and media-related competencies was carried out in two phases. The legal and ethical regulation and accountability domain as well as the media use domain did not need computerised content analysis as there were fewer variables than in the other two domains.

### *(1) Manual content analysis*

Manual content analysis allowed Mediadecom researchers to apply a qualitative method (Mayring, 2023) that involved a systematic review and interpretation of written material. During the manual content analysis, researchers coded the sections of their respective domains for each of the fourteen countries being studied. This process identified keywords (variables) that established the patterns and themes under analysis. By examining these patterns and themes (sections of the text containing the keywords and their surrounding context), researchers acquired the necessary information, to be inserted into the relevant section of the coding tables.

The results of the content analysis are presented as qualitative analytical overviews. The tables used in the content analysis were used to create illustrative figures that have been included in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

### *(2) Computerised content analysis*

By deconstructing the lexicon, experts can establish the range of investigation according to the factors they aim to analyse within each area. As Tian and Stewart (2005, p. 292) point out, computerised content analysis is “potentially more objective” than manual content analysis due to the improved precision and dependability offered by technological tools. Popping (2000) argues that studies using computerised content analysis as their main method can easily be verified

and validated by other researchers, providing higher reliability and reproducibility of the results, thanks to its quantitative nature.

To begin the analysis, two steps are necessary: first, establish the domain database structure based using the theoretical framework of operational variables developed earlier. Second, convert the document with all 14 CS1s into Microsoft Word format. After that, an initial text 'cleaning' is needed to identify the specific vocabulary based on individual terms (words).

At the next stage of the analysis, a search algorithm (keywords/variables) is applied to the document case studies assisted by *Antconc* software. This process extracts sections of the text that displays the hierarchical relationships of the operational variables studied, based on (1) the frequency of each keyword appearance, and (2) the lexical positioning of the keyword. Consequently, researchers extracted information related to each variable, finding out for which variables the existing information and knowledge was sufficient and for which it was partly or entirely missing.

## CONCLUSION

As we explained, Mediadelcom's approach is based on the 'meta' aspect of every element in the cycle of research studies that extend analytic strategies into syntheses by using holistic approaches. As Timulak (2013, p. 3) points out: "the variety and diversity in the approach to qualitative meta-analysis is also reflected in the fact that there exist various 'brand name' methods of conducting" this form of analysis. This is relevant for the Mediadelom approach. The holistic nature of the approach means that we combine country case studies, diachronic analysis and comparative methodology. Thus, the brand identity of the Mediadelcom approach is diachronic and comparative qualitative meta-study.

The new knowledge created by Mediadelcom through a critical inventory of the existing studies and information sources empowers media policy experts and analysts to adequately assess the potential of JMC research to improve media governance. Mediadelcom's approach creates a toolbox for analysis and understanding of the current situation on national and European levels.

A limitation, as well as a strength, of the methodology is its holistic nature. The combination of numerous variables based on various theories and methodologies makes it sometimes difficult to find consensus among researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and prompts uncertainty and debate, for example on the selection of sources. In addition, other questions arise, for example: should a bibliographical database include student research if it is an important source of knowledge creation in a particular country? How can the disciplinary boundaries of the JMC be more precisely defined?



The excessively increasing variety of topical issues and research trends places researchers in the parable of the three sightless people who each touch a different part of an elephant and reach wholly individual and wildly incorrect conclusions. In this vein, a holistic approach would enable these same three sightless people to investigate much more effectively and come up with a significantly more complete picture.

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## Notes

Content analysis expert groups' members come from following universities:

(1) The domain of Legal and Ethical Regulation and Accountability: the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy; the Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism, TU Dortmund University; the Mertek Media Monitor; St. Kliment Ohridski University Sofia; the University of Warsaw.

(2) The domain of Journalism: Masaryk University, Università degli Studi di Milano, Örebro University, Mid Sweden University, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and St. Kliment Ohridski University Sofia.

(3) The domain of Media Usage Patterns: the University of Tartu, St. Kliment Ohridski University Sofia, Riga Stradiņš University, Masaryk University, and Jönköping International Business School.

(4) The domain of Media Related Competencies: the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, the Center for Independent Journalism in Bucharest, Riga Stradiņš University, the Faculty of Political Science at Zagreb University, St. Kliment Ohridski University Sofia.

*AntConc* free software: <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>.

# 4

## The evolution of capabilities of monitoring mediascapes in 14 European countries

Epp Lauk, Martín Oller Alonso, Zrinjka Peruško,  
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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, European media, journalism and communication (JMC) research has led to a plethora of studies that address various challenges and developments in contemporary news media. Both these developments and their research bear the traits of the contexts and conditions of the previous periods, mainly of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The advancement of research institutions and structures, and even more the technological innovations (especially the internet and digitalisation), exhibited a remarkable acceleration that has gathered speed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A diachronic look at the development of these research structures and conditions in the context of significant shifts, as well as continuities and disruptions in the 14 EU countries under examination helps to explain and assess their capability of monitoring the news media's transformations. The previous chapters of this book have defined and substantiated the importance, necessity and aims of examining the capability of monitoring mediascapes (CMM). This chapter endeavours to explore the monitoring capabilities of 14 EU countries from a diachronic perspective using comparative qualitative meta-analysis (see Chapter 3). The main categories for this analysis are the evolution of the field of JMC, the institutionalisation of the discipline, and the funding and governance of the research activities in these countries, which are explained in the respective sub-chapters.

All the 14 countries investigated (see the introductory chapter of the book) are members of the European Union. They represent a range, from wealthy to less affluent nations, with a variation in both the quality of democracy and their rank in the Human Development Index as well as minimal differences in the proportion of broadband households (see Table 1 in Appendix). Additionally, they encompass a spectrum from very small (Estonia with 1.3 million inhabitants) to very large (Germany with 84 million inhabitants) countries. From the perspective of this book, it is important to know their ability to invest in research and development

(R&D). This is not only a matter of the size and wealth of a country, but also of the quality of democracy and political and civic culture. A small country could invest more in R&D than a larger and wealthier country, as OECD R&D statistics show (e.g., Sweden spends proportionally more on R&D than Germany).<sup>1</sup>

In addition, history plays a role. In our 14 country sample, six countries – Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and part of Germany (i.e. what was the GDR) – were parts of the Eastern bloc under Soviet control, while Estonia and Latvia were annexed and occupied by the Soviet Union for nearly 50 years. Croatia, in contrast, was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), a non-aligned socialist state that broke away from the Soviet sphere of influence in 1948. Unlike Austria, Germany, Italy and Sweden, the former members of the Eastern bloc did not enjoy the freedom of research for most of the period from the end of World War II to 1989. Greece also had a period of political repression and censorship during the military dictatorship that was in place between 1967 and 1974. All the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in our sample share a common critical turning point that occurred between 1989 and 1991, i.e. the collapse of both the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. When comparing the 14 countries today, various similarities and differences can be found that impact their JMC research and monitoring capabilities – the main theme of the current book.

## INSTITUTIONALISATION OF JMC RESEARCH IN THE 14 COUNTRIES

A significant condition for any research area to achieve the status of independent discipline is the institutionalisation of the field. The most important aspects here are organised scholarly activities and research, networks, education, funding models and the existence of scholarly journals and professional associations. Along with professionalisation and the aspirations of journalism to achieve public recognition and an independent position among other professions, interest in examining journalism's specific features and functions emerged. There are always 'founding fathers', whose works bring some phenomena, topics, or interest areas into the limelight. Research interest in the news media of individual scholars appeared sporadically before any research institution was established in the sample countries. One of the earliest known journalism researchers in Europe was the German scholar Robert Eduard Prutz (1816–1872), who in 1845 published the first history of German journalism (Hanitzsch, 2005). The first research and education institutions appear only when a critical mass of qualified scholars had stepped into the field. In several European countries (including for example, Aus-

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<sup>1</sup> The percentage of Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D in 2020 in Sweden was 3.49, and in Germany 3.13.

<https://www.oecd.org/innovation/inno/researchanddevelopmentstatisticsrds.htm>

tria, Germany, Estonia and Poland in our selection), the institutionalisation of journalism and news media research started during the interwar period, accelerating and broadening remarkably from the 1960s onwards along with general economic growth and the diversification and expansion of mass media in Europe. For the CEE countries, the political turbulence of the 1989–1991 period and the consequent democratic transition opened new horizons politically, economically and culturally. The concurrent transformation of media environments in these countries, as well as their scholarly analysis and interpretation, did not follow the same patterns because their research traditions and conditions differed remarkably. Therefore, when comparing and assessing the countries' capability of monitoring mediascapes, examining the length and nature of the research traditions becomes significant.

Continuity and disruption in the development of the academic study of journalism and news media also have an impact on the capability of monitoring. Relatively stable political, economic and societal conditions support sustainability of the research tradition and practice. Political ruptures can remove freedom of expression but also academic freedom, and bring about censorship, which makes independent research impossible. On the other hand, as the experience of the 1989–1991 political turning point demonstrated, the opening of new and favourable perspectives for all fields of life can occur. Some countries in our 14-country selection have gone through several ruptures, all of which have left their footprints on the ways the media and journalism have developed and how that process has been studied and understood. We can also talk about disciplinary ruptures, which mainly come with political shifts but can also happen for other reasons (e.g., change of funding policy, or change of research agenda). A disciplinary rupture occurs when scholarly attention makes a turn, i.e. the research interest in certain topics or sectors disappears and research turns to something different, mainly to a more topical issue. Viewing monitoring capability with these aspects in mind helps not only to record the acquired knowledge but also to notice the gaps in this knowledge.

## ESTABLISHED STATUS OF JMC STUDIES – GERMANY, AUSTRIA AND SWEDEN

The issue of disciplinary identity initially emerged in Germany, where the first journalism research institutions appeared in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> According to Kreutler and Fengler (2022), throughout the 1920s, several institutions were founded for studying journalism under the label of *Zeitungskunde* or

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Bücher (1847–1930) established the first University institute for *Zeitungskunde* (newspaper studies) at Leipzig University in 1916, “which had a structural impact on the discipline’s development across the continent” (Wiedemann et al., 2018, p.11).

*Zeitungswissenschaft* (Newspaper Studies). A complex debate about a new term that would include the content of media other than newspapers resulted in the creation of the term *Publizistik* for this kind of scholarly activity. The term became widely used for newly founded or re-established institutes in the field after World War II in West Germany. The discipline faced two destructive phases of political pressure and ideological influence: first under the National Socialist regime and then in East Germany. The period after World War II saw not only the foundation of two separate German states, but also a complete reconfiguration of all types of media activity. In the GDR (German Democratic Republic, East Germany), the journalism faculty at Leipzig University clearly followed socialist ideology. It was closed during the reunification phase and re-established in 1993. In the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany) in the 1960s, a turn towards understanding the discipline as an empirically oriented social science took place, identified as *Kommunikationswissenschaft* (Communication Studies). Over the following decades, the discipline diversified and grew significantly. In parallel to *Kommunikationswissenschaft*, a more philological approach, *Medienwissenschaft* (Media Studies), developed, usually placed within the Humanities. Although there is some exchange between the two fields, two separate research associations exist, which the German research funding body, the DFG, treats as separate entities.

German reunification brought another reconfiguration of the media system – and monitoring systems – to the ‘new’ federal states (*Bundesländer*) of the former East Germany. The increase in university professorships from a total of seven in 1970 to 120 in 2012, working in more than 30 academic institutions, is a clear illustration of the development of the field. Simultaneously, the number of researchers grew along with the emergence of new research networks, funding structures and new research institutions. The DGPuK (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft*/German Communication Association) estimates the size of the research community today as totalling 19 thematic divisions with around 1,300 members. The multitude of academic, non-academic and institutional research centres and commercial media monitoring companies demonstrates a considerable monitoring and data gathering capability. In effect, the statutory commission tasked with monitoring concentration in the media sector (*KEK*) can base its reports on scores of different data sources. On the other hand, however, the federal administrative structure of 16 federal states (*Bundesländer*) makes it harder to get a structured and representative picture of the studies and existing data on the overall German media landscape because of its fragmentation and decentralised governance.

The varied landscape of JMC research in Germany is also reflected in numerous academic journals, such as *Publizistik*, *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, *Studies in Communication and Media*, *Global Media Journal* (German edition) and several more specialised journals that focus on specific aspects of the fields. In professional discourse in the media field, the two journalists’ unions (*DJV* and *dju* as a part of *ver.di*) and private publishers’ associations (*BDZV*, *VDZ* and *Vaunet*,

which is mainly for newspapers, magazines and audiovisual media) are especially visible and relevant.

In Austria, compared to Germany, we see a commensurately late institutionalisation of journalism, media and communication studies. The first department of communication was founded as early as 1939 at the University of Vienna. However, the evolution of communication studies from a historical and philological discipline to an empirical social science took until the 1970s, which can be characterised as a period of consolidation for Austrian media and communication research (Eberwein et al., 2022). The advent of two new academic institutions – the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Salzburg (1969) and the Department of Media and Communications at the University of Klagenfurt (1971) – accelerated this development. These three universities are also the leading centres of journalism research in the country, with numerous national and international projects. The University of Klagenfurt and the Austrian Academy of Science jointly operate the Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies (CMC), which focuses largely on international research (e.g., through regular contributions to the Media Pluralism Monitor). Academic journals in Austrian media and communication studies (e.g., *MedienJournal*, *Medienimpulse*, *medien & zeit*, among others) primarily focus on university-based research.

In Austria, the discipline is well established and the data and information gathering on the mediascape is coordinated. The governing authorities – the Austrian Communications Authority (KommAustria) and *Rundfunk und Telekom Regulierungs-GmbH (RTR)* –, as well as the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) release regular reports on audio-visual media usage, various analyses of audience research and programming, and financial statements, etc. In addition, various non-academic research organisations, centres and non-profit associations, such as the Research Institute for the Law of Electronic Mass Media (REM), the Interdisciplinary Media Ethics Centre (IMEC) and the Austrian Press Council are involved in media monitoring and research reporting in various formats. Initiative Quality in Journalism (IQ) is an association of media researchers and practitioners that organises regular events with a focus on the quality and accountability of Austrian journalism. The commercial media is mostly involved in market-oriented audience research, although their data and related studies are not always publicly available. However, data from key sources such as Media Analysis, Radiotest, Teletest, or Austrian Web Analysis, are often used for secondary analysis by academic researchers. As an attempt to synchronise single-media studies and live up to the realities of cross-media usage in the present, the Media Server study has been developed as an all-media survey in Austria that covers print media, television, radio, internet and outdoor advertising. The first survey was conducted in 2014–2015 and repeated in 2019. In sum, JMC studies in Austria can be described as a field generally acknowledged by the authorities and academia, despite its comparably late institutionalisation; its advancement is secured both administratively and financially.

In Sweden, social and cultural background factors have had a stronger effect on the development of media and communication studies than in any other Mediadecom country. As with Austria, journalism and media studies in Sweden have developed within a stable and secure environment without any fatal disruptions. Today, media and communication, as well as journalism studies as the acknowledged disciplines are taught and researched in 14 Swedish universities.

Being the first country in the world to include a Freedom of Information Act in its constitution, in 1766, freedom of expression and information has been the lasting framework for the development of Swedish journalism and media studies. Along with the other Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland), Sweden shares the tradition of viewing a fully functional system for the provision of news and information as a responsibility of the state that cannot be left to the market. Therefore, the wide-ranging freedom of the media is complemented by rather extensive regulation on private broadcasters and advertisers, and by support for public broadcasting as well as broad support for newspaper journalism. Thus, the authorities are committed to continuously monitoring the development of the media sector, often in collaboration with other actors in the media environment (Berglez et al., 2022).

The beginning of the institutionalisation of media and communication studies in Sweden falls approximately into the same period as in Austria, i.e. in the 1960s, when the expansion of mass media led to greater demand for analysis, education and critical reflection (Hyvönen et al., 2018; Springer, 2021). Since the 1970s, the University of Gothenburg has been one of the leading institutes for media and communication studies. Associated with the University, the NORDICOM research centre was established in the 1970s. NORDICOM collects and publishes statistics, books, bibliographies and reports on various aspects of media, as well as the leading Nordic media and communication research journal *Nordicom Review*. It also conducts the annual Media Barometer survey on media use and research.

Within the past 30 years, certain diversification of the research traditions and orientations in media and journalism studies have taken shape. For example, Stockholm University has developed a strong culture studies orientation, while at Lund University, media research is largely oriented to the relationship between the media and democracy, as well as gender and media; Karlstad University is known for its projects on various aspects of journalism; and Uppsala is known for its focus on ICTs, digitisation and internetisation (Berglez et al., 2022). The universities collaborate on various national and international projects. Springer (2021) estimates that around 250 scholars are currently active in the field, with approximately 200 of them being members of the Swedish Association for Media and Communication Research (FSMK).

A diverse range of other actors is involved in media monitoring and studies, including government authorities (especially the Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority MPRT), commercial monitoring enterprises, trade associations and

NGOs. Most of their data and reports are publicly available, as legally guaranteed access to information is considered among Swedish civic rights and is part of Swedish culture. The multitude of monitoring actors who are provided with sufficient economic resources produce data and knowledge on all aspects of media development, which demonstrates the excellent monitoring capability the country possesses. However, Berglez et al. (2022) in their report on Sweden's media research capability point out the risk of data overproduction, especially if the collected data is "not innately useful either for the media sector or for wider society".

In Sweden, funds for media research primarily come from the Swedish Research Council, *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*, *Östersjöstiftelsen*, *Forte*, *Formas*, *Vinnova*, *Wallenberg Foundations*, *Hamrin-stiftelsen*, *Anderstiftelsen*, and EU-funded programs such as Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe. Despite a variety of funding sources, media and communication scholars in Sweden often perceive their discipline as being disadvantaged in relation to more established research fields, such as political science. Analysis by Peter Berglez et al. (2022) also demonstrates that it is difficult to estimate the importance and extent of externally funded research in relation to the available internal resources of each university, which is usually embedded in employment.

## DISCIPLINARY FRAGMENTATION – ITALY AND GREECE

Another noticeable trait in the disciplinary development is a certain fragmentation of the field in some countries. For instance, although the institutionalisation of JMC in Italy also goes back to 1960 (when the first journalism and communication programme was founded at the University of Perugia), subsequent development did not lead to the discipline achieving an established status (in contrast to Austria) or to the acknowledgment of its autonomy (in contrast to Sweden). According to the *Quacquarelli Symonds* ranking list (QS, 2023), there are currently 42 universities in Italy offering 59 JMC programmes. The programmes focused specifically on journalism and digital media studies and research is dispersed among 12 universities, the University of Siena, the University of Padua, the American University of Rome, the University of Milan, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, in Milan, among them. Most of the JMC research is conducted in the Universities, which also participate in international projects such as CONCISE on science communication, Media Pluralism Monitor, V-Dem, the European Media Ownership Monitor (EurOMo) and others.

Splendore et al. (2022) are critical of the data offered by the market monitoring units of the media arguing that they are often poor in terms of available variables, which hinders cross-data analysis. In addition, although various independent Italian organisations or professional associations can be considered reliable in this respect, they offer data that are often only useful to themselves, thus not contributing to the advancement of the field. They also argue that there is parallel data



production, but very little cooperation and communication between the media industry and academia.

The three main coordinating institutions related to research on JMC are the Communications Regulatory Authority (AGCOM), which oversees the General Public Broadcasting Service and the media landscape in general, the National Research Program (PNR) and the Italian Ministry of the University and Research. The three main coordinating institutions are also the main funders of JMC research through various initiatives and programmes.

Splendore et al. (2022) argue there are many researchers and that extensive research is conducted in Italy, but the results are rarely made available to a broad range of media specialists and practitioners. Furthermore, there is insufficient coordination between governing institutions and universities and other institutions that collect data and conduct research. This makes it difficult to get an adequate picture of the current situation in JMC research. As is the case in some other countries (e.g., Czechia, Estonia), academia has very little collaboration with the practical field of journalism and media.

Italy has several academic journals dedicated to media communication, but only seven are indexed in Scopus: the *Journal of Science Communication*, *Qwerty*, *Comunicazione Politica*, *Comunicazioni Sociali*, *Reti Saperi Linguaggi*, *Visual Ethnography*, and *Languages Cultures Mediation*, among which none specialises in journalism or media studies.

A degree of disciplinary fragmentation can also be viewed in the case of Greece. Psychogiopoulou and Kandyla (2022), point out the heterogeneity of the research and data sources available, while a comprehensive and cohesive approach to data collection across public and private bodies is missing. Next to academic research, public bodies and independent authorities collect media-related data on aspects under their remit. Professional associations and market research bodies also engage in data collection activities. Different aspects of the state of the media are regularly reviewed by international non-profit organisations (e.g., Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, etc.), while European and international surveys also cover Greece (e.g., Eurobarometer, Pisa).

The first university department in the field of JMC – the Department of Communication, Media, and Culture of Panteion University – was founded in the early 1990s. Other notable departments include those at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the University of Western Macedonia, and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

For the Greek Research and Innovation Institute (ELIDEK), established in 2016, media and communication studies are still not a specific discipline as no public funding mechanism has so far been created. Many Greek media and communication scholars conduct research within European and other international projects. The National Documentation Centre offers online access to research produced by the Greek academic community in the field and hosts journals of

interest. Greece has had an academic journal dedicated solely to communication and journalism, *Zitimata Epikoinonias (Communication Issues)*, but it ceased publication in 2015. However, there are some journals in other fields that address media-related issues, such as *Law of Technology and Communication*.

Greece is a latecomer to the field of journalism and media studies, which partly explains the current status of the discipline and lack of specialised journals. Independent scholarly work in Greece experienced a critical rupture during the 1967–1974 period of the military dictatorship, when a lack of academic freedom, as well as other democratic freedoms, fatally restricted the scale and scope of academic research.

## FROM THE SOCIALIST PAST TO THE CAPITALIST PRESENT – (RE)BUILDING JMC STUDIES IN THE CEE COUNTRIES

The transition to free media and the capitalist market with private ownership was a significant juncture that influenced media development in CEE countries from the early 1990s onwards. Adopting media laws and transforming state broadcasting into public service broadcasting were the most critical media reforms during the 1990s. These reforms were part of a much broader range of political, economic and social transformations that had to break the old structures and change the mentality of the people. On this journey, CEE countries faced various challenges and moved forward at different speeds. During the transition period, for journalism and communication studies in CEE countries, the initial ‘reform’ was to re-define and re-orientate research according to the changed circumstances. The only places where journalism was taught (and within limits researched) before the 1990s were universities, which had to follow communist ideology. Social sciences and humanities were politicised.

An exception here is the former Yugoslavia. Slavko Splichal’s analysis (2020) of 32 Yugoslav social science journals between 1964 and 1986 showed that the discipline drew on a variety of schools of thought, including critical theory, functionalism and “productive inclusivism”. This paradigmatic parentage was firmly ‘Western’, with little use or knowledge of Soviet media theory during this time. Therefore, of the nine studied CEE countries, Croatia has the longest tradition of media research, with social-scientific approaches predominating in the field. The discipline’s institutionalisation began in 1969 with the introduction of journalism courses at the University of Zagreb. Here the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences introduced empirical study of public opinion in the early 1960s, and *Informatologia Yugoslavica* (today under the title *Informatologia*), founded in 1969, was the first academic journal in the broader field in Croatia. After living through the 1991–1995 War of Independence and its consequences, academic scholarship revived relatively quickly. Already since 2000 Croatia has experienced growth in academic departments related to media and

communication. Analysis of the Croatian corpus of published research between 2000 and 2020 identified more than 400 publications on journalism, the legal and ethical domains of the media, media usage and competencies. Several universities offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in journalism, communication, and media (e.g., the Universities of Zagreb, Rijeka, Zadar, Dubrovnik and Sjever). The two main research centres in Croatia are the Department for Culture and Communication at the Institute for Development and International Relations and the Centre for Media and Communication Research (*CIM*) at the University of Zagreb. Croatia has numerous NGOs conducting media-related research. Notable organisations include *GONG* (Citizens Organise to Monitor Elections), *DKMK* (Society for Media Culture), the Centre for Democracy and Law Miko Tripalo, and the Croatian Law Centre (Peruško & Vozab, 2022).

Six academic journals are devoted to media and communication research. All academic journals published in Croatia are, thanks to a mandatory policy, available in open access.<sup>3</sup> The first post-socialist journal was *Media Research*, established in 1995 – earlier than respective journals in most CEE countries. The journal is referenced in SCOPUS. Another SCOPUS-referenced journal is *Media Studies* (since 2010, also referenced in WoS). Other journals are *MediAnali* (2007–2018), *In Medias Res* (since 2012), *Media, Culture and Public Relations* (since 2012), and *CM Communication Management Review* (since 2016).

Poland is another CEE country where media and communication studies have been recognised (since 2011) as autonomous research disciplines. Today, over 70 centres offer education and research in communications and the media. Up to the early 1990s, JMC in Polish universities were traditionally researched under the auspices of other disciplines, most often philology. The tradition continued throughout the 1990s and 2000s, which is evidence of a certain path dependency. However, research centres at several universities were also developing social scientific approaches (Jagiellonian University, the Universities of Warsaw, Poznań, Wrocław, Gdańsk, etc.). The first scholarly association of the field – the Polish Communication Association – was founded in 2007, its “primary goal was to support the recognition of media studies by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education” (Glowacki et al., 2022). Research progress in Poland includes the establishment of the Committee of Social Communication and Media Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in January 2021. The social sciences panel of the National Science Centre – the funding and administrative body – includes communications and media in its budgets for grants. Various funding schemes are available for the media and communications’ projects. There are also several other national funding programmes and sources, such as the National Program for the Development of the Humanities (NPRH), the National Center for Research and Development (NCBiR), and the Ministry of Education and Science. There is also a government body called *Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej* (NAWA), which sup-

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://hrcak.srce.hr>

ports international academic research and exchange, alongside foundations and projects in partnerships with other countries, such as the Kościuszko Foundation, the Polish American Fulbright Commission, Norway Grants and the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies.

In two national databases (POLON, an Information Network on Polish Science and PBN, the Polish Scientific Database) information on researchers, publications, research projects and grants is available. Public opinion research organisations conduct regular studies of media users' attitudes and share their findings publicly. The National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) publishes all the relevant information about existing media regulation and provides resources on media literacy and education on its website.

The field of JMC in Poland is well covered with scholarly journals in Polish and English. Most prominent among them is the *Central European Journal of Communication* published by the Polish Communication Association and indexed in Web of Science, Scopus and other international databases. The oldest journal published by a university is *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* (Press Studies Notes) founded in 1960 and run by Jagiellonian University in Kraków. There are currently approximately 20 journals covering research in media and communications in Poland (Glowacki et al., 2022).

The Mediadecom bibliographic database<sup>4</sup> illustrates the strengthening of the position of JMC studies within national research due to a supportive science policy. The numbers of academic publications (articles, books and edited book chapters) increased sharply after 2009. Polish JMC research is predominantly national (80%) and in Polish, and therefore its international visibility is limited.

In Hungary, prior to independence in 1989, the only university department providing journalism education was at Eötvös Lóránd University in Budapest. Under state socialism the department was closed in 1957 because some of its professors and students participated in the revolutionary events of 1956. Since then, the Hungarian Journalists Association's journalism school had a monopoly on journalism education (Bajomi-Lázár, 2009) and there was no university-level journalism education until 1991. During the 1956–1991 period no journalism research could be performed other than what was ideologically suitable to the regime.

Hungarian JMC research had an emphasis on communication from the end of 1969, when the Mass Communication Research Centre was established. The Centre became internationally acknowledged in public opinion and audience research, and its empirical studies of social psychology were recognised, especially in the 1980s. The closure of the Centre in 1991 coincides with the appearance of communication departments at the universities, the first of which was launched at

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<sup>4</sup> The Polish database: <https://datadoi.ee/handle/33/522>

the University of Pécs in the same year. A disciplinary rupture can be detected in the fact that the new communication departments did not continue the research tradition developed by the Centre, instead communication was added to the existing departments of sociology, film studies and other fields. Journalism and media as scholarly disciplines began to take shape as late as the 2000s. In 2019, 16 universities were listed with media and/or journalism programmes (Pelle, 2019). The faculties still have a human resources issue: they predominantly employ teachers with degrees from other social sciences, as well as practitioners without degrees due to lack of sufficient teachers with degrees in journalism and media (Polyák et al., 2022). Consequently, teachers with different qualifications and competences are rarely doing research in journalism or media communication.

Along with other fields in culture and education successive Fidesz-KDNP governments (since 2010) have gradually increased state control of JMC education and research. In 2013, the number of state-funded university places was reduced. In 2012, the Prime Minister appointed chancellors to the universities, responsible for management and financial administration. An even more overwhelming control mechanism was installed in 2021, when most universities were taken over by foundations run by boards of trustees representing the governing party. In reaction to this there has been an increase in professional debate and the emergence of critical voices and research.

Journalism, communication and media studies are not separate disciplines in the structure of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), although in 2018 the Scientific Committee on Communication and Media Studies was established as a platform to coordinate communication and media studies and related disciplines such as sociology, political science, anthropology and psychology. In 2019, the government deprived the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) of its network of research institutes and reorganised it into a new institution, the Eötvös Lóránd Research Network.

The Hungarian case demonstrates the importance of the field of media and communication studies from a political perspective. All authoritarian and dictatorial regimes have made attempts to control the institutional structures and content of research. In Hungary, research centres close to government have been strengthened or newly established over the past decade to analyse the domestic media from perspectives favoured by Fidesz and to counterbalance critical voices. Their experts regularly appear in the pro-government media and participate in centralised government communication. Polarisation of pro-government and opposition attitudes is characteristic of the whole of Hungarian society, also dividing scholarly communities.

Academic research on JMC in Hungary is dominated by communication studies. Media research projects (especially those related to journalism research) are rare, both in national grants and in large EU research grants. The only possibility for funding large, basic research projects is through the National Research, Devel-

opment and Innovation Office. The Research Centre for Social Sciences has funded smaller national journalism and media research projects in different universities over the past two decades. Hungarian scholars also participate in international research projects such as the Worlds of Journalism Study, EU Kids Online and some EU-funded Horizon 2020 projects. Polyák et al. (2022) say:

The Hungarian media authority, the Media Council of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) operates the Institute for Media Studies, which provides support for the Media Council by analysing among others the media regulation, the history of journalism, and the phenomena of new media. The authority is constantly under fire from the professional as well as the academic field, mainly because of its dependence on the government parties and the resulting problematic procedures. (p. 219)

Private companies carry out audience measurement for television, print and online media. Audience measurement for radio is provided by the NMHH. Some self-regulatory organisations and various associations also carry out surveys and research that provide information on the media market. The largest media research NGO, MerteK Media Monitor, provides media law and media market analysis, engages with the industry through journalism research and content analysis of the different media outlets and regularly conducts media consumption surveys.

The official scientific research database is the Hungarian Scientific Works Repository (MTMT) where Hungarian scholars record their studies. The Repository of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences contains more than 137,000 scientific articles, books and chapters, 79% of them open access. Three main communication and media studies journals are published in Hungary: *Médiakutató*, *Jel-Kép* and *KOME* (in English). There are two more in the field of media law: *Infokommunikáció és Jog (Info-communication and Law)*, and *In Medias Res*.

Critical media and communication research in Estonia began with research on Estonian journalism history in the second half of the 1950s. In 1954, the first journalism curriculum was launched at the Faculty of History and Languages as part of Estonian philology studies. As journalism (along with the other social sciences) was regarded in the Soviet Union as an ideological subject, no adequate research in contemporary journalism was possible. Therefore, the 'founding father' of journalism, professor Juhan Peegel (1919–2007), chose the only possible option, the history of the Estonian press from the first periodical published in Estonian in 1766 to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Research on the history of national journalism and the profession as a whole was an attempt to maintain the professional values of Estonian journalism and create the tradition of its research. Journalism history remained the main research area throughout the Soviet period, especially after the launch of the Department of Journalism in 1976 at Tartu University. Several books were published and research projects carried in the early years of renewed Independence in the 1990s. The research developed from his-

torical descriptions to analysis and comparisons, while broadening the scope of approaches and methods. An important milestone in journalism history research was a collective monograph on the historical development of the Baltic media and society from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to 1993, titled “Towards a Civic Society. The Baltic Media’s Long Road to Freedom: Perspectives on History, Ethnicity and Journalism” (1993). This was the first comprehensive study of Baltic journalisms in English, and simultaneously the fruit of the first collaboration between media scholars in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Another immediate result of this collaboration was the foundation of the Baltic Association for Media Research (BAMR). Since the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, studies of Estonian journalism history have been reduced due to a lack of funding.

Sociological media studies emerged at Tartu University in the mid-1960s. During the late 1960s, sociological media research was carried out by the Laboratory of Sociology at the University of Tartu. In 1965, Tartu local newspaper *Edasi* carried out a readership survey. In 1975, the Laboratory was closed by the authorities, but the audience research tradition remained. Between the 1970s and 2007, the research unit at Estonian Radio and Television conducted regular monitoring of audience structure, interests and expectations. In 1988, the first journalists’ survey was carried out by Tartu University researchers, followed by several surveys of newspaper readership and content analysis in the subsequent years.

The first decade of renewed Independence was a new beginning for research in the humanities and social sciences, including the fields of media and communication. Western scholarly literature became widely available, membership of international scholarly organisations became possible and contacts and cooperation with foreign counterparts began. This was also the time when a certain sociological turn towards socio-cultural analysis and comparison took place in Estonian journalism and media research. New issues were included on the research agenda, such as the professionalisation of journalism, the sociology of news, various text and document analyses, discourses of censorship, journalism and media ethics, media policy and media literacy. The first articles by Estonian media scholars began to appear in international journals as well as in edited collections published internationally.

The 1990s was also the time when competition-based research funding was set up. Due to the new science policy of the 1990s, well prepared young researchers started their careers and were able to compete successfully for EU research grants when these became accessible in 2004. The JMC studies academic research agenda is therefore largely dependent on EU funding.

Currently in Estonia, the main data and knowledge collecting and producing actors in JMC are academic research units, groups and single researchers at the University of Tartu and Tallinn University. The number of individuals involved in journalism and media research in Estonia is around 40. At Tallinn University, the interdisciplinary Centre of Excellence in Media Innovation and Digital Culture

(MEDIT) was established in 2015. MEDIT focuses on the processes of cultural change and innovation that accompany digital media and experiments with new and innovative forms of digital media. The Baltic Film, Media and Arts School at Tallinn University carries out projects related to film skills, digital communication and media literacy.

The change in funding conditions in 2013, which increased the size of grants but simultaneously reduced the number of them, put the humanities and social sciences in an unfavourable situation as funding logic favours the medical, natural and technological sciences; the field of social sciences has never been a priority in Estonia. For instance, media audience studies at Tartu University have not received national funding since the last large project ended in 2014. Neither exhaustive nor regular monitoring takes place anymore.

Outside academia, some research companies and NGOs (such as PRAXIS) collect data and provide limited analysis of various sectors of journalism and the media. The Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority collects data on broadcasting and broadcasting licences; the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate collects cases relating to freedom of information and provides a limited amount of analysis. The Development Monitoring Institute published an important report on Estonia's freedom of information in August 2022. Statistics Estonia and commercial research enterprises (e.g., Kantar EMOR) and media organisations gather data on media usage. However, the information collected by commercial actors is either paid or not available to the public or researchers. There are currently no specific legal provisions requiring the disclosure of ownership information. Nonetheless, general information related to entrepreneurship is electronically available in the Business Register.

Estonia does not have national journals that specialise in journalism and media. There is one Estonian-language non-peer reviewed yearbook, published by the Estonian Academic Journalism Association, which first appeared in 2010. Two journals indexed in WoS – *Trames* and *Acta Historica Tallinensia* – sometimes publish articles on journalism and media. The Baltic Film, Media and Arts School at Tallinn University publishes the interdisciplinary open access journal *Baltic Screen Media Review* twice a year, which is the only journal in the Baltic Sea region that focuses on all forms of audiovisual culture emerging from the region.

As in Estonia, the roots of Latvia's media research go back to the establishment of university level journalism education. The first attempt to begin teaching journalism in Latvia was made in 1940, when on the initiative of the Latvian Press Association, the Institute of Journalism was prepared to start providing courses in the autumn. However, in June 1940 the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic countries and this plan never realised. As a result of the ensuing Sovietisation, Latvia's national journalism was destroyed in the same way as Estonia's.

In the post-World War II decades and up to 1991, Latvia was part of the Soviet Union. At that time in the Soviet Union, journalism studies were possible only



in Communist Party Colleges and in Russian. Estonia and Latvia were, however, exceptions. According to Plokste (2009), a journalism study programme was started at the Faculty of Philology at the State University of Latvia in 1945 to demonstrate the achievements of education and culture in Soviet Latvia. In 1947, the Department of Journalism and Editing was established. The new dean of the Faculty, Andrejs Upts, a writer who became professor at the sovietised university, took responsibility for this task, although he also endeavoured to give future journalists a good philological education. Admission ceased for ideological reasons in 1951 and the last graduation took place in 1955. The education and training of Latvian journalists continued at the Communist Party School until 1969, when the Journalism Department at the State University of Latvia was reopened.

Under the pressure of Russification between the 1970s and 1980s, the Journalism Department admitted equal numbers of Russian- and Latvian-speaking students, enrolled in alternate years. Little space was left for the Latvian language and culture in the curricula, which had to follow Moscow State University study plans. Only in 1988 did it become possible to develop new curricula based on national language and culture. In 1991, communication science was added as a BA programme and in 1992 the Department was named the Department of Communication and Journalism. In 2000, the Faculty of Social Sciences was established, and the Department became a part of this faculty (Plokste, 2009). Since then, the Faculty of Social Sciences has been one of the leading institutions in the field of JMC research. The only academic journals dealing with media issues were published at the University of Latvia: *Daudzveidība (Diversity)* focused on media and democracy, *Agora* was a collection of research papers from various projects and *Domino* published student research works. None of these periodicals was peer reviewed and they only published a couple of issues each due to a lack of funding and contributions. The longest-running publication devoting space to media and communication issues is the peer reviewed *Acta Universitatis Latviensis Communication Volume* (Rožukalne et al., 2022).

Study programmes and departments of communication emerged in other universities in Latvia starting at the end of the 1990s, for example Riga Stradiņš University, the Turība Applied Business University and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences. Media and journalism researchers work in various departments in two regional higher education institutions, Liepāja University and Rēzekne Academy of Technologies. The Centre for Media Studies at Stockholm School of Economics in Riga focuses on media business and investigative journalism. The Baltic Centre for Media Excellence is a hub for smart journalism in the Baltics, the countries of the Eastern Partnership and beyond. The Centre carries out media training and consultancy, facilitates advances in media literacy and digital activism and publishes various reports. The research in these institutions is not coordinated and there is no clear specialisation among them.

Along with universities some institutions for sociological research or political study (for example, the Baltic Institute for Social Sciences) as well as NGOs (for example, *Providus* and *Delna*) have contributed to research on media and journalism, carrying out projects on possible risks to civil society and deliberative communication (e.g., minorities and social integration, hidden political advertising, etc.). Commercial research companies (*TNS/KANTAR Latvia*, *Gemius Latvia*, *SKDS*, *Latvijas Fakti*, etc.) are involved in regular surveys of media audiences and public opinion.

The story told above demonstrates that for various reasons in Latvian academic institutions the teaching of journalism, media and communication has received far more state attention and funding than research, which suffers from a shortage of human resources. At the beginning of the 21st century, there still were no doctoral level media and communication programmes in Latvian universities, nor any doctoral level researchers with a Latvian degree. The first few Latvians who gained doctoral degrees in media and communication did so in other countries. Currently, the National Network of Science, at the Academy of Science, which issues expert accreditation from the Latvian Council of Science to researchers based on their applications, counts 13 experts in the field of journalism, media and communication. A cursory look at the bibliographies (including the *Mediadelcom* bibliographic database) shows that 15 names appear more than five times as authors (over the past 20 years). The lack of qualified researchers has also prevented Latvian media and communication scholars from gaining the status of leading partner in important research programmes such as *Horizon 2020*, *Cost Action* and others. At the national level, most media studies projects are small-scale initiatives carried out by individual researchers, as no regular, targeted and well-organised funding system has been established for the field. These unfavourable conditions for the development of journalism and media research as a scholarly discipline have a detrimental effect on the national and international competitiveness of Latvian media scholars.

The early history of the institutionalisation of JMC research in Czechia (then part of Czechoslovakia) begins with the establishment of the Free School of Political Studies in Prague, in the 1928–1929 academic year as the first institution specifically for educating journalists. The courses were suspended during World War II and continued from 1946 to 1950 at the College of Political and Social Science, which replaced the Free School. The first university level positions for journalism lecturers came at Charles University in Prague in 1946 and at Palacký University in Olomouc in 1947, before the former Czechoslovakia became the part of the Soviet bloc in 1948 (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2009). Journalism was, according to Soviet doctrine, the promoter of communist ideology, and journalism education had to fulfil this task. Journalism education began at the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague at the beginning of the 1953–1954 academic year. The watchful eye of the authorities was, however, not as strict as in Estonia and Latvia, and a certain emancipation of journalism education became possible. In 1968 the

Faculty of Social Sciences and Journalism, which valued journalism's cultural and literary traditions, was established. However, in the aftermath of the Prague Spring, in 1968, the faculty was closed in 1972 and a new Faculty of Journalism that operated in close cooperation with the Communist Party and journalists' union was established. The intellectual background of study here was Marxist-Leninist theory of the role of journalism in socialist society, blended with criticism of Western concepts (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2009). Education that was based on ideological dogmas, did not need a scientific approach, and any ideology-free research was consequently not developed.

The political and societal transformations of the 1990s caused a critical change in the concept of journalistic education. Along with journalism, media studies and communication were added to the journalists' education, and in 1993 the Department of Mass Communication (later Media Studies) and the Department of Journalism were founded, which were later merged to become the Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism at Charles University. Journalism programmes were also established in other universities, for example Palacký University in Olomouc in 1992, Masaryk University in Brno in 1995 (initially within the sociology programme) and the Technical University in Ostrava in 2006 (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2009). There is also the Department of Media Studies, at the private Metropolitan University Prague, which continues the tradition of the Charles University's Institute in terms of staff and themes.

During the period of the 1990s to 2000s, journalism and media research largely described transformations in media markets, ownership changes and public service broadcasting issues. The small number of qualified scholars and doctoral students were able to cover a limited range of topics, while the selection of topics was more a reflection of the authors' and media organisations' individual interests than any systematic research strategy. Consequently, many important areas remained uncovered. In 2008, two years after the first national professional journal, *Mediální studia* (Media Studies), was founded, the editors revealed that they were facing a shortage of potentially publishable articles (Waschková Čísařová et al., 2022). However, the position of the journal has strengthened over the past decade along with the gradual advancement of both academic research and the qualifications of the researchers. Apart from the one and only specialist journal, media-related research articles also appear in *Sociologický časopis* (*Journal of Sociology*), and *Sociální studia* (*Social Studies*).

During the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the main departments of journalism and media studies gradually developed a certain degree of specialisation. The Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism at Charles University in Prague has a strong tradition of research in media history, media literacy, and changes in the Czech media system. The tradition of the literary-historical approach, descriptions and theoretical essays continued for some time. Together with an increase in the number of young researchers with doctoral degrees join-

ing academia, the role of empirical research began to grow and the scope of research broadened to include media policy, political communication, issues of professional journalism, television series, etc. In the past decade, the Department of Media Studies and Journalism at Masaryk University in Brno has established itself with interdisciplinary audience studies, especially in relation to the internet and new media. Apart from the department's researchers, there are also researchers in the Interdisciplinary Research Team on Internet and Society. Researchers also work on history, journalistic professional roles, local journalism and cultural research. The emphasis is mainly on empirical research based on sociology and psychology. The Department of Media and Cultural Studies and Journalism at Palacký University in Olomouc is more theoretical at its core. Only a few examples of empirical research can be found. Historical research is strongly represented, but audience research is missing.

Relevant data for journalism and media research is also gathered by the media industry, especially on audience use of various media. While these data were initially accessible, they have been gradually monetised and become inaccessible for public and research use. As research grants are small, it is not always possible to purchase the necessary data from media organisations.

The Foundation of Independent Journalism (an NGO), established in 2016, often publishes various reports on media performance and journalistic issues. The public service broadcaster Czech Television publishes annual reports on viewership, measures the popularity of its broadcasts and publishes reports by external evaluators on broadcast quality. Media organisations sporadically produce descriptions of market conditions and analysis of media ownership, but any noticeable cooperation between academia and the media industry is missing.

The capacity for academic research is limited because of the scarcity of funding. Two main grant agencies provide funding for journalism and media research. The Czech Science Foundation, established in 1993, awards grants in the social sciences, among them media research. The Czech Republic Technology Agency, founded in 2009, offered a new grant programme for social sciences in 2017, but this is oriented towards applied research. Journalism and media researchers can apply to both agencies for grants. However, the success rate is relatively low for projects in the social sciences and humanities (20–30%), and in particular journalism and media. There are no special calls for media-related projects, as journalism and media studies are not officially recognised as specific disciplines.

The beginning of the Slovak JMC research goes hand-in-hand with Czechia, as both had the same history as the two parts of Czechoslovakia until 1993, when the two independent states were established. The institutionalisation of journalism education started at the Free School of Political Science in Prague in 1928, which stopped during World War II, and continued in 1946–1950, which repeats the same story as early Czech journalism education. The Slovak history of JMC re-

search experienced several fatal ruptures that did not allow the field a continuous development and left consequences palpable to the present day.

Academic journalism education in Slovakia was established in 1952 at the Department of Journalism at Comenius University in Bratislava. In 1953, the Methodological Research Cabinet was founded for research into radio broadcasting. The Cabinet operated until 1996. As the early education of former Czechoslovakian journalists had a mainly practical orientation it did not produce research. In the 1950s and 1960s, the content of journalism studies at Bratislava University was closely related to the study of Slovak culture, language and literature, as a balance to the compulsory ideological bias. Thanks to professor Mieroslav Hysko, in addition to more practical specialisation on radio, TV and press, the journalism curriculum offered courses on national and international politics, economics, culture and sport. In parallel, the Journalism Study Institute (established in 1955) was engaged in scientific research in journalism throughout several decades (in the 1990s under the name of the National Centre of Media Communication), until it ceased activities in 2000 (Vatrál, 2009).

Deviation from the official framework of academic education resulted in staff being criminalised for 'contra-revolutionary' activities during the military occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 by the Warsaw Pact armies. Nine out of eleven teachers had to leave the University. In the aftermath the study programme was filled with courses on Marxism-Leninism theory, mass media tools and propaganda, the contemporary politics of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, etc. The role of the journalist was reduced to the role of Communist Party propagandist. Comenius University expanded journalism teaching and research in 1975 with the opening of three Departments: theory and history of journalism; periodical press and news agency journalism; television and radio journalism. In addition, the Cabinet of theory and history of journalism was established. In 1992 the departments were merged into the Department of Journalism (Vatrál, 2009).

Until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, which removed the communist regime in Czechoslovakia and abolished censorship, research had to follow official ideological doctrines, although certain deviations were possible. The Journalism Study Institute was engaged in sociological media research, theoretical and methodological issues and interdisciplinary research in journalism and the mass media. The Institute also founded the oldest academic journal in the field, *Otázky žurnalistiky* (*Issues of Journalism*) in 1958, which continues to appear as a quarterly publication published by the Department of Journalism at Comenius University.

Since 1989, alongside the transition to a democratic society, the media and the whole field of research underwent significant change. Freedom of the media and of business led to the emergence of a new media landscape with independent newspapers, radio and television stations. This also broadened the area of research to include media market issues, media culture, media and democracy, political communication, etc. Cooperation with foreign scholars began and broadened

in scope. New centres of JMC education and research started appearing, such as the Department of Journalism at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (1995), the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava (1997), the Department of Journalism at the Catholic University in Ružomberok (2000), and some private universities, such as the Faculty of Mass Media at the Pan European University in Bratislava (2007). Altogether six Slovak universities and colleges offer academic programmes in journalism and media studies. The University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava publishes the biannual open-access and WoS indexed journal *Communication Today* in English (since 2010), and since 2018 Media Literacy and Academic Research.

Structurally, journalism and media studies are generally parts of the faculties of humanities/arts, philosophy, or sociology, and their research traditions are influenced by the theories and approaches of these disciplines. JMC research has never been a priority in the development strategies of Slovakian universities, nor in science policy at national level. There is no national organisation to coordinate research activities, except the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, and the Slovak Accreditation Agency. The Ministry of Education has established three agencies that provide research grants: the Agency for Research and Development Support (APVV), the Scientific Grant Agency at the Ministry of Education and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (VEGA), and the Ministry of Education Cultural and Education Grant Agency. None has special calls for JMC research projects, these applications compete with all other disciplines. JMC scholars receive some national grants every year (from €10,000 to €250,000) with media literacy projects and issues related to disinformation being prioritised. Slovakian JCM scholars have yet not succeeded in applying for EU grants or establishing a firm footprint in international networks.

The overall tradition of JMC research in Slovakia is brief as the universities engaged in this research are only about 20–30 years old (apart from Comenius University). An established tradition of JMC is still to be developed. Without any purposeful research policy that would support the disciplinary development of JMC, achievements remain modest. The Mediadelcom bibliography shows that the proportion of international publications within the past 20 years is only 18% of all publications (including research reports). The proportion of Slovakian publications represented in high-level indexation (Web of Science, SCOPUS, Social Science Citation Index) is also low at 21%.<sup>5</sup>

The JMC research history in Romania is the briefest among the reviewed 14 countries. As an independent sector of research, JMC studies appeared only in the 1990s, after the period of state socialism in Romania had ended. As in several other countries, the emergence of JMC research is connected with the foundation of journalism education. In Romania, a journalism programme was initially creat-

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<sup>5</sup> The Slovakian bibliographic database: <https://datadoi.ee/handle/33/524>

ed at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences at the University of Bucharest. During the socialist period, academic professional education did not exist, other than the journalism programme at the Stefan Gheorghiu Academy, a Romanian Communist Party ‘university’ established in the early 1970s, “at which the emphasis was far more ideological than professional” (Gross, 1999, p.149).

Along with the diversification and expansion of media markets in the 1990s, academic journalism and media studies became very popular in Romania. According to Avadani (2022), the peak was in 2008–2009, when as many as 40 journalism and communication programmes existed. In 2022, 31 accredited journalism programmes were still active, as well as 10 advertising and seven digital media programmes all over the country. A further 39 programmes were devoted to communication and public relations. Journalism and media pathways were available in Hungarian, German and English. The most prominent programmes are offered by the University of Bucharest and the University of Babes-Bolyai. Universities also set up JMC research centres (at the University of Bucharest, the University of Craiova). There are also three national doctoral schools dedicated to JMC studies (one at Bucharest University and two at Babes-Bolyai University). Doctoral theses and the proceedings of doctoral school activities form an important body of the research and new knowledge in the field of JMC.

Romania participates in large international comparative projects such as Media Pluralism Monitor and the Worlds of Journalism Study (all three waves of the survey from 2007 to 2023). Romania is also part of the Digital News Report study (by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism), and Global Kids Online. Several faculties and departments are involved in international consortia that carry out media research projects, although no Romanian university has achieved the role of project leader internationally. At the same time, national JMC projects are rare and poorly funded, as supporting JMC research is neither a priority in the state’s development plans nor in the interest of funding bodies. The national science funding policy is based on the National Plan for Research, Development and Innovation, which has four major funding programmes, two of which are available for the humanities and social sciences. The areas chosen for funding are development of the national research and development system, and exploratory and frontier research. Over the last three rounds of competitive calls (2016, 2019 and 2021) only one project (about new media research) received funding of approximately € 55,000.

The Romanian state is only indirectly related to JMC research through public institutions that publicise their regular activity reports. The national telecom regulator (the National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications, ANCOM) issues biannual reports on Romania’s connectivity capability. The national broadcast regulator, (the National Audiovisual Council, CNA) issues reports on broadcasters, including the type of licence and ownership information. The ANCOM and CNA reports use standardised methodology and provide con-

sistent data year after year. National and multinational companies active in Romania or with an interest in the local market also provide data through their own research. Some NGOs also gather and analyse various data about media and journalistic practices. International government or transnational organisations are also active in generating and processing data about media and democracy, such as the European Commission, the US State Department, OECD and the Council of Europe. As a result, there is a large volume of raw data, descriptive reports and analytical studies, although they are scattered and disconnected, which makes using them in research difficult.

An important database is the National Bibliography of publications (including doctoral theses) of the National Library. By 2021, the National Library had published 11 volumes online, covering 2009–2014. The National Bibliography is searchable by keywords. Eight Romanian academic journals publish JMC research results, of which three specialise in JMC. The academic journals are all peer-reviewed and indexed in various scientific databases. Six out of seven are published by the universities. *Revista Transilvania*, published by the University Lucian Blaga in Sibiu, is indexed in SCOPUS and some less prominent databases. The Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences of the University of Bucharest publishes the *Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication (RJJC)*. Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj publishes two journals dedicated to media and communication (*the Journal of Media Research* and *Studia Ephemerides*). Although they do not rank among the top journals, some are bilingual or even multilingual. For example, *Saeculum* (published by Sibiu University) publishes articles in four languages, Romanian, English, German and French. *Revista de Studii Media* (from Hyperion University in Bucharest) has published in Romanian, English and French since 2018.

Academic articles on journalism and media are also published in the journals of other fields, such as political science, education and sociology. For example, *Social Sciences and Education Research Review (SSERR)* is an international, biannual, print and online academic journal published by the Center for Scientific Research in Communication Sciences, Media and Public Opinion and the Department of Communication, Journalism and Education Sciences at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Craiova. *The Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* is an interdisciplinary journal published by the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations' Centre of Communication Research, at the National School for Political and Administrative Studies in Bucharest. The journal focuses on communication and media studies and public relations research. The journal is indexed in Web of Science, SCOPUS, EBSCO and some other international databases.

Having no clear-cut science policy that would create sustainable conditions for the development of JMC as a scientific discipline, the current picture of the field shows studies of narrow topics, mirroring the interests of the respective



researchers rather than a broader vision or the strategic preoccupation of a research hub. The lack of coordination and research strategy results in numerous gaps in coverage of JMC. Public service media are mainly represented by their own activity reports. Media-related competencies and the conditions for content production in the Romanian media have barely gained any attention. There is no policy for promoting media literacy or initiatives to measuring or educate media-related competences in consumers. No consistent studies exist on multiplatform journalism, foreign correspondents or digital journalism. However, topics related to disinformation and the impact of digital technologies on the media and communications have been on the rise over the last decade. Topics such as the legal environment, market evolution and media competences are studied in more depth outside academic circles by the business or non-governmental sectors. Romanian data in the Mediadelcom bibliographic database<sup>6</sup> shows that Romania has in the past two decades produced the same number of relevant research publications (274) as Sweden (279), a much smaller country. In Web of Science, the referenced articles make up 13% of all publications.

As in the other countries, the institutionalisation of JMC in Bulgaria started from that of journalism. The first organisations of journalists (the Society of Journalists of the Capital (1907) and the Union of Professional Country Journalists (1924)) organised courses for working journalists and even awarded scholarships for study trips to London, Paris and Rome (Manliherová et al., 2009). University level journalism education began in the 1952–1953 academic year with the establishment of journalism as a major at Sofia University's Faculty of Philology. Later, this became an independent Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication with five departments at St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University. In the 1990s, some other universities began to offer journalism education, as well as public relations and book publishing programmes. Currently, 11 Bulgarian universities (out of 52) offer higher education in journalism (BA, MA and PhD programmes), of which 7 are public<sup>7</sup> and 4 private.<sup>8</sup> JMC is also part of the curricula in several BA and MA programs in the humanities. Supplementary training programs for journalists include NGOs with external funding, for example the Centre for Media Development.

Academic JMC programs and units with more than 100 academics in full-time positions receive regular (although not generous) basic funding for research, and on a competitive basis they can also vie for additional funding from various sources. There are approximately 100–120 academics in JMC studies in full-time positions in 11 universities. The funding scheme includes grants from universities

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<sup>6</sup> The Romanian bibliographic database: <https://datadoi.ee/handle/33/523>

<sup>7</sup> St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University, St. Cyril & Metodius Veliko Turnovo University, St. Neophyte Rilsky Blagoevgrad University, St. Paisiy Hilendarski Plovdiv University, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, University of National and World Economy

<sup>8</sup> New Bulgarian University, Varna Free University, Burgas Free University, the American University in Bulgaria, Blagoevgrad

and from the Ministry of Education and Science's National Scientific Research Fund. For media research, funds are allocated on a competitive basis with a total value of around 250,000 Euros. The funding and the number of funded projects vary. The duration of each project is from two to three years. Between 1999 and 2012 The National Scientific Research Fund financed a project called The Electronic Media Environment in the Republic of Bulgaria in Conditions of Transition and Digitisation: 1999–2012, which produced three volumes of detailed analysis of the radio and television audiences in Bulgaria. The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at the St. Kliment Ohridsky Sofia University received a grant from the National Scientific Research Fund in 2021 and produced a scientific bibliography of research during the 1990–2022 period in media and communication and in numerous related fields (advertising, marketing, public relations, propaganda, visual culture, book history, etc.) that includes 6,480 titles (published in 2022).<sup>9</sup> Funding for media research has also been secured from other sources, for example, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Open Society Institute and others. Since Bulgaria joined the COST framework in 1999, Bulgarian JMC scholars have participated in COST Actions, although not yet as action leaders.<sup>10</sup> Bulgarian JMC scholars also participate in Horizon framework projects.

Over the past 20 years, (according to the Mediadecom bibliographic database)<sup>11</sup> journalism and media research interest in the country has largely focused on aspects of legal and ethical regulation of journalism. Specific interest, especially in media literacy issues, has also increased recently, mainly due to the efforts of NGOs and academia. A national representative survey of the Bulgarian Center for Safe Internet from 2016 analyses the digital media competence of Bulgarian children between the ages of nine and 17 years (Raycheva et al., 2022). The office of the global company Nielsen in Bulgaria provides analysis and audience measurement, media consumption data and data on the use of the internet in Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup> The annual reports of the public service broadcasting television BNT and radio BNR are also valuable public sources for research. Media data collection, surveys and in-depth analysis in Bulgaria are also conducted by transnational observation organisations (e.g. Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, etc.), comparative international surveys (e.g. Balkan Media Watch, Eurostat, Media Pluralism Monitor, the Worlds of Journalism Study, etc.), public bodies (e.g. National Statistical Institute, Council for Electronic Media, Communications Regulation Commission), the media industry, sociological agencies and professional associations.

All five peer-reviewed online journals publishing the results of JMC research are open access. *Медии и комуникации на 21. век (Media and Communication in*

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<sup>9</sup> [https://research.uni-sofia.bg/bitstream/10506/2540/1/Bibliografia\\_FJMC\\_v.5\\_Interactive.pdf](https://research.uni-sofia.bg/bitstream/10506/2540/1/Bibliografia_FJMC_v.5_Interactive.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2021/06/Bulgaria-1.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://datadoi.ee/handle/33/512>

<sup>12</sup> <https://en.nielsen-admosphere.bg/>

the 21st Century)<sup>13</sup>, publishes articles in Bulgarian, English and Russian. The journal is referenced and indexed in 12 international databases, the most prominent of which is ERIHPLUS. The journal *Медии и обществени комуникации* (*Media and Public Communication*) appears in Bulgarian and English<sup>14</sup> and is indexed in 8 databases, the most prominent being Google Scholar. *Newmedia21.eu Медиите на 21 век* (*Newmedia21.eu Media of the 21st Century*) appears in Bulgarian<sup>15</sup> and is indexed in less prominent international databases. *Postmodernism Problems* appears in English and Bulgarian versions (indexed in ERIHPLUS and Google and less prominent databases).<sup>16</sup> Like *Postmodernism Problems*, *Риторика и комуникации* (*Rhetorics and Communication*)<sup>17</sup> is more broadly focused than on media and communication alone, publishing articles in English, Bulgarian and Russian (referenced in ERIHPLUS and some less prominent databases).

Analysis of research production covering the central aspects of the field of JMC (the four domains of the Mediadecom project) shows the gradual increase in relevant publications, especially in the 2010s.<sup>18</sup> However, the number of strictly academic publications (journal articles, books, chapters in edited volumes) is rather modest (182 out of 229 entries in Mediadecom bibliography). JMC research and publishing are mainly domestically oriented (reported and published in Bulgarian). The proportion of international academic publications in Mediadecom's Bulgarian JMC database is 26%. In Web of Science referenced articles are 3% of all publications.

The institutionalisation of JMC in Bulgaria started about 70 years ago, with some distinct qualities of journalism studies and media studies developing over time. Bulgaria has universities and other institutions that are involved in JMC research, there is a community of over a hundred scholars in the field, specialised journals regularly appear and research activities are supported by central funding on a competitive basis. The international visibility of Bulgarian research is limited, as most of the publications are in Bulgarian and the proportion of Bulgaria's input in the high-ranking European journals is minimal. Perspectives for the development of national research seem to be broadening, as in 2023 the National Research Fund awarded the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University a substantial grant to establish a Centre for Media Studies.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://journals.uni-vt.bg/mc/bul/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://media-journal.info/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.newmedia21.eu>

<sup>16</sup> <https://pmpjournal.org/index.php/pmp>

<sup>17</sup> <https://rhetoric.bg/>

<sup>18</sup> The Bulgarian database: <https://datadoi.ee/handle/33/512>

## SOME FINAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIACHRONIC EXERCISE

A birds-eye retrospective of JMC research in the selected 14 EU countries allows us to point out some universal trends in the capability of monitoring changes in journalism and news media. As the processes of societal-political transformation, of which the media are part, occur at various speeds across different economic and cultural environments, variations can be found in even these common traits. One of them is the gradual growth in the number of institutions engaged in JMC research and teaching. The more research institutions and scholars, the better is the capability of monitoring JMC. This is especially true in the CEE countries, where many new departments and centres were established in the 1990s. However, so far, their success in research and teaching differs, as institutionalisation is still insufficient to develop a sustainable research policy in these countries.

Another remarkable development connected with structural enlargement is the noticeable broadening of the national and international networks over the past two decades, to which the European research funding policy has given a boost. The selected 14 countries have participated in various EU Framework 7 projects and are participating in COST networks, as well as in Horizon projects. They are also included in the international reports on press freedom (such as the Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders), democracy (V-Dem), media pluralism (Media Pluralism Monitor) and many others.

The Mediadelcom bibliographic database demonstrates the overall increase and gradual internationalisation of publishing research results (see Figure 8). As revealed in the countries' descriptions, the number of journals published in the field of JMC in these countries has also increased over the past two decades.

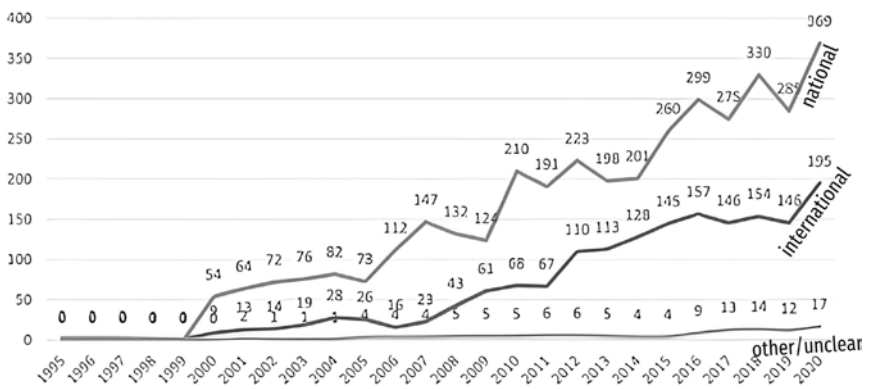


Figure 8. Dynamics of the number of national and international publications in 14 EU countries during the 2000–2020 period.

The Bibliography also shows some dynamics in scholars' focus on diverse JMC-related topics. Although topics within the domain of journalism prevail in all countries throughout the two decades, interest in other topics increased during the second decade. For example, more research was done on media usage and legal and ethical issues than in the first decade. A detailed review of the research done in the four domains can be found in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Gender-related issues seem to have received little attention in JMC studies and monitoring. Public broadcasters often have a gender equality policy, and in their reports, among other issues, also focus on women's representation in TV programmes as well as other gender diversity issues. The representation of women, gender stereotypes and the proportion of women in executive level roles are also quite frequent topics of JMC research. Increasingly, harassment of female journalists appears as a research focus. In our sample, the domain of journalism is mainly represented in studies that deal with gender issues. Germany, Sweden, Italy and Croatia stand out as performing such studies. However, overall, the existing research appears to be fragmented, with systematic study of female journalists' status in newsrooms, their working conditions and economic situations, the glass ceiling problem, etc., rarely addressed in most of the examined countries. Sweden seems to be an exception here. Gender aspects of media production and the situation for woman in the newsroom have been studied extensively by Swedish scholars such as Maria Edström and Monica Djerf-Pierre at JMG, University of Gothenburg (e.g., see Djerf-Pierre, 2005). Even though too few researchers focus on these issues, there is a general awareness of gender inequality and the importance of including the gender variable in media research. Worlds of Journalism Studies (WJS) surveys contain information on gender balance, the position of women in the newsroom, career status, etc. WJS reports are one of the few sources on gender issues in journalism for example for Hungary, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Italy, Slovakia and Romania in our sample. Media Pluralism Monitor country reports describe gender equality issues, but to a limited extent, as this is not the focus of these reports. However, some of them are quite rich in relevant information, such as, for example, the Bulgarian report of 2023 (Orlin et al., 2023).

When comparing countries' monitoring capability, it is essential to consider whether JMC studies are acknowledged as autonomous disciplines in a particular country. Disciplinary recognition is especially important in connection with research funding schemes, as in countries where JMC studies do not have autonomous discipline status, there is no designated central funding for JMC research. On the other hand, the proportion of JMC funding depends on the policy and practice of general research and development (R&D) funding in a country. It becomes very clear that of the 14 countries examined, the countries that show high JMC research capacity – Austria, Germany and Sweden – invest the most in R&D (see Figure 9). R&D expenditure as a proportion of GDP has also increased within the five years of 2015 to 2020 in all the examined countries except two, Bulgaria and Romania, where expenditure has even somewhat decreased. The greatest increase has oc-

curred in Poland (0.39%), with a remarkable share of higher education sector R&D expenditure (35%) (see Figure 10). Indirectly, this growth also reflects the positive impact of the increased funding for Polish academic JMC research in this five-year period, and the country's CMM. Academic research in JMC is closely connected with higher education in the field, as in most universities researchers also teach various JMC courses. When examining European comparative statistics, the same countries that spend more on education are more successful in research. The contrast between the wealthier and poorer countries is enormous. While in 2020, the expenditure per inhabitant in the higher education sector was €375.72 in Sweden, the comparable expenditure in Bulgaria was €4.58.<sup>19</sup> In our sample, only Germany, Austria and Sweden spent more per inhabitant than the EU average (€165.65 in 2020), Estonia being the closest at €121.50. In all 10 other countries expenditure was remarkably less than €100. Although these statistics do not directly describe the situation in the field of JMC, they reflect the countries' potential to carry out consistent and sustainable research.

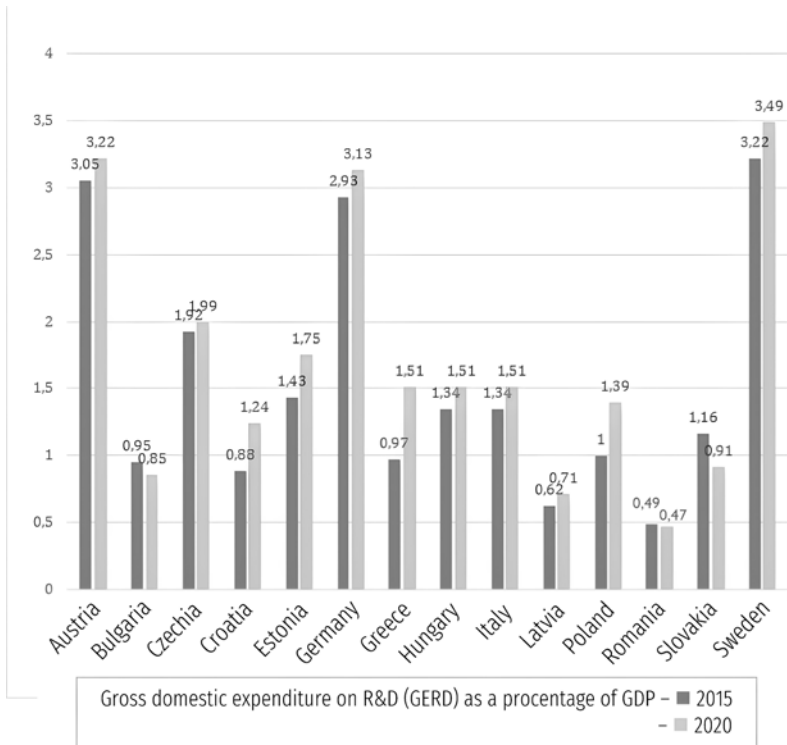


Figure 9. Gross domestic expenditure on R&D in the 14 EU Mediadecom countries in 2015 and 2020 (% of GDP).

Source: OECD (2024), *Gross domestic spending on R&D (indicator)*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/d8b068b4-en>

<sup>19</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/rd\\_e\\_gerdtot/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/rd_e_gerdtot/default/table?lang=en)

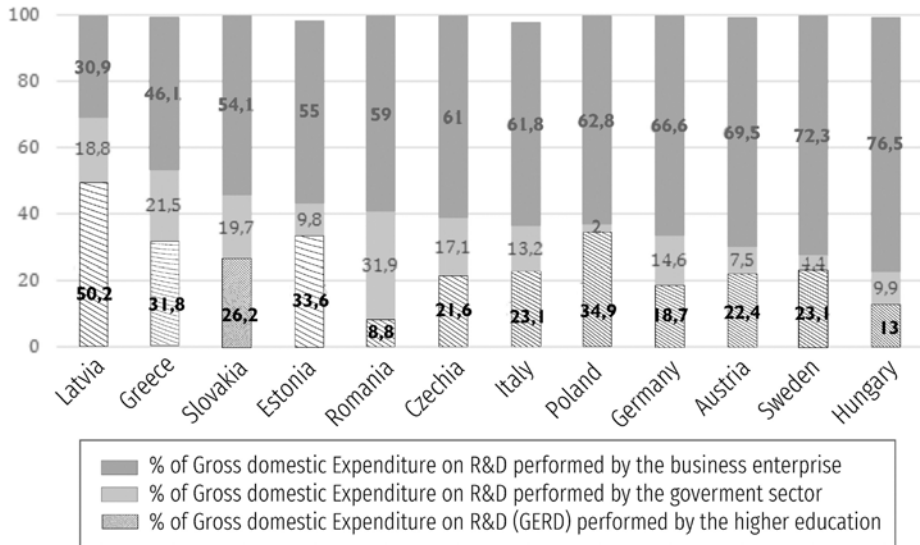


Figure 10. Proportion of gross domestic expenditure on R&D in business, government and higher education sectors in 2020 in the 14 EU Mediadecom countries.

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=R%26D\\_expenditure&oldid=551418#R.26D\\_expenditure\\_by\\_sector\\_of\\_performance](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=R%26D_expenditure&oldid=551418#R.26D_expenditure_by_sector_of_performance)

Another relevant indicator for assessing CMM is the number of the researchers in JMC. OECD statistics shows the notable increase of this number in all the examined countries, except Romania (the data was missing for Bulgaria) (see Figure 11). Again, the proportion of full-time researchers is the highest in Sweden (equivalent per 1,000 total employment is 15.8 in 2020), followed by Austria and Germany. This proportion has grown remarkably in Croatia within the five-year period (from 8.4 to 10.5), which even surpasses the level of Germany (10). These statistics correlate the results we gained comparing the CMM of the 14 countries. Best practice countries were Germany, Austria and Sweden, while Bulgaria and Romania show a modest capability to monitor sources of ROs for deliberative communication.

Important factors influencing countries' CMM are the conditions of the development of disciplinary identity and status of JMC, as well as continuity of development. In most of our selected countries, JMC research started with the establishment of academic journalism education in universities. Germany has the longest JMC research tradition (since 1916), whereas Greece is a latecomer establishing departments of communication and media as late as the beginning of the 1990s.

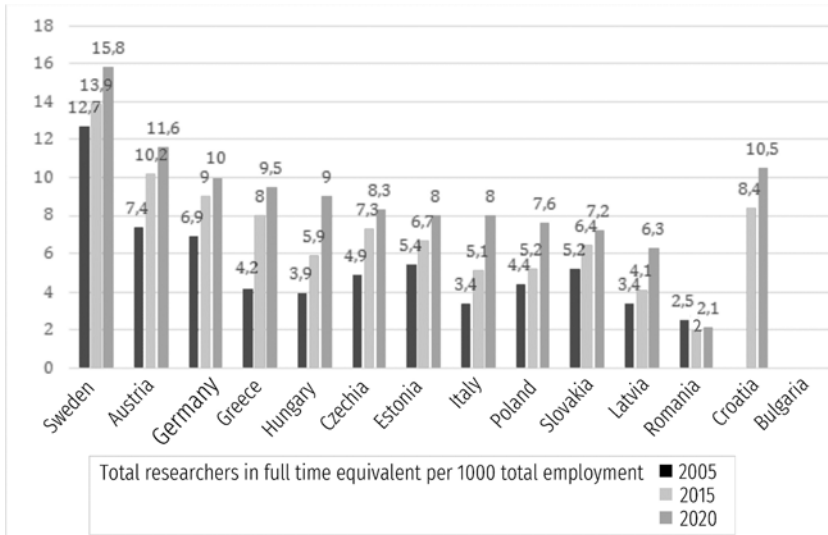


Figure 11. Researchers in the 14 Mediadelcom countries in full-time equivalent positions per 1,000 total employment in 2005, 2015 and 2020. Source: OECD (2024), *Researchers (indicator)*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/20ddfb0f-en>

Research traditions in JMC studies largely depend on whether journalism education was established at faculties of arts and humanities or social sciences. For example, for decades journalism research in Estonia followed the tradition and approaches of humanities, especially history, research, as the study programme of journalism and later the Department of Journalism belonged to the Faculty of Humanities at Tartu University. Gradually, sociological media studies (initially as audience research) began to develop, and in 1992, when the Faculty of Social Sciences was launched, the Department became a unit of this new faculty. Since then, both traditions have developed close to each other, and some degree of integration has occurred. In Germany, the two traditions exist independently and are represented by *Medienwissenschaft* and *Kommunikationswissenschaft*. Both are recognised as autonomous disciplines that are represented by distinct learned societies and specialised journals. In Croatia, JMC studies generally developed under the auspices of sociology and political communication and follow their research paradigms. In Poland, communications and media were recognised as autonomous disciplines in 2011 and awarded regular funding. Since then, the scope of research and publishing, as well as the number of researchers and academic journals, has rapidly expanded. The situation differs in other CEE countries, where JMC studies are embedded in information and communication sciences, or more generally in the social sciences, and do not stand out as independent subjects but must compete with other disciplines for funding and acknowledgement. The disciplinary status of JMC studies also depends on the length of the research tradition. The established disciplines have had more time to develop their institu-



tional structures, educate researchers, lobby for funding and build up their reputation, even if their development has not always been stable.

In only two countries in our selection – Austria and Sweden – has the development of JMC studies been relatively stable throughout the decades of their existence. All the other countries have experienced longer or shorter ruptures, mainly caused by various world events. World War II and the Soviet annexation entirely destroyed journalism as a field and profession in Estonia and Latvia, and under the post-war Soviet occupation, research was limited and controlled. In Germany, JMC research experienced two periods of political control and ideological pressure: under the National Socialist regime and then after World War II in the GDR (East Germany). Journalism education and research in Hungary was disrupted by the 1956 uprising and for decades afterwards. The tragic end of the Prague Spring in 1968 and its aftermath was fatal for Czech and Slovak journalism education and scholarship. Greece lived through a period of military dictatorship between 1967 and 1974, with censorship and other restrictions to scholarly activities.

The rapid democratic transition in the 1990s that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union was a radical turning point in the fields of JMC and their research in most CEE countries. Several of those countries, especially those which had been parts of the Soviet Union (Estonia and Latvia) or where the communist regime had taken a stronger grip on society (Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) practically started from zero as continuity had been broken five decades earlier. Western scholarly literature and journals had not been available for those decades (unlike, for example, in the former Yugoslavia which included Croatia, and to some extent in Poland), and access to international conferences had been limited to the extreme. In Romania, journalism, sociology and psychology had been eradicated from academic domains in 1977. The 1990s were a time of institutionalisation and restructuring of JMC education and, simultaneously, research. A major problem was the lack of teachers and researchers with JMC degrees, often with scholars from other fields filling this gap. Consequently, JMC research was developed from the perspectives of other disciplines, which was not conducive to the formation of a disciplinary identity for JMC studies. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, doctoral degree programmes in JMC had been launched in many universities, and the first graduates began to return from their studies abroad, which gave the discipline a firmer foothold. Access to international scholarly journals was important for two reasons. First, they introduced the research done elsewhere around the globe and inspired CEE scholars to explore and adopt new theories, methods and approaches. These journals also motivated CEE scholars to improve the quality of their research and publications to meet the requirements of international scholarly publishing. Marton Demeter is correct in arguing that CEE scholarship is not visible on the European scale (Demeter, 2020; Háló & Demeter, 2023). However, it is debatable that this visibility was achievable in such a short time as the 35 years that the less wealthy CEE

countries have had to develop their JMC studies, compared to their counterparts in Western Europe.

## CONCLUSION

The task of this chapter was to analyse and compare the development of the conditions for CMM in the 14 EU countries selected for the Mediadelcom project. To depict development, a diachronic perspective is necessary, since common trends, as well as the uniqueness of each country, come to the fore in historical comparison. Furthermore, ROs to deliberative communication and the CMM for detecting them do not appear overnight but are the result of lengthy developments. In this chapter, we viewed the decisive aspects for assessing the potential of CMM: the evolution of JMC research towards autonomous and acknowledged disciplinary field(s), the institutionalisation of the research environment (including funding mechanisms) and the agents of governing and conducting JMC research. The main sources for this overview are two outcomes of the Mediadelcom research: the reports on participating countries (the Case Studies, see Chapter 1) and the bibliographic database of academic publications, research reports and various data sources. The chapter is based on secondary sources (without doing any empirical research) and therefore represents the approach we call diachronic qualitative meta-analysis.

The results indicate that adequate institutionalisation, continuity of research without fateful disruptions, the availability and sufficiency of domestic funding supported by international funding and the existence of an optimum number of qualified scholars are the main conditions for successfully diagnosing potential media-related ROs to deliberative communication. In our sample of 14 countries, these conditions co-exist in only three, Austria, Germany and Sweden.

Another important result is the impact of EU funding policy on the CMM of the 9 CEE countries in our sample. In a situation where domestic funding is scarce and is extremely difficult to obtain in competition with the hard sciences, participation in EU funded international projects and COST actions is an invaluable way for less wealthy countries to advance their JMC research. Here, Estonia is a good example of how EU funding has contributed particularly to JMC scholarship (among other topics, research on the digital competencies of children and young people, media accountability, the media–democracy relationship, and indeed, diagnosing ROs for deliberative communication).

Although this chapter does not go deeply into the details, it gives a holistic view of the development of the conditions of CMM in the 14 Mediadelcom countries using diachronic qualitative meta-analysis.

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## Monitoring legal regulation and media accountability systems

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Jacek Mikucki, Gábor Polyák, Petra Szávai, Ágnes Urbán

The domain of legal and ethical regulation stands out for its logical subdivision into two primary areas: the statutory regulation of media activities on one hand, and self- or co-regulation practices of media accountability on the other. The former concerns legal assurances of freedom of expression and freedom of information, as well as the various national contexts that strive to balance these with other rights and interests. The latter focuses on media accountability mechanisms that exist to oversee the adherence of the mass media to standards of professional ethics. Although the degree of interplay between these two realms – law and ethics – varies by country in terms of regulatory practice and monitoring, the discourse is divided between the distinct logics of the two fields and the relevant actors involved. Media accountability discussions primarily take place among media practitioners and within the media and communication studies community. Regulation discourse is largely influenced by legal studies and practice, as evidenced by court cases covering media issues. This distinction is also manifest in the monitoring structures and actor groups involved. The two areas are most closely connected in the context of statutory instruments of media accountability – where self-regulation is based on legal provisions (co-regulation) – as well as in debates covering the interplay between self- and legal regulation.

This chapter employs a dual approach, first examining monitoring capabilities within each subdomain individually, and then integrating both perspectives to compare the status across the 14 countries studied by Mediadelcom. This technique emphasises the connections between law and regulation, and accountability systems, facilitating a thorough analysis of monitoring capacities in each subdomain. Ultimately, the monitoring of legal and ethical regulation is crucial to comprehend the state of freedom of expression and information, the accountability systems in place, and the potential risks and opportunities.

## THE LAW

The countries included in the Mediadecom project experience varying degrees of involvement from domestic actors engaged in research and data collection within the legal domain. International research as well as monitoring projects and organisations scrutinise domestic legal frameworks, their development, and related case law. These sources provide insights into matters concerning the protection of the freedom of expression and information in both legislation and practice. The following subsection examines the key actors participating in legal monitoring and the primary sources they use. The subsequent sections present the main findings regarding freedom of expression and information, as well as the degree of attention they have received between 2000 and 2020 in the countries examined.

The choice of a fundamental rights lens is based on the premise that any laws and regulations addressing contemporary media ecosystems must be congruent with fundamental rights, especially freedom of expression and freedom of information. Freedom of expression is a basic right in a democracy and a prerequisite for the open exchange of views and ideas on matters of common concern. Domestic constitutions in the countries examined safeguard freedom of expression, as is the case with the EU's *European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR)* and the *Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR)*. Article 10 of the *ECHR* and Article 11 of the *CFR* firmly assert that everyone has the right to freedom of expression. Both Articles explain that free speech protects the right to voice opinions, views and ideas, and to receive and impart information. Freedom of information is thus a corollary to freedom of expression.

While freedom of expression and freedom of information must define regulatory action targeting the media, they are not absolute. The state may intervene on grounds that are considered legitimate to justify restrictions on free speech and freedom of information. Restrictions can generally be allowed if they pursue a legitimate aim, they are prescribed by law and they are necessary and proportionate to the aim pursued. Seen from this angle, any attempt to examine the nature and depth of protection given to these two freedoms requires verification of whether legal frameworks and regulatory standards create an enabling environment for the exercise of each through the media. To illustrate, rules regarding defamation or disinformation should not impose overly broad restrictions on the freedom of expression. Similarly, domestic laws should seek to reconcile personal data and copyright protection with freedom of expression and access to information. Other aspects considered relevant for assessing the legal protection afforded specifically to freedom of information include the protection of journalists' sources, the protection of whistleblowing through the media, the protection of trade secrets and transparency of media ownership structures.

## *Sources of research and information*

In the countries studied by the Mediadelcom project, a variety of domestic actors contribute to the sources of information in the legal domain and to the attention given to freedom of expression and information. These actors include academic bodies, professional associations, local NGOs, state bodies and public agencies. In many countries, a broad range of academic institutions offer relevant study programs and conduct pertinent research, sometimes with a transdisciplinary focus, as observed in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Hungary and Italy.

A significant portion of legal research is conducted within law faculties by individual researchers and research groups. Faculties focusing on media, communications, and journalism studies contribute to research in the legal domain. Their research agenda integrates new technologies as well as the challenges posed by digitisation. Additionally, some countries examined feature specialised legal journals with contributions from scholars and practitioners in media law and policy. In Germany, for example, there are several legal journals in the field, such as *AfP* (*Archiv für Presserecht*, Archive of Press Law), *ZUM* (*Zeitschrift für Urheber- und Medienrecht*, Journal of Copyright and Media Law), *Kommunikation & Recht* (Communication & the Law) and *MMR Multimedia und Recht* (Multimedia and the Law). Other journals include *Medien und Recht* (Media and Law) in Austria, *Juridica* in Estonia, *Journal of Law of Technology and Communication* (*Dikaio Technologias and Epikoinonias*, *DITE*) in Greece, and the *Journal of Law and Technology* in Czechia. These journals focus on media and communication law, its evolution and related case law, considering the impact of digitisation and convergence. Specialised law databases, available in most of the countries reviewed, serve as crucial sources of information on media legislation and relevant court rulings. Examples of such databases include *RIDA* (*Rechts-Index-Datenbank*) in Austria and *NOMOS* in Greece.

In most of the countries examined, government entities and public organisations play a vital role in providing data and information. Ministries, independent agencies and bodies involved in media and fundamental rights protection either collect original data or compile data from other sources, making it accessible to the public. In Croatia, for instance, the Ministry of Culture and Media has online lists of media-related legislation and regulations. In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Justice releases annual reports on European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law against Germany, including freedom of expression cases, while federal and *Länder-based* institutions publish both domestic laws and related information online.

Competition authorities and independent media regulators, such as the Agency of Electronic Media (AEM) in Croatia, the Austrian Communications Authority in Austria and the Communications Regulatory Authority (AGCOM) in Italy,

also collect data and information. Data protection authorities are increasingly involved in information and data gathering. In some countries, public authorities and independent agencies not only provide data but also conduct in-depth analysis and assessment. The AGCOM in Italy exemplifies this approach. The Hungarian Media Council (NMHH) conducts research at its Institute for Media Studies. However, concerns about the independence of the NMHH raise questions about the credibility of its studies. In some countries, such as Croatia, public authorities' attempts to carry out analyses and studies have encountered resource limitations.

National professional organisations and NGOs offer additional sources of information on media laws and fundamental rights protection. In Germany, for instance, the research-oriented journalists' network *Netzwerk Recherche* advocates the implementation of freedom of information acts. Such sources are especially crucial in countries experiencing rule of law issues, such as Hungary or Poland, or in those where academic research and legal analysis tend to be less common. Romania is a clear case in point, as studies by domestic NGOs help fill the gap in academic research and analysis on media law implementation. However, the lack of consistent funding affects the ability of these organisations to conduct continuous research, resulting in occasional, ad hoc studies. However, Romania, as well as Sweden, serves as a notable example of how local media contribute to reporting and discussing media law-related trends and developments.

The capacity for domestic monitoring around media regulation and protection of fundamental rights appears to be relatively constrained in Latvia, Poland and Slovakia, as affirmed by the corresponding coordinators for Mediadelcom in these countries. Their Czech and Estonian counterparts suggest that the underdeveloped nature of domestic research on media law and regulation in Czechia and Estonia could be due to funding constraints and heightened competition in social sciences and humanities research. Large-scale transnational research initiatives and reports from international organisations and European institutions are thus crucial in supporting monitoring efforts. Notably, there are collaborative research projects encompassing all the countries studied such as the Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), spearheaded by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. Conducted regularly since 2016, following pilot testing in 2014, the MPM assesses risks to media pluralism, including risks to freedom of expression and information in legal contexts and their practice.

Under the guidance of EU institutions, international and European organisations as well as NGOs, transnational monitoring initiatives assess media law and policy developments in all countries examined. For example, the *European Commission's Rule of Law Report* has been evaluating the state of the rule of law and media pluralism in EU Member States since 2020. The *Council of Europe's Safety of Journalists Platform* also plays a relevant role, and transnational organisations, such as Reporters Without Borders, provide updates on current media law and



regulation issues. Research from these non-domestic sources enables regular and comparative monitoring, which aids in identifying potential systemic risks and opportunities for freedom of expression and information protection throughout Europe.

### *Freedom of expression*

From a comparative perspective, the European countries examined display both similarities and differences in their research on media law and the availability of legal texts and documents. Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, and Hungary share a substantial amount of research and legal sources in media law, with attention recently given to emerging issues such as disinformation and Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). However, the specific tendencies, risks, and opportunities vary between countries. Austria has a strong focus on media law research, with comprehensive legal texts and critical commentary. However, empirical research is less developed, and recent academic and public discourse revolves around new laws and amendments targeting hate speech and disinformation. Media-related laws are explored and commented on in books and journals (e.g., Berka et al., 2021). Freedom of expression is examined in diverse academic and other publications (e.g., Kaltenbrunner, 2021; Seethaler & Beaufort, 2021; Siebenhaar, 2020), focusing on the extent of protection provided and potential risks. Greece, like Austria, presents a wealth of information on media regulation and freedom of expression (see, amongst others, Maniou, 2022; Papadopoulou & Maniou, 2021; Psychogiopoulou & Kandyla, 2020), with academic publications focused on domestic legal frameworks and the extent of protection granted to free speech. The literature follows legal developments and demonstrates a steady interest in the evolution of the jurisprudence in balancing free speech with personal rights, such as the right to develop one's personality freely, the right to a private life and the right to the protection of personal data (see indicatively, Skondra, 2020; Vlachopoulos, 2018a; Vrettou, 2020). Copyright issues, disinformation, and SLAPPs have also gained attention (e.g., Media Freedom Rapid Response, 2021; Spiropoulos, 2019).

Bulgaria provides a relatively clear picture of domestic legislation, and a variety of books, articles, academic dissertations, and international sources are available (e.g., Veleva, 2022; Zankova, 2021). Furthermore, there is a broad selection of online sources dealing with compliance with international rules on freedom of expression and legitimate restrictions. Available sources show that the individual right to free speech is more thoroughly explored than the institutional right of freedom of the media, with the focus being on the protection granted to free speech, privacy, personal data protection, copyright, libel, and defamation. Recently, SLAPPs have garnered attention (Reporters Without Borders, 2022).

Similarly, Hungary has extensive research literature exploring freedom of expression and its restrictions. In particular, scholars have delved into domestic and European jurisprudence on defamation, as well as protection of reputation and honour of public figures in relation to freedom of expression through the media (e.g., Békés, 2014; Koltay, 2014; Tóth, 2017). The introduction of new Criminal and Civil Codes in 2012 and 2013, respectively, has stimulated the study of the criminal and civil law aspects of personal rights in the media over the last decade (e.g., Görög, 2014). More recent studies, responsive to the critical junctures that occurred at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, tackle restrictions on freedom of expression resulting from responses to the dissemination of fake news and the addition of scaremongering rules within the Criminal Code with the *Coronavirus Protection Act* (e.g., Bencze & Ficsor, 2020; Koltay, 2020; Polyák, 2020). The literature also discusses copyright guarantees and exceptions granted to the press (e.g., Polyák, 2020).

Estonia and Germany have well-documented legal frameworks. In Estonia, legal data on media regulation and freedom of expression, such as laws and case law, are readily available. Current research addresses freedom of expression, disinformation, defamation, related damages, personal data protection, and communication confidentiality (e.g., Piho & Kalev, 2020). Despite this, case law is neither thoroughly nor systematically studied. There is a lack of substantial assessment of trends in judicial interpretation. Recently, however, some attention has been directed towards gathering data on cases that could be considered SLAPP.

Germany has systematic descriptions of its legal framework, which include the relevant European legal context, and monitors legal developments and significant court rulings (e.g., Fechner, 2021; Ricker & Weberling, 2021; von Lewinski, 2020). The academic discourse of recent years has closely examined the introduction of the *Network Enforcement Law* (NetzDG) (e.g., Eifert, 2018; Liesching et al., 2021). This law imposes strict deadlines on platforms to remove “manifestly unlawful content”, raising concerns about its implications for freedom of expression.

Croatia and Italy both have a tradition of academic research in media law. In Croatia, academic output and research on media law have grown since 2010, with significant works on freedom of expression dating back to the civic and academic projects of the 1990s (e.g., Peruško, 1999). Long-standing debates involve restrictions to free speech, defamation, and the balance between personality rights protection and media freedom (e.g., Jakovljević, 2017; Maršavelski & Juras, 2019; Prančić, 2008). Attention has also been given to judicial practice and its compliance with ECtHR standards. More recently, domestic research has explored disinformation, SLAPP lawsuits, and online threats against investigative journalists (e.g., Krelja Kurelović et al., 2021; Peruško, 2021; Pilić & Pilić, 2021). However, personal data protection and copyright issues related to media freedom have not received substantial coverage. In Italy, freedom of expression in the media is a recurring research topic. The continuous scholarly attention to free speech in the

media relates to what appears to be a discrepancy between law and practice: on one hand, the freedom of expression of media professionals is one of the rights most vigorously protected by the Italian legal order. On the other hand, in international indices, Italy has low press freedom rankings compared to other Western democracies. The Italian defamation law, and the high number of proceedings initiated against journalists, are some of the issues more extensively discussed (e.g., Pacileo, 2013). Other issues covered in the literature include the protection of personal data, disinformation, and exceptions to copyright protection in facilitating free speech.

Romania and Sweden exhibit underdeveloped or limited research on media law, even though in both countries new research areas include social media regulation and digital environment protection. In Romania, academic research on freedom of expression laws is underdeveloped and empirical studies on the implementation of domestic law are sparse and fragmented. Existing research primarily centres on the legitimate limits of media criticism and the case law of the ECtHR (e.g., Popescu, 2018). Domestic NGOs, such as ActiveWatch, partially fill the research gap by conducting occasional studies. ActiveWatch's annual report consistently tracks changes and events related to freedom of expression in Romania. SLAPPs remain inadequately documented. Sweden similarly exhibits limited research on the freedom of expression specifically in the media sector, although there are exceptions (e.g., Kenyon et al., 2017; Svensson & Edström, 2017). However, this may be due to well-established practices for the protection of journalists through instruments such as the world's oldest *Freedom of the Press Act* and the robust *Freedom of Expression Act*. New research areas in Sweden explore the regulation of freedom of expression on social media and journalist protection in digital environments (e.g., Nord & Truedsson, 2021).

In Czechia, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia, a noticeable lack of research and data concerning freedom of expression in the media has been observed. In Czechia, existing studies mainly focus on the key principles of media law and certain aspects of personal data (e.g., Míšek, 2020; Moravec, 2020). Recently, however, new information technologies and digital copyright protection have garnered some interest (e.g., Myška, 2020; Polčák et al., 2018). Research in Latvia is considered limited, while in Slovakia most of the research has occurred within the past decade, with a particular focus on disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Bulganová, 2020; Kapec, 2020; Mičuda, 2020). In Poland, the academic literature of the observed period has primarily featured theoretical and normative approaches, with empirical research being rather scarce.

## *Freedom of information*

In Sweden, Germany, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Hungary, the legal frameworks surrounding access to information are well-explored in academic literature. Studies in these countries often examine access to information, media ownership transparency, and the interplay between data protection legislation and access to information. The discourse on the implementation of the EU directive on whistleblower protection in Germany and Hungary has also recently emerged as a focal point.

In Sweden, the literature has emphasised the country's tradition of open government and access to public documents, with attention to applicable restrictions. In Italy, academic research on freedom of information predominantly addresses issues related to document access under the *Freedom of Information Act* (e.g., Splendore, 2016). Rules governing media ownership and transparency have also been extensively studied (e.g., Craufurd Smith, Klimkievicz & Ostling, 2021). Likewise, access to information in Croatia is a central topic in legal literature on freedom of information (e.g., Vajda Halak et al., 2016). Existing studies explore access to public information and the unique status of journalists based on the constitutional right to information, the *Act on the Right of Access to Information* and the *Data Secrecy Act*. Additionally, the literature touches on the re-use of public sector information (e.g., Matanovac Vučković & Kanceljak, 2018). However, protection of journalistic sources, whistleblowing, and trade secrets in relation to access to information have received limited attention (Habazin, 2010; Rajko, 2015). Conversely, media ownership and transparency are thoroughly examined subjects. While Croatian legal literature primarily centres on access to public information and journalists' special status, Germany's research focuses on the diverse press laws of the federal states, the journalistic privileges they grant, and Freedom of Information Acts. Overall, the legal framework and recent developments regarding freedom of information are thoroughly described in the literature. More recent discussions have revolved around the implementation of the EU's directive on whistleblower protection and the implementation of the *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR) (Fricke, 2019; Netzwerk Recherche, 2021; Tinnefeld, 2020).

The implementation of the EU's directive on whistleblower protection and the GDPR have spurred new discussions not only in Germany, but also in Greece and Hungary. Scholars and researchers in the latter two countries have examined the relationship between data protection legislation and access to information. In Greece, the research focus has been on the legal framework governing access to documents preserved by public authorities vis-a-vis personal data protection rules (e.g., Grivokostopoulos, 2021; Igglezakis, 2020; Vlachopoulos, 2018b). Additionally, research has delved into the confidentiality of journalistic sources, the legal framework for disclosing media ownership structures, and the role of the national media regulator in this respect (see indicatively European Commission,

2021a; Psychogiopoulou & Kandyla, 2021). However, Greece has not explicitly explored trade secrets legislation and its impact on freedom of information or the transposition of the EU directive on whistleblower protection.

Hungary's academic studies discuss the changes enacted in the freedom of information laws over time and the practices followed by public authorities and bodies in this respect. The introduction of the GDPR has given new impetus to the study of balancing personal data protection with freedom of information. SLAPP cases that are typically found in connection with the GDPR in Hungary, have also been analysed in recent studies (e.g., Bodrogi, 2021; Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, 2020). Furthermore, the literature has reviewed domestic legislation on the protection of information sources and relevant case law, covering seminal rulings of the Constitutional Court (e.g., Kóczyán, 2013; Koltay & Polyák, 2012). Overviews of domestic legislation on whistleblowing, in force since 2013, are also available (e.g., Hajdú & Lukács, 2018a, 2018b).

In countries like Croatia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Sweden, access to information is a prominent subject in legal literature. In contrast, Austria is characterised by a weak legislative framework on access to information, for which data indicates that Austria consistently ranks low in international comparisons (see indicatively *Access Info Europe & The Centre for Law and Democracy*, 2016; and *Access Info Europe*, 2021). Additionally, research on whistleblower protection is limited due to the absence of a specific law before the EU whistleblowing directive was adopted (e.g., Transparency International Austria, 2020). Media ownership concentration is, however, well-researched (e.g., Seethaler & Beaufort, 2021).

In the other countries covered by Mediadelcom, research on freedom of information appears limited. In Latvia, studies primarily address media ownership and transparency issues, attempting to clarify the lack of media ownership transparency. A few studies concentrate on access to information, while the protection of journalistic sources and the transposition of the EU Trade Secrets Directive are only discussed in isolated cases (e.g., Birstonas et al., 2019). In Bulgaria, some studies examine access to information and the confidentiality of journalistic sources, while Czechia's focus is on access to information and the protection of sources. Romania emphasises the importance of access to information and source confidentiality (e.g., Moldova, 2012), while Slovakia explores the right to information within the broader context of media law. In Estonia, academic research on access to information is limited (see European Commission, 2021b and some master's theses), as is research on whistleblowing in the media (Harro-Loit & Loit, 2011). The Polish case study identified no research or data specifically concerned with freedom of information.

## MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

Regarding various regulatory and media policy frameworks in the 14 European national case studies, critical cross-cultural differences have become evident in approaching media self-regulation, ethics, and accountability. On the surface, the media accountability systems (MAS) among the countries involved in Mediadelcom offer fertile ground for mapping the discourses over existing MAS institutions and practices alongside their cultural contexts – one of the critical fabrics of journalistic culture. The overall challenge to applying Mediadelcom’s methodologies for monitoring MAS potential and threats has at least two contrasting aspects.

On the one hand, it requires examination of media accountability structures. Media accountability systems today include traditional media accountability instruments (MAIs) such as codes of journalistic ethics, and ethical councils, as well as online accountability innovations and ombudsperson-like institutions. These include citizen-driven and more informal media quality monitoring practices initiated by non-governmental organisations and online media users (e.g., Fengler et al., 2022; Heikkilä et al., 2014). As recent shifts toward digital and socially engaged platforms have provided space for bottom-up and more agile forms of crowd criticism (Fengler, 2012), the theoretical framework for media accountability applied in the Mediadelcom project builds on a broad understanding of the subject that joins professional, public, political, market and international frames (cf. Fengler et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the overall Mediadelcom discourse shows that a large proportion of the debate in the 14 countries is centred on established structures and the legacy of self-regulation arrangements, with only a few examples of media accountability innovations online.

On the other hand, the mapping of monitoring capabilities in relation to ROs calls for a cultural approach together with an attempt to evaluate MAS effectiveness in implementing the scope of values, norms, and media ethics (normative view on MAS vs journalism practice). In line with this, the overview of findings presented here references a broader social context with potentially relevant cultural path dependencies (for instance, mature democracy vs young democracy, rational-legal authority vs the legacy of clientelism and nepotism, etc.) (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Jakubowicz & Sükösd, 2008), along with ongoing threats of multiplication of discourses on media plurality as a human right (Bajomi-Lázár, 2015; Połońska & Beckett, 2019) and the polarisation of media accountability discourses (Głowacki & Kuś, 2019).

The monitoring activities on media accountability in a country will typically be focused on instruments that are in use and relevant for the given national context. Because of this peculiarity of the media accountability subdomain, it is necessary to briefly assess the existence and relevance of the groups of MAIs before going into the details of monitoring activities. After giving a general overview of

accountability monitoring structures in the following section, we will follow this two-step approach for codes of ethics, media or press councils, ombudspersons, and other MAIs, before finishing with a section on the normative discourse on media ethics in the different countries. These five variables have also guided the comparative analysis of media accountability in the national case studies.

### *Sources of research and information*

Some Mediadelcom partner countries – including Austria, Estonia, Germany, and Sweden – have established a strong institutional framework to monitor media accountability. Collaboration between stakeholders (including academia, public, professional, and civil society organisations) is prevalent in these countries. However, the level of institutionalisation and its impact on monitoring capability varies when looking at the existence and the impact of MAIs. For instance, Austria’s institutional development was hindered by the abolition of the Press Council in 2002, which was re-established only in 2010. Although the country reports that media accountability is still a developing field and systematic data collection is limited, the monitoring capabilities of the so-called Democratic Corporatist countries can be considered among the most effective from a comparative perspective. In line with this, the positive assessment of accountability monitoring in Germany and Sweden is based on a high degree of institutionalisation and the active engagement of diverse actors. In Sweden, accountability discourse is an integral part of the general media policy: for example, the various actors can channel their knowledge towards the decision-makers through public inquiries. The generally high level of interest in media ethics and the availability of ample public data ensure Germany’s monitoring capabilities.

The Estonian academic community and its participation in large comparative research projects are the foundations of the country’s favourable monitoring potential in the ethical subdomain. On the other hand, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia exhibit unfavourable conditions resulting from low institutionalisation and minimal involvement or disinterest from stakeholders. In the case of Latvia and Greece, self-regulation is a relatively new area, with only initial steps taken towards its establishment. Despite its negative evaluation, Czechia is showing signs of development, as evidenced by the formation of the first academic research group on media ethics at Masaryk University in 2021.

The countries classified as ‘intermediate’ exhibit some institutionalisation and cooperation between stakeholders and monitoring actors, although these efforts are still neither fully comprehensive nor systematic. In Bulgaria, collaboration between the government and the media industry is perceived as satisfactory, but accountability research is mainly situated in academia and NGOs. The media regulator’s role is strong in Italy, which includes accountability issues, but there is a lack of cooperation between stakeholders. In Croatia and Poland there is some

fragmented knowledge produced by journalistic associations, media policy experts and academia. Romania reports active professional and civil society organisations, but knowledge is still scattered, and actors are separated.

Academic institutions have a significant role in monitoring accountability in the countries examined, although there are no university departments solely dedicated to the subject. In cases where the institutionalisation of accountability is weak, individual researchers and research groups are central in advancing the field. Austria, Estonia, Germany, and Sweden exhibit high academic interest in media accountability, generating diverse and abundant resources contributing to the media ethics debates. In Sweden, some university media departments focus on accountability topics; large national research projects also regularly address ethical issues. German academia encompasses multiple approaches and organisational characters, with few dedicated professorships and a strong emphasis on education. Textbooks, monographs, and anthologies reflect a normative perspective on media ethics. Institutionalised forums, such as the *Netzwerk Medienethik* or the *Zentrum für Ethik der Medien und der digitalen Gesellschaft* together with its specialised journal *Communicatio Socialis* connect academics and professionals. These initiatives are not only relevant in Germany, but also in other German-speaking countries such as Austria. The Austrian MAI research is primarily driven by individual researchers, including Matthias Karmasin, Larissa Krainer, Tobias Eberwein, Michael Litschka, Alexander Filipović and Claudia Paganini, as well as the research groups and organisations they have formed (for example, the Media Accountability & Media Change research group and the Media Ethics Center). Some of the above-mentioned researchers have previously been or are now associated with German universities, exemplifying the personal level of exchange between the German-speaking countries. In Estonia, a few devoted researchers, including Halliki Harro-Loit, Epp Lauk and Urmas Loit from the University of Tartu, are shaping the field.

The current state of the academic sector's monitoring potential for accountability and ethics in selected countries varies. Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Italy, Poland and Romania demonstrate a satisfactory level of monitoring potential, even if academic institutions in the field are not always fully established. Recent developments, such as the launch of a special program at Palacký University and the formation of the Centre for Media Ethics and Dialogue at Masaryk University, are promising steps toward the advancement of MAI research in Czechia. In Poland, individual researchers, as opposed to institutions, construct the academic discourse on accountability, with aid from the media ethics section at the Polish Communication Association, which acts as a network for scholars representing national research centres and universities. Greece, Hungary, Latvia, and Slovakia are the countries where academia's monitoring capability for the accountability subdomain cannot be considered sufficient. In Greece and Latvia, the relatively young field is still weakly institutionalised. In Hungary, there is a general disinterest in the entire accountability sphere, even in academia. Apart from regular en-



quiry into the operation of the media authority, only occasional studies on Hungarian MAI are available.

In recent years, international research projects have also addressed accountability issues and contributed to significant research findings in many of the Mediadelcom partner countries. The comparative project, Media Accountability and Transparency in Europe (MediaAcT, 2010–2013), looked at the performance of traditional accountability systems and innovations online. Among the Mediadelcom countries, it has created data for Austria, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania and Estonia. During the same period, there was another EU-funded study, titled European Media Policies Revisited: Valuing and Reclaiming Free and Independent Media in Contemporary Democratic Systems (MEDIADDEM). MEDIADDEM looked at conditions for media governance and policymaking, and targeted several Mediadelcom countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Romania and Slovakia). Moreover, there is an ongoing Media Councils in the Digital Age project (2019–) which provides lessons on media self-regulation and accountability in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany and Hungary.

In several Mediadelcom countries, public institutions are also involved in monitoring accountability. Media authorities are responsible for handling matters of media ethics, either independently or within the framework of co-regulatory systems. In Italy, AGCOM, the country's media authority, exercises its competence in matters of ethical concern. The institution's regulatory power is so robust that issues that could be addressed by self-regulation are regulated by law instead. Similarly, the Hungarian media authority is also a strong organisation, operating a co-regulatory system that includes the country's four sector-specific self-regulatory organisations. However, the transparency of this system is not sufficiently ensured. Both the Italian and Hungarian media authorities have their own research centres. The Italian *Osservatorio sul giornalismo* is primarily intended to provide collaboration with professional organisations, while the Hungarian Institute of Media Studies aims for an academic orientation.

Professional organisations and journalists' associations are also important agents in monitoring media accountability. Countries that have traditionally strong professional organisations, also typically possess valuable data and expertise. In Czechia and Slovakia, those professional organisations are even considered more significant monitoring actors than academia, although their contributions tend to be in the form of data and information rather than systematic knowledge. There are cases where self- and co-regulatory organisations neither clearly publish, nor publish, any of their complaints handling policies and procedures, as seen in Hungary, Greece and Romania. Countries with press councils (Austria, Estonia, Germany and Sweden) or equivalent bodies (Italy's *Ordine dei Giornalisti*) seem to be exceptions to the rule, publishing these kinds of information transparently and regularly. Professional organisations tend to be particularly weak in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia and Romania, with no significant involvement in monitor-

ing or shaping the country's accountability discourse. The reason is the underdeveloped professional debate and general passivity of the profession. Hungary, Sweden and Romania highlighted the role of the general press itself as a monitoring agent, but several countries have also dedicated trade magazines or journals, such as *Österreichs Journalist:in*, *Extradienst*, *Horizont*, *MedienManager* and *Medi-  
anet* in Austria, *Medium Magazin*, *Kress Pro*, *Menschen machen Medien* and *Journal-  
ist* in Germany, and *Dagens Media*, *Resumé* and *Journalisten* in Sweden.

Non-governmental and civil society organisations can also play an important role in accountability and media ethics. In Austria, the *Qualität im Journalismus* initiative is an association of researchers and practitioners that organises events and forums, while *Medienhaus Wien* is a relevant research and education company. The Institute for Media Studies in Sweden is an independent think tank that commissions academic enquiries and publishes reports on the profession as well as annual reports on the state of Swedish media. The Swedish Enterprise Media Monitor assesses the quality of news media in the country. In Czechia, the People in Need organisation provides analysis on migration and ethnicity issues, the Foundation for Independent Journalism rates media for quality and the *Oživení* monitors municipal media. These organisations are recognised for their valuable contributions to the discourse on accountability and media ethics in their respective countries.

### *Codes of Ethics*

Journalistic codes of ethics are among the most widespread MAIs in the Mediadelcom countries. The debates around the codes of ethics (and their relevance in the digital and data-driven age) focus on how traditional journalistic values and norms can adapt to the new media reality, and the implementation of ethical codes in daily work practices.

Some countries, such as Austria or Germany, have Codes of Ethics with long traditions. The Austrian document, dating back to 1971, is built on a traditional understanding of media as the press, with no systemic ethical standards for journalists, broadcasters or online media. Countries such as Sweden have well-established codes of ethics, characterised by advanced traditions of self-regulation and the rule of law (Von Krogh, 2012). Mediadelcom countries have various approaches to ethical codes, with some, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary and Poland, using codes associated with journalistic associations. Other countries rely on codes established by press or media councils, such as Estonia, Latvia and Germany. However, the existence of an ethical code does not necessarily induce media quality and sound journalistic practice, as observed in the cases of Poland and Bulgaria.

The academic and wider monitoring discourse on journalistic codes of ethics is centred on two topics: (1) Critical reviews of code content are common across

many countries, and (2) empirical studies of journalists' awareness or compliance with the code (as found in Germany or Poland) are usually much rarer. Although Austria and Sweden have a long tradition of journalistic codes of ethics, and the Central and Eastern European countries have more than three decades of media freedom and transparency, and there has been a growing call to develop existing codes to respond to digital change and data technologies, especially as production and consumption continue to blend. In Romania, media accountability institutionalisation remains unfinished, and has been ascribed to an individual approach to journalism ethics with 'formal-only' attributes. Nonetheless, there are some positive developments, such as in Latvia, where the new state media policy requires a code of ethics to exist as a prerequisite for public policy support.

### *Press and Media Councils*

Press and media councils vary across the countries studied, with no universal models of media criticism and complaint institutions. Some countries have created independent press or media councils to uphold media standards (for example, Austria and Germany), while others only have ethical commissions and accountability processes by journalistic unions and associations. The examples include the Croatian Journalists Association, the Syndicate of Journalists of the Czech Republic, the Periodical and Electronic Press Union in Greece, the Latvian Association of Journalists, the Commission on Journalistic Ethics at the Council for Journalistic Ethics in Bulgaria, and others.

From the monitoring perspective, different councils differ in terms of access to their case work. While well-established councils such as the Swedish or German ones publish case databases or even their own analyses of annual case work, some of the journalist unions' ethics boards (for example in Greece and Slovakia) do not grant access to their decisions and analyses for academics or other monitoring actors. The Czech syndicate's ethics board only reviews selected cases, which renders the remaining published decisions unrepresentative.

Similar to the discourse on codes of ethics, the academic or wider monitoring community in several countries discusses the proceedings and effectiveness of press and media councils. In Croatia, creation of such a council was suggested from within academia, but so far without success. While knowledge of procedures and structures of well-established media councils exists in the international research and professional community, their application is not regularly demanded in countries where such a body is missing.

## *Ombudspersons and Institutions*

The discourse around ombudsperson-like institutions and councils in the media industry can be a crucial part of ensuring transparency, accountability and high-quality journalism. There have been successful national attempts to propagate the ombudsperson model in Europe – the Swedish prototype deals with media freedom and communications rights –, often under the umbrella of a commissioner of human rights or people’s advocate (for example, Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland and Romania). However, the research discourse on ombudsperson-like institutions is limited, particularly in countries without a tradition of this MAI. For instance, only two Italian newspapers have introduced ombudsperson positions, and neither of these experiments is extant. In Germany, there has been a rise of ombudsperson-like practices in several privately owned media outlets (such as the ombuds council of the news magazine *Der Spiegel*), but it is still the exception rather than the norm.

Overall, ombudspersons are a relevant MAI in far fewer Mediadelcom countries than codes of ethics or some form of either or both press and media council or ethics board. This situation is reflected in limited monitoring activities and discourse, although the existing examples have often been evaluated as valuable additions to the media accountability landscape.

## *Other Instruments of Media Accountability*

The diverse range of alternative instruments for media accountability in Mediadelcom countries examined reveals the complexity of ensuring media transparency and professionalism. Independent media associations, online NGO portals and research projects have all been explored as potential instruments of media accountability. General research findings provide only a few examples of how other instruments of media accountability have been implemented.

Sweden, Germany and Poland have implemented successful instruments such as awards for best journalistic practice, best organisational codes of journalistic ethics or most intensive meta-coverage on media issues. Other countries such as Greece, Italy and Romania have experienced difficulties due to the dispersion of entities responsible for media transparency, a lack of cooperation between the various actors and political polarisation. In countries such as Czechia, Croatia and Bulgaria, various foundations and journalistic unions function as alternative media accountability mechanisms.

Academic actors can be seen as a blend of monitoring actors and other instruments of media accountability. International projects (such as MediaACT) and online portals play important roles in promoting media accountability (for example omediach.com in Slovakia) and fostering exchange on instruments and strate-

gies that have successfully been implemented in other countries. Academic and wider public discourse also highlight deficits that existing media accountability structures do not cover sufficiently.

### *The Normative Perspective*

The normative approach dominates in the monitoring discourse of most Mediadecom countries. While relevant to develop journalistic and media ethics, this normative focus demonstrates a need for empirical research, and constant tracking and study of the changing socio-cultural-political environment. In Germany, Poland, Italy and Greece, scientific publications with a theoretical emphasis prevail over empirical studies. This may be due to difficult access to informants (for example, journalists, media strategists and decisionmakers), political parallelism, or ownership problems in the media market. Another problem is insufficient effort to nurture media transparency. In the case of Austria, for example, media ethics codes only apply to some parts of the media. This results in television, radio, newspaper, and online journalism not being subject to the same rules of functioning and evaluation.

Research in Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and Poland focuses on institutional and regulatory analysis. This is mainly done using document analysis, but rarely focuses on the implementation of the regulations. Large-scale empirical studies have often been carried out as part of international research projects, a finding that highlights the relevance of such efforts and the need to update comparative studies with new data on a regular basis.

## CONCLUSION

Results for the two realms analysed in this chapter – regulation and self-regulation – differ both in terms of what is being monitored and how such monitoring is being executed. While a certain set of legal rules is present in all examined countries, this is not the case with all relevant instruments of media accountability. Beyond this basic difference between the two parts of the domain, there are also significant differences in monitoring capacities, which is true for both subdomains.

Analysis of the legal subdomain shows that, in general, there are not that many differences between the countries in terms of research. The academic literature on freedom of expression and freedom of information across the period covered is diverse, especially in Germany and Greece. The research provides a systematic, long-term analysis of the domestic legal frameworks and the scope of protection granted to these freedoms. Furthermore, in Italy and Sweden, domestic laws and regulations are thoroughly researched, which allows researchers to map and understand legal developments. Differences can be detected in knowledge of

implementation practices. Although the relevant information is often available, there is lack of systematic analysis.

Media laws and regulation commonly form the object of analysis and review by scholars and legal practitioners, alongside local NGOs, professional associations and public bodies in most of the countries reviewed. Research and data collection covers a broad range of issues but tends mainly to address aspects concerned with freedom of expression and the nature and degree of its protection. Research is mainly focussed on long-standing concerns, such as the balancing of freedom of expression and information with privacy, data protection rights and personality rights, as well as media ownership transparency. More recent issues that could have an impact on freedom of expression and information, such as the protection of trade secrets, laws on whistleblowing, disinformation and SLAPP cases do not receive the same level of attention. In some countries, research on these issues is completely non-existent. This does not necessarily show a lack of interest in the relevant aspects, as it takes some time for research on new legal areas and developments to come out.

There are also some challenges that complicate the monitoring of the legal subdomain in the 14 countries. The federal structure of Germany, for instance, causes a plurality of regulations that differ in the federal states. Although coordination mechanisms between the federal states exist, a more complex research and monitoring strategy than in other, more centralised, countries is required. In Sweden, although there is an abundance of information on applicable legal rules, it appears that analysis of their implementation is underdeveloped. Yet, the Swedish press has been active in reviewing and discussing relevant case law. In Italy, the excessive production of laws and their amendments creates difficulties for researchers to grasp and analyse the ROs these laws and amendments produce. In Hungary, political polarisation appears to be strongly present in academia, leading to various assessments of regulation and its role in protecting freedom of expression and information. In Bulgaria, there is a lack of continuity in research and data availability. Much of the extant research and data collection processes are ad hoc and cannot lead to long term conclusions about the evolution of media laws and their contribution to free speech and freedom of information. Lack of continuity in research is also observed in Slovakia. In other countries, several gaps in data collection and research have been revealed. In Czechia and in Latvia, for instance, the available data is insufficient for the adequate assessment of the ROs potentially emerging in the domain of legal regulation and the implementation of laws. In Romania, the relevant data about media-related regulation has been gathered sporadically.

With regards to the media accountability subdomain, the studied countries exhibit country specific variations in their implementation of MAIs. These are pertinent to our analysis of monitoring the structures because they directly affect the width of the field in each national context: While codes of ethics are often well-

known as a central normative guideline for journalistic conduct, they may be criticised for being overly general, not up to date with technological innovations in the media, and sometimes too wordy. In countries such as Bulgaria and Poland, there is a discussion about the self-regulatory nature of such codes as opposed to sanctioning mechanisms. Similarly, either or both press and media councils and other ethics bodies exist in such variety that makes it difficult to meaningfully compare their role, impact and standing with the journalistic community. Other MAIs than these two are not as widely found across the analysed countries. An overall risk, perhaps most visible in CEE and South Eastern European countries, is that of low professional and social interest in media accountability as such, which may in turn limit interest in monitoring the field.

As for the potential to monitor media accountability practices, the scope and quality of the research in the 14 countries varies remarkably. Austria and Estonia report an intense discourse on media accountability, at least partially inspired by specific developments, such as Estonia's two co-existent but competing media councils and Austria's re-established press council. Controversies about media or press councils as central instruments of media accountability seem to inspire lively academic and professional debates. Monitoring of media accountability is well-established in Germany, with a wealth of publications in the form of both overviews (handbooks, textbooks) and specific literature, as well as dedicated research and teaching structures in some universities.

In contrast, media accountability monitoring in Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia is evaluated as being rather scant. A lack of academic interest and institutionalisation sometimes goes together with little relevance of accountability instruments in journalistic practice, as is the case with Greece or Latvia. However, in the Latvian case, a council has been established recently, and it will be interesting to see if this new development can inspire increased discourse comparable to the Austrian and Estonian cases. A possible risk is the lack of practical application: In Italy, academic research produces data, information and even knowledge, but in separation from policymaking or practices of self-regulation. Consequently, existing knowledge is not transferred into policymaking or professional practice. A similar situation occurs in Poland and Hungary, where the knowledge of instruments and normative approaches is available in academic discourse, but application is more dependent on political power dynamics than the public's interest.

Comparing the monitoring capacities of legal regulation and media accountability, the analysis often reveals diverse levels and histories of institutionalisation. While discourse on media accountability is generally carried by communication or media scholars and practitioners looking at ethics in their own fields, the legal discourse can often rely on the added perspective of legal scholars and lawyers looking at the media. Thus, discourse can build on the resources and institutional standing of a discipline that is often far older and more institutionalised

than communication studies. The only clear exception seems to be Estonia, where the accountability discourse was evaluated as being at least as broad and in fact more structured than the discourse on legal regulation.

A common feature of both the legal and the media accountability subdomains is the importance of transnational research and monitoring, which over the past years have become more systematic. International projects can help rectify the absence of domestic research and data, supporting monitoring also in a comparative fashion. Notably, future EU regulatory developments in the field, such as the *European Media Freedom Act*, which was proposed by the European Commission in 2022, could also enhance the monitoring potential across the EU.

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# 6

## Journalism: collaboration is the key to monitoring

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The role of journalism in European societies has grown increasingly complex, intricate, diverse, and multifaceted as the emergence of global digital platforms introduces new challenges. In this context, monitoring the journalism landscape in various countries is essential for comprehending the current state of journalism studies in Europe, as well as the risks and opportunities (ROs) for its advancement.

This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the domain of journalism from 2000 to 2020, spanning two decades and highlighting both similarities and differences in the available data from fourteen countries. The Medielcom consortium investigates various dimensions of journalism, which include: (1) market conditions (based on the variables of ownership diversity, foreign interests, labour market, news media income, and regional and local journalism); (2) production conditions (based on digitisation, investigative resources, and foreign offices and correspondents); (3) public service media conditions (based on autonomy and financing); (4) working conditions (based on employment conditions and employee satisfaction, threats/harassment and hate against journalists, education and training, and clear manifestations of commercialisation); (5) organisation conditions (i.e. workforce diversity indicators such as gender, class, etc.); (6) professional culture (issues of ethics and autonomy); and (7) journalistic competencies (based on journalistic roles, journalistic values, knowledge and ability, skills and practices, discrepancies between normative ideals and practice).

## JOURNALISM STUDIES

This study indicates that while some countries possess well-developed research infrastructure, others face significant research gaps, creating risks for understanding media autonomy, sustainability, and accountability. The monitoring situation within journalism also uncovers challenges in tracking the development of journalism studies. As the field has grown, new research priorities and dominant considerations for data internationalisation could have affected monitoring capabilities. Moreover, while certain aspects of journalism – such as gender representation in organisational culture – are thoroughly documented, other perspectives, such as class and ethnic background, have been overlooked. Additionally, production conditions, particularly in public service media, are relatively easy to compare, with ample reliable data available. However, comparing labour markets is a challenge, since many countries have no data available about the number of journalists and their specialisation, as the criteria for defining journalism as a profession are missing.

In sum, monitoring journalism is critical in understanding the state of journalism, its risks, and opportunities for improvement. This chapter highlights various areas of journalism that require further research and points out the need to bridge the gap between academic research and the non-academic sphere to ensure that research is relevant and applicable to practice. The development of journalism studies in the 2000–2020 period is a crucial area that requires further exploration to capture the expansion of the field and its influence on monitoring capabilities in Europe.

## MARKET CONDITIONS

Meta-analysis of media market conditions in the countries under study highlights the risks, opportunities and challenges inherent in researching journalism. Academic research, policy reports, and market research have extensively documented these aspects from varying perspectives. The availability of information regarding media market conditions – such as ownership, foreign interests, the labour market, news media income, and regional and local journalism – differs throughout Europe (see Figure 12). Countries with long EU membership possess well-established public authorities and institutions that gather, analyse, and publish reports on media market trends and developments. Germany, Sweden and Austria boast a rich array of data on market developments that can be tracked through databases, scientific publications, commission reports, and periodic studies on various media types, including comprehensive audience and market monitoring.



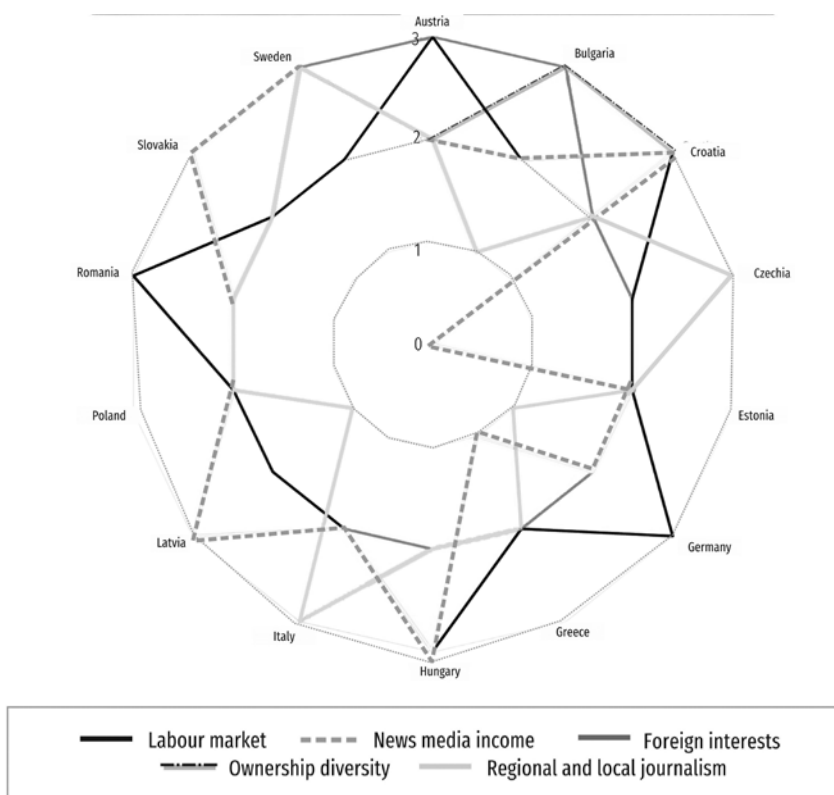


Figure 12. Illustrative comparison of market conditions in the 14 EU countries.

Favourable situation (opportunities) = 3

Ambivalent/neutral situation = 2

Unfavourable situation (risks) = 1

More information required to make evaluation = 0

Source: Halliki Harro-Loit & Lenka Waschková Císařová.

The statutory commission responsible for monitoring media concentration in Germany, the German Commission on Concentration in the Media (KEK), has access to various data sources and produces regular reports. Circulation figures for newspapers and larger magazines are measured and made publicly available by the German Audit Bureau of Circulation (IVW), but reliable data for smaller magazines is limited. Foreign correspondence is a well-researched topic in Germany, both in terms of general foreign coverage and coverage of specific world regions. The Swedish media market is well monitored. The recency and regularity of data for the 2000–2020 period is satisfactory, with several institutions producing annual or quarterly reports, and public inquiries conducted at regular intervals of about 5 years. The information is made available through institutions such as the Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority, the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS), Statistics Sweden, Swedish Media Council, and Swedish Internet

Foundation, academic institutions (Nordicom), commercial institutions and private research institutes. The Institute for Media Studies (IMS) is a non-profit independent think tank supported by industry, philanthropic, and labour market financing that produces reports on the state of the Swedish media. There are also international efforts, such as the WACC's Global Media Monitoring Project, and various EU initiatives that monitor media ownership and performance. The self-regulation system is frequently debated but respected by media companies.

Research on media sector market conditions in Austria has primarily focused on the risks of high media concentration and foreign market share (as is the case in Bulgaria, Croatia and Czechia, as will be seen later). Numerous studies have been conducted on working conditions, demographic data, income, working practices, job satisfaction, understanding of journalistic roles and self-perception. For example, researchers such as Renger, Kirchhoff and Prandner (2016) have focused on local and regional newspaper companies, their development and economic situations. Although Austria has been part of the Media Pluralism Monitor since 2015, the most comprehensive research on Austrian journalism is provided by Medienhaus Wien through a series of journalists' surveys published since 2007.

In Greece, Croatia, Estonia, Bulgaria and Czechia, data related to media ownership, audience and advertising figures, and digital-native media is primarily collected by private market research companies, with exceptions such as the Council for Electronic Media (CEM) and the Ministry of Culture in Bulgaria. However, this data are not always made publicly available and often does not reveal the real owners of media outlets. The lack of transparency in media ownership is a concern for these countries, and different mechanisms are in place to regulate and monitor it. Furthermore, the media sector in these countries needs effective regulation and monitoring to ensure transparent market structures, maintain media diversity and protect media autonomy and sustainability. There is growing concern about the impact of media ownership concentration on freedom of speech and media accountability. Media development research is also covered by the European Research Council (ERC) through the international MDCEE project – Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe –, which mapped the development of media in the region. The EurOMo project (Euromedia Ownership Monitor) monitors media ownership transparency and control in all 27 EU member states. Seven of the published 15 reports cover the Mediadelcom countries (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Sweden), while in September 2022 all Mediadelcom countries were added.

The research in Greece focused on journalistic studies, but more generally it covered topics such as the economic sustainability of journalism and its ability to keep pace with technological innovations and the socio-economic challenges that journalism faces. Nevertheless, there are no official figures for the number and profile of journalists, and large-scale comprehensive surveys of journalists are

also absent. Nonetheless, international non-profit organisations regularly review aspects of the state of the media in Greece, and European and international surveys also cover the country. In the case of Croatia, the media market lacks (foreign) ownership diversity conditions for media and journalism. In media audience research there is reliance on market research agencies. The Croatian Association of Communications Agencies provides annual data on advertising expenditure across different media, while the Open Society Institute undertook a European comparative project in 2000, *Television Across Europe*, which analysed developments in television. Market research agencies such as the IPSOS Puls and AGB Nielsen have measured audience size and ratings. The Bulgarian government has established a register of media owners at the Ministry of Culture to increase transparency in the printed media sector. Radio and television companies are under the supervision of the Council for Electronic Media, which was established as an independent regulatory body. However, these institutions have not produced the expected results and media ownership often remains hidden behind formally registered companies. Additionally, non-governmental organisations and foundations dedicated to the media environment in Bulgaria have employed local professionals and/or academia to collect data and conduct their own research. Italian market conditions demonstrate a poorly supervised media environment that is heavily influenced by economic and political factors. Overall, the chapter on Italy in the edited monograph on media accountability provides insights into the challenges and opportunities facing journalism research in this country. They include the lack of comprehensive and reliable data, the risk of losing key research experts, and the dependence on transnational investigations, as highlighted by Gianpietro Mazzoleni and Sergio Splendore from the University of Milan (2011, Ch. 7). Foreign interests in the media ecosystem have had little academic exploration, despite the increasing influence of transnational digital platforms.

Another risk among European countries is that the available information may not accurately represent the actual state of media conditions and ownership. Transparency of media ownership remains a concern in most of these countries, with various mechanisms in place to regulate and monitor it, such as the Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority in Estonia, Act V, 2006, on Public Company Information, Company Registration and Winding-up Proceedings in Hungary, and Romania's law containing specific provisions for transparency of ownership of audiovisual media. In these countries, national authorities, academic researchers and EU-sponsored projects make diverse efforts to monitor and analyse media development, ownership structures and market conditions. In Romania, there are limited academic studies of the media market, but non-academic resources such as books, studies by NGOs and media sector publications are available. The IREX – Media Sustainability Index – annual study includes information about users' preferences and the relevance of news media in this country. Media market measurement in Hungary is mainly provided by paid services from professional organisations.

In Estonia, there appears to be a focus on monitoring the current media market situation and working conditions (internationally through the Media Pluralism Monitor project or Norstat), but limited research on diachronic changes or market ownership. Challenges persist in obtaining valid structural data for different market segments. The Estonian media market is highly concentrated, while the legal framework has no media-specific regulation for horizontal and cross-media concentration. A similar situation was observed in Latvia, where research has been conducted on various aspects of the media, but with limited focus on market conditions and media ownership. The lack of media ownership transparency is also criticised and there is a shortage of nationally based communication research journals. In contrast, Poland appears to prioritise research on journalistic competencies and market changes, with a focus on media pluralism, regulatory frameworks, political independence, and social inclusiveness. The Media Pluralism Monitor project, conducted by the Center for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, examines the regulatory framework and its influence on media pluralism, political independence, and social inclusiveness, as well as the impact of digital technologies on the Polish media landscape.

In the following sections, as we delve deeper into the meta-analysis of market conditions, it becomes evident that there is a pressing need for further research to address data limitations and improve our understanding of media markets, ownership, production, journalism, and professional cultures in the countries under study.

## PRODUCTION CONDITIONS

Although research on production conditions in most countries is generally limited, digitisation has received more scholarly attention than other topics, such as investigative resources and foreign offices and correspondents. Digitisation is a broader and more attractive subject, gaining the status of a buzz phenomenon and easily drawing interest from both media houses and academia. Moreover, investigative resources and reporting are seen as a controversial topic in some of the countries, as it involves the media's scrutiny of political power and public officials.

Germany, Italy, Poland and Sweden, with satisfactory research coverage or, at the very least, data availability, have the best overall infrastructure for producing knowledge about various aspects of production conditions, particularly regarding digitisation between 2000 and 2020. Germany stands out among these countries with a satisfactory extent and breadth of research and data on production conditions, encompassing not only digitisation and investigative resources but also foreign offices and correspondents. Foreign correspondence has been a recurring topic in Germany, both as a theoretical field and in empirical studies concerning the professional development of German foreign correspondents, often linked to the concept of global journalism. In Austria, investigative journal-

ism and foreign news journalism are not researched to the same extent as in Germany. In Austria, one challenge is that certain data are produced by private research institutes (for example, large-scale data production related to user algorithms) and are therefore only accessible to a limited segment of society, and not always to academia. In Italy, investigative journalism in the period from 2010 to 2020 has been extensively covered, primarily through contributions from academia. In Sweden, between 2000 and 2010, several significant research projects examined investigative reporting both locally and nationally. However, during the 2010–2020 period, other research topics seem to outcompete the investigative perspective. Despite the limited number of studies, available research confirms that investigative journalism remains relatively strong in Sweden. There is a national association for investigative reporters called the *Grävande journalister*, which arranges events for discussing new working methods, among other topics. Notable contributions on media coverage of wars and conflicts are more theoretical and engaged in the transformation of foreign reporting globally than dealing with the economic and production conditions for foreign news journalism in the domestic context.

Although investigative journalism in Estonia has demonstrated remarkable achievement and recognition in recent years, there is yet no research about its problems and development. Austria – along with Bulgaria, Greece and Slovakia – belongs to a category of countries that have adequate monitoring capacities to understand how the media sector is impacted by various digitisation processes. However, ‘acceptable’ implies that there is still a noticeable lack of information and knowledge, indicating that improvements are necessary both within academia and outside of scholarly research. In Bulgaria, knowledge about digitisation seems to develop specifically within the context of journalism and media education at universities. This kind of applied learning approach helps to fill some of the gaps left by the scarcity of available private sector data.

It is likely that in most of the 14 reviewed countries, scarcity of resources within media houses for producing investigative reporting contributes to the lack of academic research and other information on this topic and production conditions. In terms of monitoring capabilities of production conditions, it is evident that across the 14 countries generally limited information is available, especially when compared to market research. However, digitisation is more extensively covered and monitored than the other two variables. The overall impression is that monitoring efforts tend to focus on journalism’s domestic conditions (i.e., the national aspects of media), while international aspects remain more marginalised. In other words, most publications are authored in national languages, published in a domestic context and may not be peer-reviewed. One possible explanation for this trend is that media research in several countries has been preoccupied with topics related to the media industry crisis, such as digitisation and audience metrics, at the expense of other areas that could have been more prominent in the past, such as investigative resources and foreign offices and correspondents. Es-

tonia is one exception to this trend, with the emphasis having been on international publishing over the past two decades (81% of monitored publications are published in English in international journals and books). Two reasons can be identified: active participation in EC funded projects (MediaAct, Mediadem, MPM, and more) and the strong requirement in academic institutions for international publishing as a condition for advancement in academic careers.

## PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA CONDITIONS

Public service media (PSM) are distinct components of most European media systems, but their roles and significance differ due to national contexts. Since the primary purpose of PSM is to provide citizens with impartial and accurate information in the public interest, it is crucial to determine whether reliable and diverse data on essential PSM functions is available.

The availability, diversity, and reliability of data on public service media vary across different European countries. Germany, Italy, and Sweden stand out with a richness of data and diversity of knowledge producers. In Italy, the relevance of PSM (such as *RAI*) is a topic analysed mainly in academic institutions. Concern over the potential loss of autonomy and independence of PSM has led to an increasing number of studies by Italian universities over the last twenty years, particularly regarding autonomy and financing perspectives. In Germany, a relative wealth of systematic data and research is available in terms of the size of the country, its media system and its media market. Much of the data collection and research results are accessible to the public either in their entirety or at least in the form of key findings. Unlike in Italy, German academic and commercial research institutions are in mutual exchange of both methods and results. Media authorities oversee various monitoring and research efforts, including the continuous work of the *Kommission zur Ermittlung der Konzentration im Medienbereich* (KEK) and reporting activities on media diversity. The autonomy, role, and mission of public service media in Sweden are primarily subjects for regular public inquiries initiated by the Swedish government. Public service companies themselves generate annual reports containing information on program content and diversity. In addition to the universities, the academic research on public service media conditions in Sweden has been, to some extent, also conducted by Nordicom, and The Broadcast Media Foundation, which examines the role of public service media in the digital media landscape. A substantial amount of data on public service media performance, audiences, and trust is regularly provided by research institutes such as Nordicom and *SOM-institutet*. Consequently, public service media is an area in which multiple actors contribute to the enhancement of knowledge about current developments.

In Austria, not much academic research is dedicated exclusively to PSM and the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF). However, public broadcasting is

covered in the studies that examine private media companies. The *ORF* is legally required to release annual reports on financial statements and public value. These reports contain detailed data on reach, market shares, programming, the company's financial data, as well as corporate goals such as equality.

In the remaining countries, challenges relating to the monitoring capabilities of public service media are apparent, although the underlying reasons for these issues vary. PSM in Bulgaria experience significant problems and for that reason this is among the most studied topics in the Bulgarian media environment, both by regulators and academics. In Bulgaria, annual reports of the performance of public service broadcasting companies BNT and BNR are made publicly available. There are quite many academic analyses of the PSM performance, but the shortage of relevant data creates obstacles for researchers to detect the long-term trends of their development. Latvia and Romania produce very limited data on PSM. In Latvia, some researchers are engaged in examining the relevance of public service media, however, the choice of topics, goals and objectives of the research is strongly influenced both by the personal interests of researchers and the funding available. Likewise, in Romania the topic of public service media is poorly covered. Sources on public service media include content monitoring performed by the NGO ActiveWatch and various reports dealing with the media in general. Annual reports from public TV and Radio and the national news agency *Agerpres* are also public.

In Hungary, there is an ongoing lively academic debate on the structural changes to public service media and the legal environment. The Merteke Media Monitor has been monitoring public service media news since 2016 in its *Szűrőpróba* analysis series, while the *Soft Censorship Reports* have looked closely at Hungarian media policy since the early 2010s. Poland also stands out with its somewhat politicised data production on public service media. A significant body of academic literature emphasises the importance of accountable and value-based public service media. Relevant studies in the domain of journalism primarily focus on questions of the relationship between PSM and politics and politicians. Only a few examples can be found of in-depth investigations into financial autonomy, organisational challenges, adaptation, and change.

In the Mediterranean countries of Croatia and Greece there is significant interest in PSM studies, although data production is not comprehensive, and the lack of continuity poses a risk. In Croatia, the position of PSM in relation to the government or political field and autonomy is a key topic in academic and professional debates. Analyses of public service media conditions primarily address autonomy and financing or discuss the democratic aspects of public service media. Legislative changes relating to PSM are the subject of many published papers. The PSM's independence from governmental influence is quite extensively covered in Greece. Relevant studies tend to prefer longer-term perspectives and a media-systems approach, acknowledging that the transition to a dual broadcasting sys-

tem was not accompanied by changes that could have enabled the Greek public service broadcaster, the ERT, to function independently.

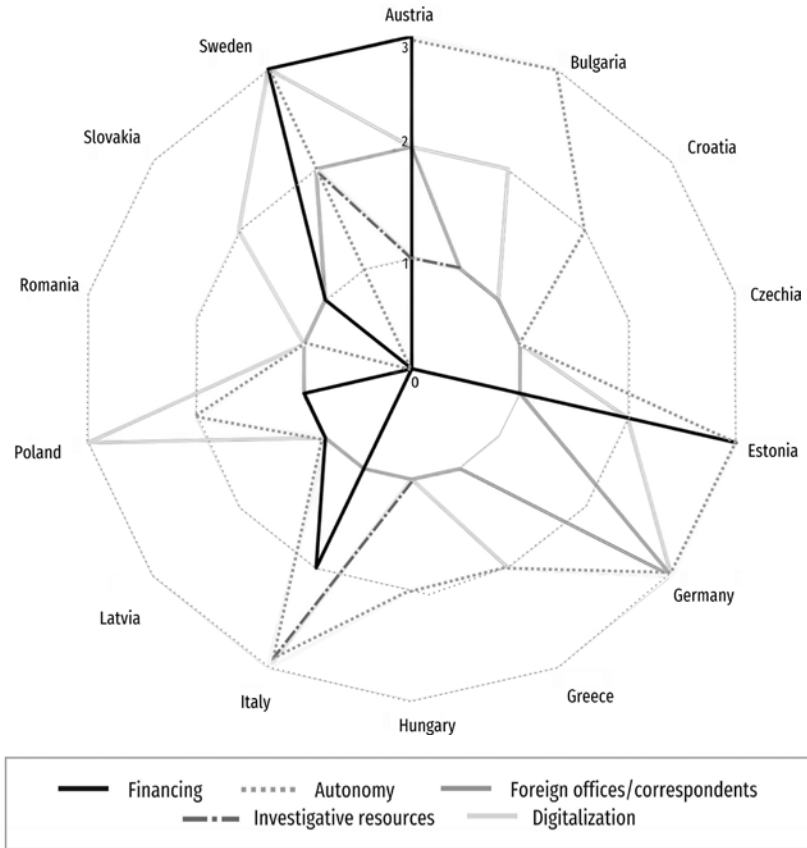


Figure 13. Illustrative comparison of production and public service media conditions.

Favourable situation (opportunities) = 3  
 Ambivalent/neutral situation = 2  
 Unfavourable situation (risks) = 1  
 More information required to make evaluation = 0

Source: Halliki Harro-Loit & Lenka Waschková Čísařová.

In Estonia, the development and dynamics of public broadcasting have been the subject of numerous public discussions at various conferences, and in the news. Although the public service broadcaster, ERR's, research unit was closed in 2017, research on public service broadcasting continued at universities. The research covers public broadcasting's economy, audience preferences, the impact of the EU audio-visual policy on Estonian public broadcasting (Jõesaar, 2011) and ERR history (Šein, 2002, 2005, 2021).



In Czechia, information on public service media conditions is available only in a fragmented manner, such as analyses for supervising councils or annual reports. Czech Television, the public service broadcaster, publishes annual reports on viewership and content popularity.

The autonomy and financing conditions of public service media are often subjects of academic research and public discussion in all the 14 examined countries. Data on the role of and general interest in PSM activities offer insights into their contributions to democracy. Such information helps journalists, researchers and policymakers understand the challenges and opportunities associated with public service media across European countries. Nonetheless, certain risks arise from the inconsistency and unreliability of data production and the limited diversity of data sources in some countries.

## WORKING CONDITIONS

The research landscape as it relates to employment conditions, job satisfaction, education and training for journalists varies across the countries analysed. Some have a well-developed research infrastructure and participate in large international projects such as the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS), while others face funding and competency problems and have significant gaps in their research.

Germany and Sweden have produced a substantial amount of research on working conditions, job satisfaction and education and training for journalists. However, most countries monitor journalists' safety inadequately, with Sweden being a notable exception. Germany boasts numerous studies on journalists as communicators. Relevant representative surveys have been conducted twice in the past 20 years, with the more recent one being related to the second wave of the WJS (2012–2016). The study presents data on income and employment types, while more recent studies assess career opportunities and training curricula.

Sweden prioritises working conditions for journalists and media workers, with the media and communication department at Karlstad University having addressed the issue extensively over the last decade. The Union of Swedish Journalists (SJF) supports regular research on journalists' working conditions and role perceptions in collaboration with academic institutions, leading to recurrent reports and data collections. Researchers such as Henrik Örnebring and Cecilia Möller (2018), Jasper Strömbäck (et al., 2012), and Gunnar Nygren (2012) contribute qualitative, longitudinal analyses to the knowledge base, incorporating information from international comparative projects and findings on the changing nature, skills and priorities of journalistic work. Research on journalistic competences is institutionalised at the Gothenburg University and has been systematically explored through a recurring survey since 2012. Berglez (2011) has investigated the concept of creativity as a journalistic competence. Additionally, the pri-

vately funded NGO *Institutet för mediastudier* and the Journalists' Union map the skills, competencies and values of Swedish journalists.

In Austria, studies on journalists' training and education provide a comprehensive overview of the entire 2000–2020 period. Significant numbers of studies are dedicated to young journalists and their training. The academic literature provides overviews of training paths, further education, field reports and critical discussions of journalistic education. In general, the extensive series of studies led by Kaltenbrunner (Kaltenbrunner & Kraus, 2008; Kaltenbrunner et al., 2007; 2008; 2010; 2013; 2017; 2020) delve into various topics related to working conditions. Additionally, recent individual studies have increasingly focused on journalistic working environments.

The topics of threats, harassment and hate against journalists, as well as commercialisation, are relatively under-researched in most European countries, with limited or even no information available on these subjects. However, notable attention to research regarding threats, harassment, and hate emerged around the mid-2010s. This period also aligns with the initiation of the Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), which addresses these issues. The changes in journalists' working conditions caused by commercialisation, carry risks that affect journalists' professional autonomy, and need more scholarly attention.

In Hungary, Estonia, Croatia and Greece, questions of journalists' safety are mainly addressed from a legal perspective or covered by non-academic actors such as Reporters Without Borders. This topic has attracted individual researchers, such as Vásárhelyi (2007) in Hungary and more recently Ivask (2020) in Estonia. Recently, some scholars have conducted qualitative studies (e.g., Gödri, 2021). In addition, detailed information on working conditions for Hungarian journalists has been provided through interview-based studies conducted regularly by MerteK Media Monitor since 2015. The Hungarian Online and Digital Media History (MODEM) oral history project also offers insights into the working conditions of Hungarian media professionals. Comprehensive information can be found in Vásárhelyi's surveys (2007). The precarious situation of journalism education and training in Hungary is well-documented, enabling proper evaluation. Hungary is also part of the NEWSREEL project. Although there is no institutionalised research on journalism education, the status of education institutions and the quality of teaching can be adequately monitored. In Estonia, participation in international projects such as MediaAct, Mediadem and Worlds of Journalism Study has shed light on some aspects of journalistic working conditions. Along with curriculum development and restructuring of the journalism programme between the 1990s and early 2000s, Tartu University passed the third international accreditation in 2017 with excellence. In collaboration with the European Journalism Training Association, curricula were evaluated in international comparisons. The only studies on Estonian journalism education mainly reflect this particular development process (Lauk, 2009; Harro-Loit, 2009). In Greece, there has been a signifi-

cant research interest in the economic sustainability of journalism since 2000. This interest intensified due to the financial crisis of 2008. From that year onwards, research on the social situation of journalists increased, resulting in a considerable number of academic studies on journalistic working conditions. However, less attention has been paid to the monitoring of training and education for journalists.

In Croatia, Bulgaria, Italy and Czechia not all relevant topics are covered and there is a lack of large-scale, comprehensive surveys on journalists' working conditions and education. Some countries, such as Italy, boast a fair number of publications on employment conditions. However, this focus mainly developed in the last decade and representative studies remain rare. In Italy, research interest in hate speech within the context of disinformation and media use has been growing since 2019. In recent years, and in connection with the WJS, investigation of working conditions has expanded. The journalists' association *Ordine dei Giornalisti* and the journalists' union are also involved in research that addresses issues of employment conditions and training. Bulgarian researchers such as Slavcheva-Petkova (2017), Spasov et al. (2017) and Vulkov (2020) have presented detailed information on working conditions and training for journalists over the past five years, albeit with small sample sizes and a lack of regularity. Similarly, there has been an increased focus on misinformation, manipulation and hate speech. Latvia has a relatively high number of studies on working conditions and journalistic skills, although in-depth analyses are less frequent. In Czechia, journalists' working conditions, education and training have received some scholarly attention, but mainly in a descriptive way, and comparable analytical approaches are missing.

In Poland, a research gap exists regarding employment conditions. A bibliometric analysis conducted for Mediadelcom reveals that only six percent of Polish journalism scholars focus on working conditions. Studies on job satisfaction and employment conditions are rare. The situation of data on journalists' training level is similar. Despite an extensive range of education institutions, with more than seventy centres offering higher education in communication and media, not much adequate monitoring is being carried out. In Slovakia, as in Poland, the university education system is well developed, yet research into journalists' working conditions remains fragmented and overlooks numerous aspects such as gender and income. Additional data is collected on an ad hoc basis by NGOs such as Transparency International, often in the context of corruption. Private media companies do not disclose employment details, which poses a risk for analytic coverage of working conditions. Primarily NGOs have tackled the issue of the online spread of hate speech and extremism. Such NGOs promote critical thinking and development of media competencies, focusing on disinformation, false reports and conspiracy theories. In Slovakia, the murder of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée in February 2018 ignited increased public interest in the safety of journalists.

In Romania, a notable nine-year longitudinal study (Vasilendiuc & Şuţu, 2021) provides data on working conditions. Regular reports from the Federation for Culture and Mass Media also offer empirical indicators of newsroom practices. The international research projects NEWSREEL 1 and 2, which include Hungary, Germany and Czechia, have been evaluating the state of journalistic education and training since 2017. However, comparative and complementary studies are scarce, making it challenging to assess the entirety of the period from 2000 onwards.

Regularly conducted international studies (such as WJS and MPM) appear to be crucial drivers of adequate data collection. When non-academic actors such as NGOs or journalists' unions are involved, they enrich the available data and seem to stimulate research interest. However, the data collected can sometimes have limited usefulness for scientific analysis. Despite this, collaborations are undoubtedly beneficial. A far-reaching risk lies in the almost total absence of institutionalised evaluations of journalism education. Assessments of developments and performance can only be made to a limited extent if individual researchers do not focus on the subject. Substantial research gaps exist in areas such as threats, harassment and hate against journalists, as well as commercialisation. While these topics can be addressed from legal or economic perspectives, a more practical viewpoint is often missing.

## ORGANISATIONAL CONDITIONS

A comparative meta-analysis of the research on organisational conditions and workforce diversity in European countries reveals that each nation has its unique focus areas. However, there are common research trends concerning media ethics, gender representation, and working conditions in the media. Austria and Sweden stand out with a significant number of research projects focused on these issues. In Austria, research emphasises media ethics and gender representation, with considerable attention given to the working conditions of women in media organisations and their representation in journalism. These studies blend theoretical models with empirical research. In Sweden, media and communication research is undertaken by both male and female scholars, with Lund University focusing on media and democracy, media and politics, and gender and media. The Swedish Enterprise Media Monitor (funded by the Swedish Free Enterprise Foundation) scrutinises the quality of Swedish news journalism and carries out research on gender and minorities as part of the Global Media Monitoring project. Think tanks and lobbying organisations have not played a significant role in shaping the discourse within the media market arena. Most publications in this area consist of correspondents' books and journalists' memoirs.

Gender studies – with a focus on analysing the profiles of journalists – are at the forefront of research in countries such as Germany, Croatia and Italy. In Ger-

many, research is made available by domestic as well as international efforts. Public broadcasters in particular monitor and publish their diversity situation and development. Research on ethnic diversity in the media is limited but gradually gaining more attention. Croatian researchers often focus on hate speech, sexuality or gender-based discrimination, and workforce diversity (in terms of gender). The Agency for Electronic Media regulates and oversees electronic media, commissioning studies on diverse topics, among them gender equality in the media. In Italy, as the AGCOM highlights, the organisational structures of media platforms have an impact on the journalistic workforce. Empirical studies conducted over the last decade demonstrate that women often hold lower positions. In Romania, the Global Media Monitoring project measures women's presence in news and newsrooms and observes an increase in quantity but a lowering in quality of the journalistic presentation of women. Additionally, the WJS reports provide information on newsroom diversity, including the high education level and specialisation of women journalists and a significant degree of professional autonomy. There is also some research into the gender balance in the newsroom and journalists' working conditions, but it is not systematic and misses various essential aspects, such as income.

The distribution of gender, age and education among journalists has been studied to some extent, focusing on aggressive feedback and harassment, but there is a need for more research into newsroom practices, working atmosphere, and conditions. Specifically, data is lacking on the total number of media employees and deeper reflection on the ethical and legal aspects of media development, journalists' working and organisational conditions, and their competencies. For instance, in Slovakia, journalism as a profession has a low standing, leading to diminished social prestige and worsening economic conditions for journalists. Overall, existing research is fragmented and lacks coordination, calling for a more in-depth investigation into organisational cultures and the mindsets of policymakers and media professionals. A similar situation can be observed in Latvia, where media messages in research studies are based on cultural texts and narratives, with several databases including relevant and open data. However, poor coordination between involved bodies, and a lack of an overall administration strategy prevent the existing research from having its full impact on the professional field and policy development.

Research on motivation systems, human resources and job satisfaction, as well as the studies on diversity management are scarce in many of the investigated countries. For example, this is the situation in Poland, where the research primarily focuses on journalists' independence from political pressure. However, little attention is given to financial autonomy and organisational challenges. Media research is primarily driven by university centres, such as Jagiellonian University and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, concentrating on democratic transformations but paying limited attention to motivation systems and job satisfaction. Generally, studies on public service media prioritise independence from

politics as a research focus, but only a few in-depth investigations exist on financial autonomy, organisational challenges and adaptation.

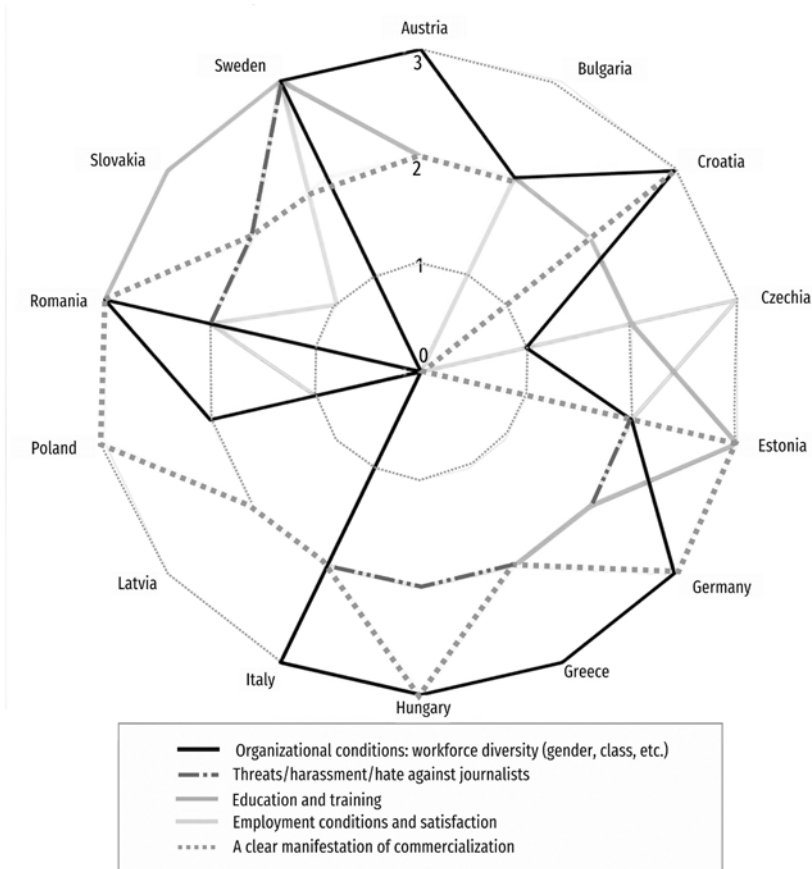


Figure 14. Illustrative comparison of working conditions and organisational conditions.

Favourable situation (opportunities) = 3  
 Ambivalent/neutral situation = 2  
 Unfavourable situation (risks) = 1  
 More information required to make evaluation = 0

Source: Hallíki Harro-Loit & Lenka Waschková Císařová

There is also a group of countries with a noticeable research deficit in the organisational conditions of the media. In Greece, research on diversity within the media industry is limited. Studies reveal inequalities in salary and promotion within newsrooms, but these findings are often not acknowledged by the management. Some data on gender diversity in public service media and leading news media is collected by the MPM. Additionally, research on the media industry in Hungary examines the proportion of journalists by gender and age, as seen in

surveys by Vásárhelyi (2007) and Róka, Frost and Hanitzsch (2017). However, information on class or cultural background is not available. Furthermore, research on the organisational conditions of journalists is primarily limited to gender balance and age groups, while it is scarce in areas such as earnings opportunities, training and career prospects.

In the third group of countries, the research deficits are the most obvious. Existing research on the state of journalism in Bulgaria is limited and non-representative. Most journalists are women, and the profession holds a weak position in the labour market, with similar findings in Italy and Croatia. In Czechia, there is a lack of research on the ethical and legal aspects of media development and journalists' working conditions, similar to Estonia. These countries face challenges due to limited research on workforce diversity and representation of women in media, hindering a true understanding of the realities within media newsrooms. In Romania, newsrooms are predominantly filled with young people, and women journalists enjoy high professional autonomy. However, research on working conditions remains limited.

In countries like Czechia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Greece and Slovakia, the research deficit on organisational conditions in the media is more pronounced. There is a general need for further research on the state of journalism as a profession and issues related to diversity in the media industry in most of the studied countries, including representation of women and underrepresented groups. Studies on organisational needs and diversity management are scarce, with most publications in journalism studies focusing on professional roles, cultures, and autonomy. Research into journalists' working conditions is fragmented and often neglects crucial aspects such as gender and income. Specifically, these studies have investigated topics such as the working conditions of women in media, the representation of women on television, and the professional situation of women in journalism. Nevertheless, the demographic profile of journalists based on age, education, ethnicity, language and origin remains underrepresented. There is also a lack of in-depth research on the ethical and legal aspects of media development, the working and organisational conditions of journalists, and their competencies.

## PROFESSIONAL CULTURE

Research on professional culture in the field of journalism is extensive and relatively common across the EU (Figure 15). The research on professional culture is strongly intertwined with journalistic roles and values. As Thomas Hanitzsch (2007) explains, journalism culture is less an ideology and more of an arena in which diverse professional ideologies struggle over the dominant interpretation of journalism's function and identity, especially in the comparative perspective. That is why the normative perspective of professional culture can be both empiri-

cally studied and evaluated in the framework of complex relations, including in the organisational context.

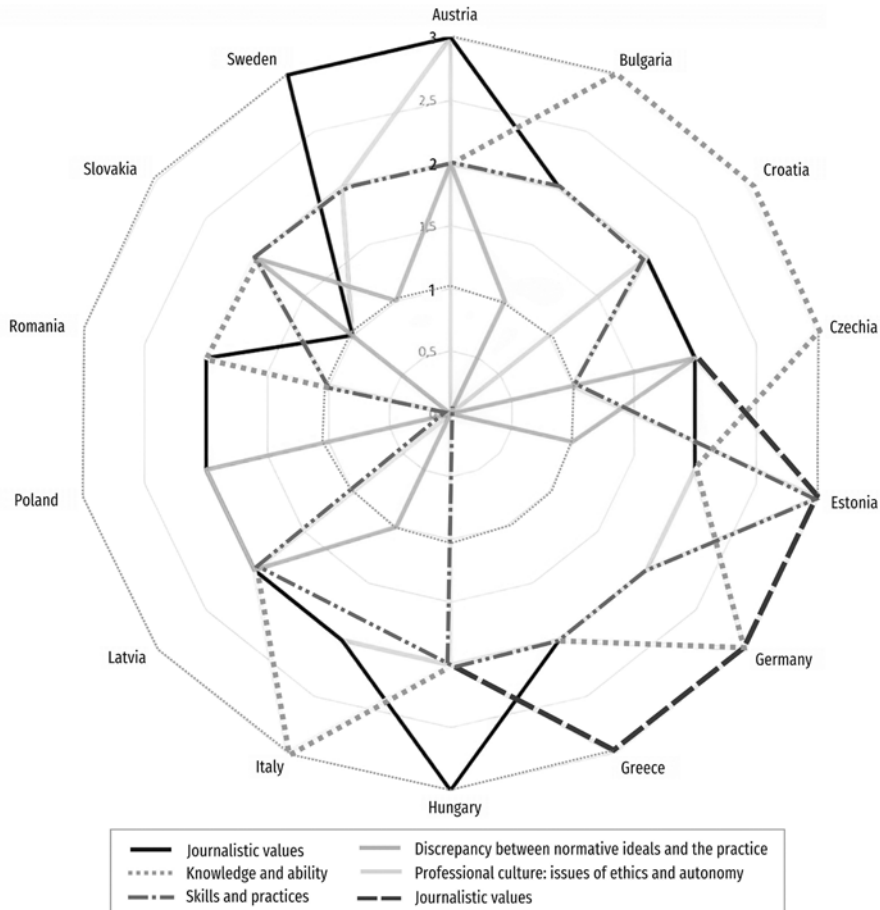


Figure 15. Illustrative comparison of professional culture and journalistic competencies. Favourable situation (opportunities) = 3

Ambivalent/neutral situation = 2

Unfavourable situation (risks) = 1

More information required to make evaluation = 0

Source: Hallíki Harro-Loit & Lenka Waschková Císařová.

The most notable commonality among countries with a less extensive tradition of research on professional culture is the reliance on data from international research and projects, such as the Newsreel, World of Journalism, and The Press Freedom Index (for example, in Hungary). Such countries also tend to focus on research addressing democratic values (the Illiberal Turn, Media and Democracy in Western and Eastern Europe, etc.), with significant emphasis often placed on ethical issues (Latvia, Croatia, Germany, Hungary and Italy).



Research on professional culture can take various forms, such as historical approaches (for example, Greece), transition studies (for example, Estonia), and independent comparative perspectives (for example, Czechia) that are separate from the international projects. Some countries exhibit a stronger focus on professional culture research (Austria, Estonia, Poland), while others lack this emphasis (for example, Bulgaria and Slovakia). Estonia, with a Russian-speaking population of about 23 %, does not have substantial Russian-language public service or commercial media, as this segment of the population primarily uses television channels and news platforms based in Russia. However, there is a comprehensive study (a PhD thesis) on Russian-speaking journalists' role perceptions, ethical stance and working conditions in Estonia (Jufereva-Skuratovski, 2021), covering the period from 1991 to 2016. The overall situation of the Russophone media in Estonia is analysed in Valeria Jakobson's doctoral thesis (2002).

Potential risks for deliberative communication include the reliance on theories of professional culture that are primarily based on Western historical traditions. The applicability of these theories to Central and Eastern Europe without further scrutiny is questionable. In this regard, the reflexive and critical approach utilised in Sweden appears essential. Sweden's research, particularly concerning de-professionalisation and alternative media, seeks to re-evaluate the definition of journalism in the contemporary digital age. Overall, research on professional cultures is a consistent component of academic journalism research in EU countries. It is not much linked to media practice or institutions but generally remains within the scope of fundamental research carried out in universities. Disparities between countries in this regard also include the degree to which research on professional cultures constitutes a separate or distinctly identifiable part of the academic tradition (for example, Austria) and the extent to which it merges either with research on ethics or research on journalistic roles and values. An opportunity for the research can be seen in critically examining to what extent Western theories can be used to study journalism cultures within their historical, political, and sociocultural contexts, and how that could be applied to CEE post-transformation journalism. Building on this critique could lead to a broader comparative platform that highlights the differences and connections between countries with varying geopolitical and historical contexts at a cultural level.

## JOURNALISTIC COMPETENCIES

We focus on the following variables in our discussion of journalistic competencies: journalistic roles, journalistic values, knowledge and abilities, skills and practices, and discrepancies between normative ideals and practice. In the countries analysed, it is challenging to assess independently the availability of research on journalistic roles and journalistic values: both concepts are closely intertwined, and respective research teams have approached them differently. These concepts

were either visibly separated, combined into one reflection, or one of the concepts (typically journalistic values) did not appear at all in the Mediadecom qualitative meta-analysis of journalism competencies.

Considering the available research, the described conceptual link is empirically evident in the Worlds of Journalism Study, which explores journalistic roles and focuses on journalistic values through journalistic epistemologies and ethical ideologies. As a result, based on data from the WJS, we can consider the research on journalistic roles and values sufficiently broad. However, it is important to note that all the countries analysed in the Mediadecom project are only included in the latest wave of the WJS (2021–2023), which has not yet been made public.

Since analyses from six of the fourteen countries address the topics of journalistic roles and journalistic values together (if they do so explicitly at all), the focus is on both concepts without neglecting knowledge, ability, skills, practices and the discrepancy between normative ideals and the journalistic profession. In terms of research centred on both journalistic competencies, there are three distinguishable country clusters.

The first cluster includes countries where the availability and quality of the data are good (Austria, Germany and Sweden). Data is mainly collected by universities, academic research centres, professional organisations, private research institutes and NGOs. In Austria, the qualitative meta-analysis reveals a wide variety of available empirical sources, with research initiatives demonstrating a high degree of specialisation (for example, at the University of Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences and *Medienhaus Wien*). Although there is criticism regarding the lack of longitudinal data, research on journalistic roles and values – even when not explicitly mentioned – continues to be published both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, there is longitudinal data on Austrian journalists that comprehensively covers self-perception of training needs and curricula in general. Particularly in Austria, cooperation between academia and media practice, and support for research by public institutions and the private sector are strongly encouraged (for example, the Austrian Press Council, ORF's Public Value Competence Centre, IQ Initiative Quality in Journalism). Germany lacks representative studies on journalists. Nevertheless, in terms of journalistic roles and journalistic values, researchers give them constant and focused attention nationally and comparatively. In Sweden, various national research projects on journalistic roles and values have been conducted, even longitudinally, by universities (for example, Södertörn University), research centres (for example, Nordicom), professional organisations (for example, *Journalistförbundet*), research institutes (for example, *IRM*), and NGOs (for example, *Institutet för mediastudier*).

The first cluster countries in particular offer a strong foundation for an in-depth discussion on the relationship between norms and practice. Since this cluster includes only countries from Western Europe, it reinforces the notion that

normative assumptions are deeply rooted in Western theory. Nevertheless, a corresponding response from Central and Eastern Europe is absent.

Secondly, there are countries where data is available but lacks quality in terms of recency, continuity, reliability or complexity. The situation in most countries within this second group, to varying degrees, demonstrates that a broader and deeper academic analysis of the quality and scope of journalism teaching is missing. This cluster can be divided into two subgroups. The first consists of countries that are on the border between the first and second clusters, with varying data quality on roles, values, and journalistic competencies in general. This group includes countries such as Estonia, Greece, Hungary and Italy. The second group, with ambivalent indicators for both aspects, includes Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Latvia, Poland and Romania.

Although there is a wide range of publications covering various topics within the journalistic domain in Estonia, there is a lack of consistent data. The Estonian publications cover different periods, making it difficult to discern trends. Surveys on journalists' role perceptions, ethical principles, workload and working conditions are conducted irregularly, depending on factors such as the availability of funding and researcher interest. While several students' theses have qualitatively examined journalistic values and offer insights into existing risks and opportunities, relevant trends are not depicted. In Greece, research on journalistic role perceptions adopts either a systemic or an individual-level perspective. However, there are no official figures on the number, profile and types of employment for journalists, and comprehensive national surveys are absent. Journalistic values are even less covered, with surveys mainly conducted by international associations such as the WJS.

On the other hand, in Hungary, survey data is available for national journalists, and is also included in the Worlds of Journalism Study. Research is conducted on role performance and the changing roles of journalists. The state of Hungarian political journalism is also monitored. Two journalism schools have emerged: one advocating neutrality and the other political commitment (Bajomi-Lázár, 2017). However, research from the early 21st century is scarce. Hence, the role of international organisations is particularly crucial. For instance, Mertek Media Monitor collaborates with various initiatives, such as the Press Freedom Index, Soft Censorship and other international academic research initiatives tackling journalistic values. Italy is also a participant in these international comparative projects. On the national level, organisations such as *Ordine dei Giornalisti*, *Carta di Roma*, and AGCOM have conducted continuous research on journalistic professional roles for a decade. In addition, the WJS has provided longitudinal data through international comparative studies.

In Bulgaria, there is limited data available on the journalistic profession, specifically on journalistic roles and values. Comprehensive studies (for both traditional and online media) have been conducted by various teams (for example,

Pesheva et al., 2011a, 2011b). A few fragmented studies have been conducted by Bulgarian National Television, the Association of European Journalists – Bulgaria, WJS (Slavcheva-Petkova, 2017) and others, which, however, lack regularity and continuity. The sample size of these studies is small and non-representative. Moreover, reliable and accurate data on the total number of media employees in the country is missing. In Croatia and Czechia, research on journalistic roles and values began after 2010, although several data sources were also available earlier. Additionally, curricula and programs seem to be only scarcely reviewed and evaluated, mainly in research articles or reports (as in Estonia and Austria).

In contrast, Latvia has produced national longitudinal data, specialised research on journalistic values, and international comparative data. However, there are still gaps in research methods and in-depth studies on communicators' media usage and adherence to idealistic values. In Poland, over 50% of publications in journalism studies investigate professional roles, cultures, and autonomy through best practices or societal expectations, with most of them conducted in the last decade. Nevertheless, the knowledge and abilities of journalists remain understudied. National studies on journalistic roles and values are available, and Poland benefits from extensive comparative data from projects such as Professional Journalistic Cultures in Russia, Poland and Sweden, and the Journalistic Role Performance project. Research on journalistic values is also available. Romania's research on journalistic roles and values has mainly been conducted since 2010, with the country participating in all three waves of the Worlds of Journalism Study, providing international comparative research.

In many countries within the second cluster there is a scarcity of adequate data to effectively evaluate the extent to which the discrepancy between critically reflected normative ideals and practice can be empirically observed. The available research is either limited or focuses on other aspects (for example, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Latvia). This research is not sufficiently systematic or coordinated (especially in Italy, but even in Sweden, which is in the first cluster). Even when the government initiates such research, it does not use the results in its evaluations and decisions concerning the media (for example, Estonia). All of this presents a significant risk for deliberative communication. A portion of the available research (for example, Czechia, Croatia) focuses on evaluating the transformation or integration of journalism and media policy into the European context, the connection between journalism and democracy, and the issue of disinformation.

The third cluster includes only one country, Slovakia, where data on journalistic competencies and journalistic roles is almost non-existent, which results in a research situation that can be considered a risk for making informed media policy decisions. Slovakia only recently joined the Worlds of Journalism Study project in its current wave and does not yet have data on journalistic roles. Likewise, journalistic values are under-researched. Most data on this topic has been collected by

universities such as the UCM in Trnava and NGOs such as Transparency International.

All the countries examined have carried out at least basic research into journalism covering training, knowledge and abilities. Austria has comprehensively covered needs for training and analysis of curricula for professional education, while Poland, for example, has done very little of this research. No country can show systematic research in journalistic education and training, which makes comparing the countries problematic. The situation in most countries is like that in Estonia, where a methodical academic analysis of the quality and scope of journalism teaching is missing (Harro-Loit et al., 2022). A related variance among the researched countries can be observed in connection with the actors carrying out the research. Most countries can draw data on journalistic education and competencies from academic research, but for example in Bulgaria, NGOs are the main data sources. This brings us again to the problem of the complicated comparability of the cases because countries differ in the way data is collected, in the actors carrying out the data collection and in the scope of such research.

While journalists in most of the countries do not officially have to go through professional training or gain some sort of journalistic education to practice as journalists, most countries offer higher education (BA, MA, and some even PhD, for example Estonia and Bulgaria). Italy represents a notable exception, with journalists having to complete an internship or journalism course and pass an examination. Hungary, on the other hand, lacks specific training for journalism at the MA level altogether, apart from a few special courses in general media studies education. Journalism training is instead provided by the professional sector. Bulgaria reports a slight decrease in students enrolling in journalism programs in the last few years, mainly due to the negative demographic trends in the country. Croatia and some others (for example, Czechia) report that the number of students is too high compared to market demand. A shared problem across the countries is the general lack of further education for journalists in the form of on-the-job training. Only a few countries (for example, Austria) offer additional education workshops or similar initiatives.

The research seldom deals with the development of the normative ideals and their implementation in practice through empirical research. This also applies to the scarcity of journalism ethics research in most of the countries studied. The topic of journalistic skills and practices is getting increasing attention from researchers in Estonia. In addition, some other countries (for example, Austria, Germany, Latvia) report on research into various journalistic skills. In Germany, some research can be found on journalistic language skills, social media practices, and digital media competencies. Surprisingly, there is a lack of systematic research into journalists' cognitive and critical skills across all countries, as well as an absence of systematised and meaningful cooperation between the academic sphere, industry, and NGOs.

The normative discrepancy is typically monitored in most of the studied countries through regulatory institutions, international non-profit or professional organisations focused on monitoring journalism's state (for example, Reporters Without Borders), or international projects (for example, Media Pluralism Monitor). This poses a significant risk for the advancement of deliberative communication, as this type of research is unable to deconstruct normative ideals and potentially reconcile them with culturally conditioned specific public expectations.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we analysed research in the domain of journalism across 14 European countries in terms of the conditions of markets, production conditions, public service media conditions, working conditions, organisational conditions, as well as professional culture and journalistic competencies. The results of the qualitative meta-analysis reveal certain similar trends across the countries, which can be grouped based on their capability of monitoring the development of journalism.

The first group includes Italy, Germany, and Sweden, with Austria included in some study areas. This cluster is characterised by an abundance of available data, well-established public authorities and institutions that collect, analyse and publish reports on the media market (including circulation figures and regular reports on media concentration). The cluster also demonstrates a relatively strong investigative journalism sector with relatively broad research coverage or at least existence of relevant data, and the best overall infrastructure for producing knowledge about various aspects of production conditions. Additionally, this cluster has a wealth of information, continuity, availability and diversity of knowledge producers. Public service media autonomy and financing are regularly studied, and several actors contribute to increasing knowledge about current developments. In addition, there is a considerable amount of research on employment conditions, job satisfaction, education, training for journalists, and journalist safety in these countries.

The second group is composed of countries primarily located in Central and Eastern Europe. This group partly overlaps with the third cluster depending on the topics studied and their level of monitoring in the different countries. Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Austria and Slovakia have acceptable monitoring capacities to understand how the media sector is affected by various digitisation processes, but data and knowledge gaps are still evident. Greece – along with Croatia, Estonia and Hungary – has produced individual studies addressing certain focal points on working conditions for journalists, but evaluations of journalistic education and training are more likely to be cursory only. In Poland, data sources may be less reliable due to the politicisation of data production in this field. Moreover, in Poland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Latvia and Romania, research on journalistic com-

petencies is available, but the data lacks quality in terms of recency, continuity, reliability or complexity.

The third group comprises a triangle formed by Slovakia, Czechia and Croatia. These countries are of particular concern due to the lack of continuity and diversity in data sources (like Greece and Estonia) and their dependence on private market research companies to collect data on media ownership, audience and advertising figures. Additionally, transparency of media ownership is worrisome in these countries, as it is in Greece and Bulgaria, with various mechanisms in place to regulate and monitor the transparency. Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Romania show little evidence of any public knowledge, including academic research, on production conditions. In Slovakia, research on journalistic competencies is almost non-existent and a significant research gap is found regarding employment conditions, with only limited monitoring of their professional competencies, a problem also shared by Poland. Latvia is included in this group due to very limited overall data production on public service media (as with Romania), creating obstacles for researchers of media, journalism, and communications.

The primary risks associated with monitoring and studying journalism include:

- Insufficient and unreliable data, lack of key research experts, reliance on transnational investigations, and potential discrepancies between available information and actual media conditions and ownership.
- Limited usefulness of collected data for scientific analysis, an almost complete lack of institutionalised evaluation of journalism education, and constraints on making well-informed statements about developments and performance due to individual researchers lacking adequate working conditions.
- Fragmented and uncoordinated research, narrow focus on specific topics, possible resistance from media organisations and journalists, challenges to obtaining representative data, and limited access to information, all of which hinder the development of research on organisational conditions.
- Over-reliance on Western theories and their applicability to post-transformation journalistic cultures, difficulties in obtaining representative data and accessing information, and disconnection between academic research and the non-academic sphere (policymakers and media practice). Additionally, the extent to which theories of journalistic competencies are based primarily on Western historical traditions and their applicability to Central and Eastern Europe without further criticism, a lack of data that may result in misunderstanding the current state of journalism, and limited research into journalistic skills and practices.
- Absence of systematic and meaningful cooperation between the academic sphere, industry, research centres, political institutions and NGOs, which

limits the practical application of research results and reduces the relevance and impact of research on journalistic competencies.

Despite the risks associated with investigating and monitoring journalism in the studied countries, there are several opportunities:

- Efforts by national authorities, academic researchers, and EU-sponsored projects to monitor and analyse media development, ownership structures and market conditions.
- Public service media (PSM) condition research offers insights into the democratic contributions of PSM across European countries, helping journalists, researchers, and policymakers to understand the challenges and opportunities of PSM. Academic research on PSM autonomy and financing is generally comprehensive, and PSM roles and activities remain topics of interest.
- Regular international studies such as the WJS and the MPM are vital drivers for sufficient data collection. Non-academic actors such as NGOs and unions enrich available data and seem to promote research interests and collaboration, which is useful for better analysis of working conditions.
- Research on organisational conditions provides insights into working conditions, representation, diversity in media and recommendations for improvement, as well as promoting diversity in the workplace. Developing more comprehensive research approaches that consider a wider range of factors and stakeholders is also beneficial.
- Criticism and reflection on the Western roots of journalistic theories used in research on professional cultures and their applicability to various geopolitical and historical contexts can create a broader comparative platform, highlighting differences and connections between countries, while providing insights into professional ideologies and values.
- Focus on the formulation of normative ideals reflecting contemporary journalism conditions and testing their implementation in practice through empirical research can help countries better understand their cultural expectations and develop more culturally specific ideals for journalism. Additionally, this focus can provide insights into how journalism can adapt to changing social, cultural and technological contexts, encourage more research on cognitive and critical skills of journalists and emphasise the importance of links between academia, institutions and media practice. Increased cooperation between academia and media practice, as well as research supported by public institutions and the private sector, can further enhance these opportunities.

While research on the domain of journalism is a well-established component of academic research in EU countries, there is a need for improved coordination



and integration with the non-academic sphere to ensure that the findings are applied to real-world practice. This could involve fostering closer collaboration with policymakers and media practitioners to better comprehend the challenges in developing monitoring capabilities across various contexts. The information and insights presented in this chapter allow us to draw conclusions on risk and opportunity trajectories in journalism across regions. Our qualitative meta-analysis underscores the significance of further research and the enhancement of monitoring capacities in the European countries analysed. This knowledge offers valuable insights into the risks and opportunities in journalism, which can inform policies and actions aimed at strengthening the role of journalism in delivering impartial and accurate information in the public interest.

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# 7

## Assessing media usage research from the perspective of access, trust and news consumption

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Involvement in deliberative communication presupposes that participants are well-informed about the topics they are discussing. Without proper, factual and up-to-date information, one is not able to participate successfully in deliberative interactions. One of the main functions of the media in society is to inform the populace, thus enabling a “public connection” between the people and significant subjects (Couldry et al., 2010).

People have developed different ways “to be involved” in society or to search for information in today’s hybrid media environment (Chadwick, 2013). On the one hand, the media repertoires people develop (Adoni et al., 2017; Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012) are created in the framework of available channels and content in a particular country. On the other hand, these repertoires are also shaped by individuals’ informational preferences and abilities. If we view the available media channels as conditions for media use, the interest of audiences and their need to follow media channels becomes even more relevant. Monitoring the aims, methodologies and results of research on audiences’ media use allows us to posit questions that aim to detect possible risks and opportunities for people’s participation in public deliberation: (1) Do existing studies on news media use give an adequate picture of the information spaces people live in and what media do different audience groups use? (2) Does existing research reveal what information providers audience groups trust? (3) Does existing research help us assess the ability of audience groups to differentiate between trustworthy and false information? Thus, the constant and focused monitoring of media use can inform us about the risks related to the media’s deliberative role in society. Risks can derive from the inaccessibility of relevant content and poor quality of media provision and can

manifest as low levels of trust in the media, interest in common issues and poor skills in the use and evaluation of media content. To evaluate the risks and opportunities (ROs) that derive from the monitoring (or lack thereof) of audience media use, we have analysed the monitoring of the following three aspects of media use as the most indicative variables: access to media, relevance of news media and trust in media. Audience media usage competencies are also relevant to participation in deliberative interactions and will be discussed in the current chapter.

## CURRENT SITUATION

The study of the monitoring capabilities of Mediadelcom's 14 countries demonstrates a heterogeneous approach to research on sources and data covering media usage patterns during the 2000–2020 period (Figure 16). This situation creates certain risks for any comparative analysis of important issues such as access to media, relevance of news media and trust in media.

Some countries – such as Austria, Germany and Sweden – demonstrate well-developed and consistent tracking of audience research. This relates both to the dominant commercially oriented studies and to weakly institutionalised academic works, mainly focused on either secondary analysis of commercial use data or a variety of other issues. In Austria, the availability of data on media use from applied audience research varies for each media segment (i.e. print, radio, TV and the internet). In Germany the longitudinal character of the *ARD-ZDF-Massenkommunikation* allows for the monitoring of developments and changes in traditional media usership patterns over a period of more than 50 years, while the *ARD-ZDF-Onlinestudie* annual study on the internet use covers almost 25 years of online media. Knowledge of media use structures and audience preferences in Sweden are systematically gathered in annual surveys. The Nordicom research documentation centre produces the annual *Media Barometer*, which is often referred to in public debate. Other Mediadelcom consortium countries do not have such lengthy traditions of media usage monitoring, showing less systematic approaches, more randomness in data collection, more disruptions and only recent implementation of monitoring practices.

In Estonia, the longitudinal academic research tradition on media consumption gradually decreased in the second decade of the 21st century. Our research group approaches media use from the perspective of ROs, employing two angles: (1) how does the media use of an individual relate to higher levels of social and political participation; and (2) how does the growing use of digital media cause changes (partly understood as risks) in social cohesion? Other countries, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Latvia, point out that research on media consumption has intensified over the same period. Audience research in these countries has progressed from descriptive measurement of audience size to more nuanced analysis of media effects and repertoires. A similar situation of graduating from

exclusively quantitative analyses to diversity in methodological approaches, using qualitative and mixed method analysis, has been identified in Czechia, Greece, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

While scholarly research continues to grow, qualitative investigations remain disjointed despite encompassing a wide variety of subjects, some of which are shaped by cross-disciplinary viewpoints. In almost all countries, large amounts of data on media use are collected by public authorities, statistical bodies and media regulators. These studies are usually commercially motivated by the media industry, advertisers and advertising marketers, and generally analyse survey data on different aspects of key social trends. According to common practice, not all such studies are publicly available.

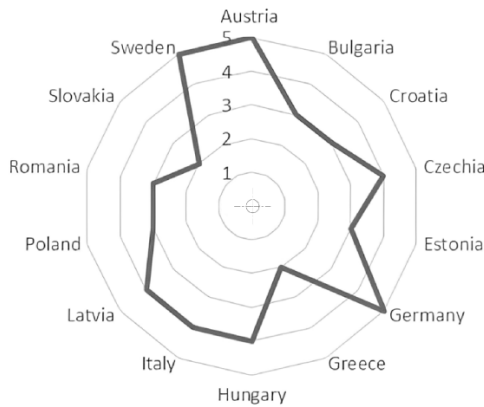


Figure 16. Illustrative comparison of production of knowledge and knowledge gaps in the 14 Media-delcom countries. (1) Audience research includes substantial knowledge gaps. (2) Knowledge commercially collected, but does not cover the whole market, or there is a lack of continuity. (3) Academic research provides knowledge, can use some commercial data. (4) Commercial information production, limited access for the creation of public knowledge. (5) Synthesis of commercial and public knowledge production.

From an international perspective, audience measurement patterns have been expertly and comparatively discussed using data, among others, from Edelman Trust Barometer, Eurostat, Freedom House, Gallup, Gemius, IREX, Kantar, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Nielsen, Open Society Institute, Reporters Without Borders, Reuters Institute Digital News Report, Standard Eurobarometer and UNICEF, as well as from opinion polls, country reports and independent research from the academic and professional communities. Thus, several national and international studies provide a comprehensive picture of the media use habits of the population. Countries such as Sweden, Estonia and Bulgaria gather information for the Media Day project, which examines the amount of time individuals spend on various media types (text, audio, visual, internet) throughout their day.

## RESEARCH ON THE USE OF NEWS MEDIA IN MEDIADELCOM COUNTRIES

In Sweden and Germany there is broad access to information and data for understanding media use patterns. Both countries have central monitoring actors, and annual surveys are utilised to gather information on structures of media use and audience preference. These surveys cover areas such as duration of media consumption, reach, use of social networks, access to media technology, and household expenditure on media subscriptions. In Sweden, there is ample information (sources and data) from the 2000–2020 period to map and understand media use patterns, including on central monitoring actors. Information about structures of media use and audience preference is systematically gathered in annual surveys. The *Media Barometer* is produced by the Nordicom research documentation centre and is often referred to in public debate. The Barometer covers aspects such as the Media Day (how much time people spend on different media during the day), as well as the reach and average consumption times of text media, sound media and image media. Other sections of the annual report describe the reach and use of social networks, news, access to media technology and household spending on subscriptions to different media. Commercial research agencies such as the MMS and Kantar SIFO also produce frequent reports on the audience figures and demographics of broadcast channels, programs, newspapers and webpages. Some of this data is publicly available, while other detailed data and reports need to be purchased. Another annual report, *The Swedes and the Internet*, produced by the Internet Foundation, focuses on the digitisation of the Swedish data. Extensive survey data is presented for areas such as internet and social media use, digital divides in the public, and audience's worries about digital integrity and hate content on the net. Overall, digitisation and convergence has made it more challenging to monitor and understand media use patterns in the media landscape. A third Swedish project in this category, which deserves attention, is the *SOM* Institute publications by the University of Gothenburg, which provide annual overviews of public opinion and always include sections on media consumption and media preferences among the public and/or sections related to other relevant factors, such as trust in media (Berglez et al., 2022).

In Germany, many of the questions raised about media use are covered by the *ARD-ZDF-Massenkommunikation Langzeitstudie*, a long-term study of general media use (not only in the realm of public broadcasting, despite *ARD* and *ZDF* financing the research) that was conducted for the first time in 1964–1965 and has been carried out every five years since 1980. An annual study on internet use (*ARD-ZDF-Onlinestudie*) was introduced in 1997. A smaller selection of items from the *Langzeitstudie* has been updated annually since 2017, published alongside the *Onlinestudie* and other data under a shared title (Engel & Holtmannspötter, 2017). Furthermore, several mechanisms for measuring audience reach (and ultimately

advertising impact) can also provide insights into the media use of different demographic groups.

The latest *Langzeitstudie* data indicates that nearly all German-speaking individuals aged 14 and above engage with the media both daily and quite extensively, averaging a combined use time of over seven hours primarily spent on moving images and radio, while sometimes consuming two types of media simultaneously. Text media is less popular, with 47% of the population using it daily. The data enables detailed differentiation by media type, age group and user generation, region, a comparison of the former territories of the Federal Republic of Germany to those of the German Democratic Republic, and in relation to previous editions of the longitudinal study (Breunig et al., 2020), as well as combinations of these categories. Data from the latest *Onlinestudie* shows that 94% of the population use the internet at least sometimes, with only people over 70 having a value below 90% (at 75%), although they have the sharpest increase of all age groups. While messaging applications such as WhatsApp were used at least weekly by 80% of the population and over 98% among respondents younger than 30, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are engaged only by 36% of the general population, although this rises to 80% of teenagers and people in their twenties (Beisch & Schäfer, 2020). While the exact figures may differ, the Reuters Digital News Report confirms these trends and facilitates cross-country comparison. This report also distinguishes between general news and other uses, revealing that messaging applications are more regarded as personal communication tools than news apps. For Germany and Austria (and Switzerland), the Media Performance and Democracy project has developed a methodology that specifically incorporates the plurality of viewpoints within the public discourse (Hasebrink & Hölig, 2020).

The patterns of media use and their research in Czechia, Austria and Bulgaria exhibit a range of similarities that underscore the importance of interdisciplinary perspectives, collaboration between academia and industry, and attention to current issues. In Czechia, the topic of media use patterns appears on many different levels and in various shapes within academic research. The associated research is highly fragmented, and academic works cover a large range of topics, some of them influenced by interdisciplinary perspectives (e.g., cultural studies, psychology, fan studies and game studies). Czech media audiences are well-researched with contributions from several teams from different universities. Both qualitative and quantitative research provide a substantial number of highly specialised but also representative data about Czech audiences. Czechia was part of the EU Kids Online IV multinational research network (2014–2021), which generated a substantial number of articles and reports on audiences. There is also a rich body of research on audience participation (i.e., media use conditions and structure) in various internet communities (e.g., Macek et al., 2015; Macháčková & Šerek, 2017). The media practices of audiences, such as piracy and many others, in the context of entertainment media (e.g., movies) also reflect the preferences of media



users and the state of access to media, as well as diversity in the media system. The media practices of foreign audiences of Czech media and the newest topic of media practice during the COVID-19 pandemic are also well-researched (Van Aelst et al., 2021). More theoretical works on audiences are supplemented by research into television series and movie audiences, although these mainly include textual analyses. A recurring topic in this context reflects the socialist past and the socialist-based nostalgia associated with re-runs of classic productions (Reifová & Hladík, 2013). Public service broadcaster Czech Television publishes annual reports on viewership and the popularity of its content, and reports on the quality of the content as evaluated by external agencies. Weekly reports on the viewership of the major broadcasters in Czechia are available from the *Nielsen Admosphere*. More specific research on media literacy, sexist advertisements and other categories is accessible at CVVM, RRTV, and private companies, such as Focus and Media Tenor.

In Austria, research into media use patterns is often subdivided into applied audience research and academic research. Commercially oriented audience research clearly dominates the field. Most of the relevant data used to analyse media usage patterns are collected by commercially oriented market research or contract research actors, and not all resulting studies are made publicly available. In contrast, academic research on media use is inadequately institutionalised and mainly focuses on either secondary analysis of commercial use data or varying current issues. However, there is not, as of yet, a distinct and typically Austrian tradition of academic research into media use and media effects (for an overview from the perspective of the German-speaking countries, see Stark & Kist, 2020). The availability of data on media use from applied audience research varies for each media segment. In the context of the print media, the Media Analysis is the largest study surveying the performance figures of newspapers and magazines published in Austria. The results are based on a survey conducted by the market research institutes GfK Austria and IFES. Additional data on the reach of print media is collected by the Austrian Circulation Control, an association of publishers and (media) agencies. Members of the association report their data on print runs, paid circulation and distributed circulation. *Radiotest* is a 'consumption' measuring instrument for radio listening in Austria, commissioned by the public broadcaster ORF and private radio stations. Its results are based on data from around 13,000 computer-assisted telephone interviews (RMS Austria, n.d.). The Teletest study has provided data since 1991 on the (classic) TV market with time-shifted viewing up to six days after broadcast, initially without web-based use on PC or mobile. The GfK market research institute records the TV viewing of around 3,200 people aged 12 years and over and around 340 children in 1,570 Teletest households, which is representative of the population (AGTT, 2022). In addition, the Moving Image Study (*Bewegtbildstudie*), which has been carried out annually since 2016 by the media authority *KommAustria*, uses surveys to provide overviews of daily reach and market shares for television and videos for TV linear, TV

recorded, TV online, online video, DVD and the like. *KommAustria* is also legally obliged to publish an annual report on the daily reach and user numbers of all audiovisual media, based on self-assessments by the media houses. The Austrian Broadcasting Corporation has its own research unit (*ORF Medienforschung*), which, in addition to analysing available data on audience reach, also conducts ad-hoc research on current issues as well as carrying out monitoring tasks (Eberwein et al., 2022).

In Bulgaria, the main sources of media consumption models and media-related competencies (2000–2020) are publications by the academic and professional community. In general, research on media consumption over the years has been conducted mainly by the Media Program for Southeast Europe set up by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Trend Sociological Agency, Open Society Institute, UNICEF for Bulgaria, Media Democracy Foundation, Kantar, CMO Insider.bg, Edelman Trust Barometer, Market Links Agency, Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House, among others, as well as by independent researchers. The most active in the long run have been the Media Democracy Foundation with its annual reports on the state of media pluralism in Bulgaria from 2011 to 2021, the Media Program Southeast Europe and Reuters Institute Digital News Reports, which have included Bulgaria since 2018.

In contrast to Austria, Bulgaria and Czechia, the majority of media audience research in Croatia has been conducted by the media industry and market research firms. Before 1990, large publishing houses and television research units carried out these studies, while later, various market research agencies, such as IPSOS Puls and AGB Nielsen, assumed responsibility for measuring audience size and ratings. Previous research found that only around 5% of articles in media and communication research had audiences as their main topic (Peruško & Vozab, 2014). However, the same research found most of these articles to contain empirical research and are of a higher quality. Since 2010, audience research moved from exclusively quantitative analysis to diversity in methodological approaches, using qualitative and mixed method analysis. The research on media use was rather scarce in the first decade after 2000, while interest in the topic and the number of sources rose, especially after 2010. The following topics are predominantly analysed in research on media use: traditional and digital media preferences (which is generally presented through descriptive data); media use of specific socio-demographic groups, mainly young audiences; media generations; news media audiences; media effects related to media use; news consumption and its political ramifications; trust in media; and comparative analyses of media use. Several sources provide data useful for assessing the accessibility of media for different audiences, as well as their channel preferences. Most recent and extensive data are included in the annual Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Croatia has been included since 2017).

Traditional television maintains its prominence as the primary news source both in Croatia and Bulgaria, followed by online versions of newspapers in Croatia. The most popular TV channels in the country are operated by commercial companies, with public television ranking third in popularity. The Croatian media regulatory agency AEM publishes reports on digital media use including television (for TV audiences see AEM, 2016) and monthly reports on people-meter shares and ratings of television channels and programs. Although traditional forms of media consumption are still most common, digital media use was already on the rise in the middle of our observed timeframe (AEM, 2013, 2016), together with the rise of internet access in Croatia (according to Eurostat, in 2019, 81% of households). Media use is also shaped in relation to cultural capital and class, and in relation to audience needs. Radio is prominent in Croatian media use, but relevant research is sparse. Academic research on social media use is limited, apart from data on news choices. Several authors used the concept of media repertoires to assess media use in a high-choice media environment, in relation to media generations and news repertoires. A mixed methods study (Peruško et al., 2017) found six news repertoires among the Croatian audience: commercial traditionalist with national scope, local traditionalist with broadcast media in focus, internationally oriented news seeker, omnivorous radio lovers and print avoiders, versatile online and print readers and multiplatform local oriented light news snackers. Popular television channels still hold an important position even among digital media users, but some digital outlets and Facebook also cut across different digital media repertoires. Education has an important role in distinguishing internationally oriented from locally oriented media users. Another stream of research deals with specific socio-demographic audience groups, mainly examining youth. As in Czechia, some reports and articles draw upon the EU Kids Online research project and there is a growing body of qualitative audience research in Croatia (Čuvalo, 2016). The latest EU Kids Online report indicates that most children have internet access, primarily via mobile phones, used mainly for entertainment, education and communication. Most children do not exhibit excessive or unhealthy internet use and tend to favour face-to-face interactions over computer-mediated communication (Ciboci et al., 2020). Qualitative studies on the media use of young audiences examine how this group is integrated and ingrained within specific *habitus* (Čuvalo, 2016). Comparative studies of media use reveal that the Croatian media system is part of the “southern” cluster of countries, which generally exhibit lower levels of media consumption (Peruško et al., 2013). Croatia is classified within the “eastern” cluster in terms of digital media environments, characterised by a stronger preference for internet-based media sources (Peruško et al., 2015). Vesnić-Alujević and Simeunović Bajić (2013) investigate transnational television consumption, with a specific focus on audiences from post-Yugoslavia states.

The domain of media use patterns is well-researched in Italy, especially in terms of access to media, diversity in the media system and relevance of public service media. Although Campanella (2003) is one of the researchers who, at the

beginning of this millennium, focused on the study of media access and diversity in Italy, Bracciale is the author who has maintained the record of publications in recent years (Bracciale & Mingo, 2016; Andretta & Bracciale, 2017; Mingo & Bracciale, 2018). According to these studies, the Italian media market faces three primary concerns that raise critical questions about diversity in media systems. First, there is a significant ownership concentration in free broadcast TV, a situation that has persisted for over 20 years. Two companies, the public RAI and the Berlusconi family's Mediaset, control 87.2% of the Italian broadcast television market. Second, there is a high concentration of advertising investment in television. For several years, Italian television has received more than half of the total advertising investments made. Thirdly, there is the issue of political and corporate relationships in Italy. A prime example of this issue is investor-founder Silvio Berlusconi, who served as prime minister three times – in 1994, from 2001 to 2006, and again from 2008 to 2011 (Richeri & Prario, 2016).

In addition, the media are increasingly entwined with social networks. According to Valeriani and Vaccari (2016), inadvertent encounters with political content on social media are likely to reduce the gap in online engagement between citizens with high and low interest in politics, potentially broadening the range of voices that make themselves heard. A study by Mosca and Quaranta (2016) similarly demonstrates that social movements and individual protesters use online platforms extensively to inform and mobilise other citizens, by-passing the gatekeeping function of traditional media. For these reasons, and despite the high level of media concentration in Italy, there is a growing proliferation of media options for news consumers, with a considerable proportion of them opting out of digital news use or having a low-source, low-frequency news media diet (Castro et al. 2022). Italian media users enjoy full access to media and their preferred channels (97.4%). They also place great importance on news, as an average of 94.9% of them engage with news daily (AGCOM, 2018)

In Estonia, a distinct separation exists between academic and commercial research on audience studies, evident in respective objectives, methods, and research scope. Academic research is primarily conducted at the University of Tartu and, more recently, the University of Tallinn (since the 2010s). Tartu University's academic research is firmly rooted in the sociological tradition, interpreting media use within a broader societal context. Rather than focusing on risks and opportunities, these studies aim to elucidate media use patterns and their connections to social practices, individuals' life-worlds and overall societal changes. One of the rare longitudinal survey studies, entitled *Me. The World. The Media*, carried out in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011 and 2014 at Tartu University, synthesises different theoretical perspectives on social change in Estonia and serves as the central reflexive analysis of societal transformations (see Kalmus et al., 2020).

In Greece, sources identifying the domain of media use mainly rely on quantitative data. Commercial research entities generally collect survey data on vari-

ous aspects of media use on a regular basis, but no single entity is covering the entire market. Relevant data is disclosed to the media, which occasionally highlights and reports on key trends. Data is also collected by public authorities, the statistical bodies and the media regulator (Eurostat, Hellenic Statistical Authority, and National Centre for Social Research NCSR). An important part of media use research originates from foreign research institutes with Greek scholars affiliated to them. Concerning access to media, Greece lacks a comprehensive and regular media use study that covers all media segments. Audience and readership data is mainly compiled by market research bodies. With regard to digital media metrics, no single agency covers the entire field. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report offers data on issues such as news media consumption, the reach of top brand offline/online news content, and Internet penetration. Digital economy statistics are also provided by Eurostat, and NCSR hosts the World Internet Project. NCSR data also provides information on the key characteristics of Greek Internet users and avoiders (Psychogiopoulou & Kandyla, 2022).

Although official audience measurement data is limited and inconsistently available to the public, Hungary has ample coverage for evaluating media consumption variables. The bibliography compiled for the Mediadelcom project includes 104 references related to the domain of media use. There is ample high-quality data for every variable, often available longitudinally, particularly from the second decade of the research period. Audience measurement for television, print and online media is carried out by private companies, while the National Media and Infocommunications Authority is responsible for radio listenership data. In the case of television audience measurement, market actors finance the measurement services of Nielsen. The resulting data is not publicly available, and it is up to the television companies to decide which results are published. Internet audience measurement is carried out by *Gemius Hungary* on behalf of the Digital Audience Measurement Council, which is also operated by market stakeholders with funding coming from publishing companies, agencies, and sales houses. Some of the resulting basic data is publicly available. The Hungarian Audit Bureau of Circulations (*MATESZ*) audits print publications, and according to their introduction, 85% of all publications on the market are on their list. *MATESZ* is also funded by publishers, agencies and advertisers. Data on circulation figures are made publicly available on a quarterly basis. Kantar Hoffmann-M-Meter measures radio listening. Detailed data are published by the media authority in quarterly reports. Eurostat's Digital economy and society theme also provides useful data, mainly on access possibilities of users. Raw data on media use, provided by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office can be located under the themes Culture and Information, Communication.

Details of internet penetration, the number of internet subscriptions, and mobile internet use in Hungary can also be found through the Hungarian Central Statistical Office or the statistical database of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority. While there is no precise data on which groups lack access to

news media, social media or mobile internet, the proportion of the adult population that does not use specific types of media or social media for information can be gathered from *Mertek-Medián* news consumption surveys (e.g., Mertek Media Monitor, 2018; Hann et al., 2020). To evaluate the diversity of the media market, there is an analysis by Bátorfy and Szabó (2021) and Mertek Media Monitor's Soft Censorship Reports for the 2015–2021 period (e.g., Mertek Media Monitor, 2021). For the reach of individual media outlets, consider the *Mertek-Medián* news consumption surveys and measurements by Nielsen (television), Kantar Hoffmann-Meter (radio), *MATESZ* (print media), and DKT-Gemius (online media). Public access to television data is restricted, but statistics on top evening news programmes can be found in the media authority's annual parliamentary reports.

Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia feature a blend of scholarly and business-oriented research on media use, frequently focusing on particular subjects or facets of media consumption. Media use and audience research were amongst the most popular research directions in Latvia in the first two decades of the 21st century. A significant proportion of media use studies have been produced for commercial purposes, and there are two main aims of data gathering – opinion polls and media usage. For quantitative research datasets on media use and audience preference are available both from commercial and non-commercial providers, collected with relative regularity on both the national and international comparative (e.g., Eurobarometer, Eurostat) levels that are used for both commercial and academic research. More focused quantitative data are collected by social research companies such as SKDS via Omnibus surveys and used for academic research projects (e.g. Rožukalne et al., 2020). Qualitative research is more irregular, carried out almost exclusively by individual academics and, to lesser extent, non-academic (NGO based) researchers and research groups, meaning that it depends on the interests of researchers or the goals of particular projects. In-depth analysis is often lacking. Longitudinal research approaches are rare. Most of the publications are open access. Due to the mainly short-term and fragmented research on media audiences, not all areas of interest in the context of the Mediadecom study are evenly covered in the corpus of research articles.

Even if media access, use preferences, and diversity of viewpoints in the media system are emerging topics in various research initiatives throughout the analysed period in Latvia, only a small selection of these studies focus primarily on media use (e.g., Zelče, 2018). The majority of the research treats these topics as additional aspects in, for example, studies on media and journalism, or on the role of mass media in political discourse or social integration (e.g., Skudra et al., 2015; Vihalemm et al., 2019). The main research topics that included media use research have changed, ranging from negative stereotypes of the Russian ethnic group in Latvia to the role of public service media and media system. Consequently, the division by language and ethnicity is the major reason driving the interest of researchers. This was especially important in the early period from 2000 to 2013. Researchers such as Šulmane and Kruks have written several articles on (ethnic

diversity and risks resulting from rising intolerance (Šulmane & Kruks, 2006; Šulmane, 2011).

Studies of media users in Poland make up about 25% of the Polish research. Data published by the OBOP and the CBOS, along with more in-depth media sector use analysis, has become a reference point for Polish audience studies. A shift from traditional 'sender and receiver relationships' has resulted in publications highlighting the rise of user-generated content and the need for ongoing online discussions with the digital public. Additionally, there is a noticeable trend that focuses on theoretical and normative shifts from the classical 'one to many' practice to the 'many to many' (see, for example, Johansson & Nożewski, 2018) through the lens of media convergence and polarisation. Regarding the user domain in Poland, researchers mainly analyse societal and technological conditions (74%), with studies on media user preferences constituting approximately one quarter of the domain's dataset. Among the most popular scholarly topics relating to media users' conditions are media functions and the assessment of media quality, combined with societal trust in the media. Moreover, many studies analyse media users from the perspective of media systems, with the public as one of the most critical stakeholders. In line with this, academic research on media users' preferences focuses on political communication campaigns and the dysfunctions of the democratic model of public service media, which, in turn, has been a subject of political capture and constant polarisation. Empirical studies on media users' technological preferences have not become a subject of systematic scholarly investigations to date; the examples focus primarily on the use of social media (Glowacki et al., 2022).

In Romania there are two main sources of data on media use: quantitative (often produced by commercial actors or for commercial purposes) and qualitative (academically oriented and looking in more depth at the causes and effects of consumption patterns). Marketing and IT actors such as *Statista* and *SES Astra Romania* sporadically issue their own reports on what the main sources of information are for Romanians, and on the time spent using various platforms and media products. As such reports use different methodologies and parameters, it can be difficult to include them in comparative analysis and they can give only indications of trends.

Circulation (for print) and traffic (for online publications) figures are measured by the Romanian Trans-Media Audit Bureau, an industry body. They employ an auditing company, selected via a competitive procedure. Their data are public and freely accessible on their website, but the older data are available at a cost. Audiences for the main TV stations with national coverage are measured by the Romanian Audience Measurement Association (ARMA). They also employ a competitively selected auditing company. Their monthly reports featuring general data are also public, but more detailed and segregated data is available only to subscribers. For radio broadcasters measurement is made by the Radio Audience

Association (ARA). ARMA and ARA measurements are the official basis for the National Audiovisual Council's calculation of 'editorial influence power' when establishing who has the dominant position in a given market. The Council involves only the major TV and radio networks and stations, as it is costly and thus inaccessible for smaller broadcasters. The use of internet and communication services data is released periodically by the Romanian telecom regulator ANCOM. The reports have been published bi-annually ever since 2003–2004, allowing for a consistent diachronic analysis.

In Slovakia, several university departments have been working intensely on the topic of media use patterns since 2000. The most important academic institution in this field is the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. It is the only public faculty that offers study programmes focusing on media communication and media education. Other institutions are the Comenius University Faculty of Arts in Bratislava, the Faculty of Arts at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, and the Catholic University in Ružomberok. Rončáková (2020) deals with the topic of media education, examining it from the point of view of the socialising and de-socialising influence of the media on the family environment, ethics and Christian morality. The largest number of non-academic sources consisted of nationwide surveys, which have been publicly available on the website of the research agency *Median SK* since 2012. These surveys are carried out quarterly. *Median SK* conducts three regular surveys: Market & Media & Lifestyle (since 1997); the RADIO PROJECT; and the Most Objective Television News.

## MEDIA ACCESS AND DIVERSITY

From a comparative standpoint, in relation to media access and diversity of opinions in the media, the media landscapes in the 14 Mediadelcom countries are easily accessible and diverse. The access to media is consistently measured by a range of data collecting actors. Both the media industry and academic researchers are interested in the actual use of media. Many researchers note that with the advent of the internet, unreliable information is increasingly being published without verification from independent sources.

Several international research efforts provide a comparative overview of media access in different countries. Among the most important sources of comparative data is the Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), which evaluates, among other factors, risks arising from the conditions of media access. The MPM identifies in all participating countries population groups with limited access to media. The topic of pluralism and lack of transparency in media ownership has gained prominence in recent years, dominating not only scientific publications but also various European Commission reports, as well as the annual reports of IREX



(2001–2019) and the annual media freedom ranking by Reporters without Borders.

## RELEVANCE OF NEWS MEDIA

Results differ across the fourteen countries regarding research on the relevance of news media, making any comparison of developments difficult. Sweden, Bulgaria, Hungary and Croatia provide comparatively more extensive information on the issue. Figures and demographics on broadcasting channel, program, newspaper and webpage audience preferences are frequently reported. Some of this information is openly available while other data must be purchased.

In Sweden, extensive survey data is available for topics such as internet and social media use, digital divides in the public and peoples' concerns about digital integrity and hate speech on the net. Overall, the data shows that digitisation and convergence has made monitoring and understanding media use patterns in the media landscape more challenging. Increased media mobility and availability have paved the way for low-intensity use, audiences moving seamlessly across platforms, and multitasking. Such new use patterns can also affect media's role in people's personal lives as well as collectively at the societal level. Important longitudinal studies have given rise to a database on the development of adolescents' political identities and engagement with media consumption. Regarding public service broadcasting, research points to the fragmentation of media consumption as a risk to democracy. Empirical analysis of this fragmentation includes aspects of audiences' social class, generation, media channel consumption and engagement with the news (Berglez et al., 2022).

Research on access to news media in Croatia has been interpreted within the framework of a polarised pluralist media system (Peruško & Vozab, 2022). The countries in this group tend to have a higher percentage of citizens who do not use news media compared to other countries. In relation to media generations and news repertoires, the concept of media repertoires has been applied to assess media use in a high-choice media environment.

Regarding relevance of news media in Bulgaria, positive changes have not been the only changes in the technologically advanced media ecosystem (Raycheva et al., 2022), with risk factors affecting the quality of journalism increasing. Fake news causes confusion among audiences and increases mistrust in media content. Academic research on media users' preferences in Poland focuses on political communication campaigns and the dysfunctions of the democratic model of public service media, which has in turn been the subject of political capture and constant polarisation (Głowacki et al., 2022).

In some countries, there is viable research on public service media, their content and news provision. The relevance of analysing public service media is explained by the assumption that public service media have an impact on the politi-

cal news environment. A strong public service media with a higher proportion of information programmes explains the higher level of political knowledge of the audience. Research on public service media has been conducted in Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Slovakia, Romania and more thoroughly in Italy. Given the fact that the public channel RAI broadcasts the television news program with the highest number of viewers, more detailed information on the relevance of public service media in Italy is provided by the regulatory authority which monitors the relevance, access, preferences, quality and functionalities of news media (Splendore et al., 2022). At the academic level, the role and relevance of public service media has also been appropriately analysed since the end of the first decade of this millennium.

More specific research is being carried out in Czechia, where the relevance of news media is being analysed in a broader interdisciplinary context. The study of audiences uses the psychological angle, through which the research investigates user skills (e.g., privacy and data protection skills, use of media, media technology). Political science is another angle through which audiences are analysed. Another visible perspective that concerns audiences and their media use is reflected in the research into active, convergent media users who partly become producers of the media content that they were assumed only to consume (Waschková Čísařová et al., 2022).

Smaller scale qualitative studies in Estonia deal with the definition of news among audiences, media repertoires, online audiences of micro-celebrities and social media audiences. News perceptions and practices among young adults in times of transition are examined. Based on the research tradition of media sociology, a longitudinal study has been conducted on media use among the Russian-speaking population in Estonia, conceptualising the risks in the integration framework of state programs (Harro-Loit et al., 2022). Articles devoted to the understanding of uses of media, social integration and political orientation of the Russian-speaking minority are also published in Latvia. Research on the relevance of news media is not very well developed. Although some researchers described the relevance of public service media, more in-depth analysis including trust in media and relevance of news media, as well as the role of public service media, is definitely needed (Rožukalne et al., 2022).

In Austria, habits of and trends in news media use are monitored by representative population studies and by several specialised studies (Eberwein et al., 2022). The situation is similar in Germany, where longitudinal and exhaustive studies enable us to follow trends in news preferences among audiences (Kreutler & Fengler, 2022). In Greece, research leans mainly on the broad range of data provided by Eurobarometer, with a focus on alternative digital news consumption (Psychogiopoulou & Kandyla, 2022). Scholars have also shown a keen interest in young people's media use on the internet. As for research related to active news avoidance, some studies show that both individual (demographics, political atti-

tudes and news genre preference) and contextual factors (press freedom, political freedom and stability) matter.

In addition to collecting data on audience behaviour in Hungary, there are a number of national surveys that focus specifically on audiences' news media and information habits. Longitudinal representative surveys on the frequency of news consumption of individual news sources, as well as of political information, provide an overview of the most relevant news sources among Hungarian voting-age audiences. Useful information on the media consumption habits of young people can be obtained from the relevant chapters of the Youth Research studies that have been published every four years since the early 2000s. Although basic demographic data on news avoiders is available, in-depth analysis is lacking. Subscription-based online media are still rare in Hungary, although hybrid practices (free articles alongside paid content) are increasingly emerging. Most independent news portals try to sustain themselves through donations and crowdfunding. There is not much information on audiences for alternative news sources, although there is some analysis on the role of grey-zone news sources and social media news providers and influencers in the public discourse (Polyák et al., 2022).

The functionality of news media as directly related to quality and the emergence of a marked cross-media phenomenon is analysed in Italy, Sweden, Czechia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. Interest in the news can be determined using the people-meter measurement. The people-metric measurement of viewership is the largest instance of continuous research in Slovakia. The phenomenon of news avoidance has been discussed by researchers in Croatia, Greece, Hungary and Romania, while the impact of the digital transition has been on the research agenda of almost all countries, including the rise of social media and social networks.

Data on the media consumption habits of Romanians, including news prevalence and consumer trust in the media, are included in the regularly conducted standard Eurobarometer. Romania has been included in the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism's (RISJ) Digital News Report since 2017, with the study having become one of the most cited sources of information in this respect. According to RISJ, the study uses online samples, so the results "tend to under-represent the consumption habits of people who are not online and makes comparisons between countries difficult".

As indicated above, the relevance of news media is not as much in focus for commercial research. On the other hand, in countries with more data transparency, industry associations (such as publisher associations in Germany and Austria) and public bodies (such as Nordicom in Northern Europe) support more sophisticated research. Sweden, for example, is well equipped in this regard (going back to the 1990s), with frequent reports on audiences, broadcast channel demographics, newspapers, webpages, etc., being published. The country has several sources of such data, including the Media Barometer, The Swedes and the Internet, and the

SOM Institute. A similar situation can be observed in Germany, where data collection has an even longer tradition (since 1964, in one case). While Sweden and Germany have institutionalised and academically based alternatives for collecting data, this is not the case in Austria and Hungary, which report that they have mainly commercial audience studies institutes (e.g., *GfK*, *IFES*, etc.) generating multitudinous reports. The situation is similar in Latvia, Croatia and in many other small countries.

There are some countries where data collection on media use has changed over the analysed period. In Estonia, for example, academic institutions regularly collected media use data from the citizens' perspective until 2014, when disruption took place due to changes in the science financing system and changed priorities of science policy. In summary, the Reuters Digital News (RDN) project is the most significant data source for conducting comparative analysis on the importance of news for audiences in nearly all Mediadecom countries. This project is an annual study initiated in 2012 which does not include data from Estonia and Latvia.

## TRUST IN MEDIA

Research in the realm of media use patterns predominantly focuses on public trust in various media platforms, while also considering social and ethnic factors. Studies delve into trust levels in diverse media types, such as TV, radio, print, the internet, websites, social networks and social media, as well as exploring a range of concerns related to media consumption and news content quality. Eurobarometer reports provide some of the most notable comparative data, distinguishing trust in media by type and presenting comparisons across countries. These reports are often cited in policy documents and public discussions, as they enable analysis of media trust trends across nations. To contextualise shifts in media trust, researchers can compare these trends to changes in trust in other state institutions, such as parliament, the courts and the police.

Media trust is treated as an important indicator of how the quality of media provision is perceived by audiences. Media trust is interpreted as “the willingness of the audience to be vulnerable to news content based on the expectation that the media will perform in a satisfactory manner” (Hanitzsch et al., 2018, p. 5). Understanding the sources and reasons for trust, as well as its decline or increase, requires more qualitative studies to be conducted in several countries.

An element of distrust in the media shows in countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovakia. For instance, in Bulgaria, a study by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation together with the Alpha Research sociological agency demonstrates that only 10% of Bulgarians believe in the autonomy of the media in the country. Research conducted in 2020 by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's Media Program for Southeast Europe and the Trend sociological agency reflects the

change in trust in media resulting from anti-epidemiological measures against COVID-19.

In Croatia, trust in the media is regularly covered by the Reuters Institute Digital News Report. Trust in the media is linked to media use preferences and audience characteristics in several detailed studies. Research shows that in Croatia audiences somewhat trust local and national media, while trust in journalists is not high. Television use is positively correlated to trust in many of the political and social institutions, while Internet use is negatively correlated to trust in politics, government, and elites (Čuvalo, 2010, 2013). In Slovakia, trust in the media is analysed by the Reuters Institute (2022) in comparison with other countries, and in other nationally relevant studies, carried out by research agencies such as the *Fokus* in 2019. The studies highlight the trends, but do not explain the reasons for the decline in trust in more detail.

Concerning trust in the news media in Greece, the DNR data depicts high levels of media distrust (Reuters Institute, 2021). Eurobarometer data (2021), Pew Research Center data (2018) and EBU data (2020) confirm the trend. Research findings show that alternative news consumption is associated with lower levels of trust in the news (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2021). Despite the relevance of the media as information providers in Italy, the trust that users place in them is particularly low according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The impact of the polarised pluralist media system in Italy is visible in trust patterns, as indicated by various studies. The most trusted brands are generally those that are known for lower levels of political partisanship (*ANSA*, *SkyTG24* and *Il Sole 24 ore*). Least trusted are outlets with a pronounced partisan bias and a popular digital outlet (*Fanpage*, *Libero Quotidiano* and *Il Giornale*). Research shows that, on average, only 13% and 15% of users believe that the Italian media are independent from undue political and commercial influence, respectively (Reuters Institute, 2022). This topic is analysed in detail by reports published by national research organisations (AGCOM), and international institutions and projects.

Germany, Sweden, and Austria have several and different sources of data and research efforts for analysing media trust, use patterns, and content evaluations. While there are similarities in the types of studies conducted, each country has its unique focus and research institutions. In Germany, media use motivations, content evaluations, and trust in news media have been a specific focus of analysis. Blöbaum et al. (2020) provide data on media-sceptical individuals, while Eurobarometer publications and a Pew Research Center survey (Matsa, 2018) offer comparative data on media trust in Germany. In Sweden, the *SOM* Institute is vital in monitoring media trust. The non-profit Media Academy consortium has published structured measurements of public trust in private and public institutions, including the media, since 1997, and has been assessing power and dominance in the digital media landscape since 2017. Additionally, opinion polls by companies such

as Novus and international surveys are also available. Domestic research includes a recent project conducted at Södertörn University focusing on the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Austrian media trust developments can be evaluated through Eurobarometer data and surveys from the Digital News Project, with qualitative studies (e.g., Russmann & Hess, 2020) offering additional insights. The Media Performance and Democracy project (e.g., Hasebrink et al., 2021) has conducted the most comprehensive assessment of news media quality in Austria and the role of the audience. A systematic literature review uncovered further research on specialised topics, such as media use motives by specific population and technology, etc. (e.g., Gallner-Holzmann et al., 2020; Perlot & Filzmaier, 2021).

In Czechia, Estonia, Hungary and Poland, data on trust in the media can be found in international comparative and country specific studies. More specifically, in Czechia, media trust (and, consequently, often the relevance of news and public service media) is a strong branch of academic research (e.g., Macháčková & Tkaczyk, 2020).

Within the framework of the Standard Eurobarometer in Estonia, data is collected on media use, including the number of users and trust in media. The patterns of trust highlight the complexity of the topic. Various academic analyses explore the changes in trust levels according to different audience factors and media environments). Generally, trust in the media in Estonia is relatively high, mirroring the high level of trust in state institutions (Jõesaar et al., 2022). In Hungary, information on media trust levels and individual news sources is accessible through *Mertek-Medián* surveys, which also examine consumer expectations and attitudes toward media. Additionally, media trust measurements are published in Reuters Digital News Reports and the EBU Net Trust Index.

Research on media trust and use is more fragmented and less comprehensive in Latvia and Romania. In Latvia, experts generally concur that the media environment has been studied in a fragmented way, with a lack of comparative studies and research continuity. This observation is supported by the fact that some existing studies are of low quality, and important issues of media development have not been addressed. For example, Līga Ozoliņa, university lecturer and Latvian editor of the EJO and Worlds of Journalism Study for Latvia, emphasises that after the period of the Mediadelcom research, recent trends indicate a growing number of research studies on trust and media use, with more institutions participating (Interview with Līga Ozoliņa, 13/10/2022).

In Romania, a significant study of the effects of media politicisation and consumption (Tătar, 2018) has been conducted. Notably, trust as a topic has become more prevalent in the academic literature with the growth of digital media. The increasing public interest in disinformation has also prompted research in this area. Some recent publications include the topics of fake news and social media (Corbu et al., 2020), the uses and gratification of YouTube (Buf & Stefaniță, 2020)

and conspiracy and anti-conspiracy information (Buturoiu et al., 2021). Generally, these contributions result more from researchers' personal interests than comprehensive research efforts (Avādani, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

The country studies discussed above show that in countries with no academic or publicly financed longitudinal studies, the main changes in media use are presented in a rather sketchy manner by commercial research, biased in favour of the viewpoint of the media industry. When available, commercially provided data enable longitudinal analysis, since the internationally recognised methodology is most prevalent. The problem is that the required data is usually not publicly available, and commercial research agencies are not interested in sophisticated analysis. The Finnish researcher Esa Herkman noted already more than a decade ago that "in countries where 'media has become a huge business', media-related research is also big business, and the role of academic media and communication research has remained marginal from the point of view of the media industries" (Herkman, 2008, p. 152). Nevertheless, some commercial research agencies share more detailed information with the public, such as in Austria (GfK) and Slovakia (Median.sk). In some countries, NGOs are active in collecting and sharing data (e.g., *Mertek-Medián* in Hungary). In addition, in some cases, media industry associations provide general data based on their membership (Romania, Estonia, Austria, etc.). In Poland, public opinion research organisations such as the Public Opinion Research (OBOP) and the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS), together with industry data and analysis by scholars, drive a more in-depth tradition of audience research. However, in many countries this kind of information is not freely available or is not published openly (e.g. in Czechia and Greece). Thus, commercial research has a lower value for policy planning than academic research, since the data is usually not diachronically analysed.

Access to the data in Romania, Germany and Sweden is not to be taken for granted, even though it is relatively broader compared to other countries. While similarly to other countries a fair share of the data collected in Czechia is available for public use, some data can only be obtained from commercial subjects by request. In Czechia, this means that such data is hidden behind a paywall at best, and completely inaccessible at worst. The situation is strikingly different in Italy, where data availability is reported as insufficient and scarce. Croatia has provided no information in this regard. In the case of Hungary, we see that the data is collected mainly by private companies with only a certain percentage made publicly available. This is also true of Estonia, where the data collected by academic institutions is available in public library collections at least to some extent, but commercial data is only available through purchase, with subsequent agreement be-

tween the data provider and the user that restricts the options for publishing the data.

Children are a group that is regarded as particularly vulnerable in terms of media use. Their online use patterns get specific attention in the EU Kids Online longitudinal project, which started in 2009 and currently covers all participating Mediadecom countries. The results of the project are made available every two or three years.

Diachronic analysis of the ROs deriving from media use patterns is possible in countries with a longer tradition of academic audience research. In some countries, more sophisticated (i.e. academic) media use research is still evolving (e.g. in Italy, Croatia and Greece), and thus not yet suitable for longitudinal analysis. In a few countries, suitability for longitudinal media use monitoring is in decline. Such is the situation in Estonia, where longitudinal academic research has been missing since 2014. Generally, countries with small academic communities and limited resources for academic research are characterised by fragmented (Czechia and Estonia) or partly lacking (Latvia) monitoring of media use.

While the longitudinal studies use quantitative methodologies, the qualitative studies employ an alternative series of methods for study. All of the country cases previously discussed demonstrate that access to media, trust in media, and relevance of news media can be linked to audience viewpoints and ideologies. To mention only a few, there are 'news-avoiders' studies and 'willingness to pay for news' studies, research on the credibility (Estonia) and dysfunction (Poland) of public service media and, with a narrower focus, studies of the use of social media (Poland) and news-following in different sociodemographic groups (such as youth and the elderly in Bulgaria).

We can see relevant differences mainly in the scope and less in the quality of data collection in media usage patterns. In countries that possess academic and public resources for data collection, their comprehensive studies cover all the relevant variables for the Mediadecom project and give information on access to media, trust in media and relevance of news media on a longitudinal basis. The best examples are studies carried out in Sweden and in Germany, where such monitoring was started in the previous century. Their studies use academically verified methodologies that enable policy planning and can serve as a basis for societal self-reflection. Sweden reports this knowledge as a source for policymakers and media authorities, which cannot be said for many other countries. For example, in Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary data collection is not sufficient to make policy decisions based on such material.

In the media use domain, the most important comparative data collections are international: Eurobarometer on trust in media, Media Pluralism Monitor on access to media, and Reuters Digital News (RDN) research on the relevance of news media. Almost all Mediadecom countries are covered in these studies on a longitudinal basis, except Estonia and Latvia which so far are not part of the RDN.



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# 8

## Monitoring media user competencies

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The Mediadelcom project is based on the premise that media-related competencies (MRC) shape users' perceptions of media content, enabling them to participate in and discuss media-related topics such as communication and production (Hudíková, 2020). Media users must crucially possess sufficient MRC, often considered a subset of communication competence, to allow them to navigate and actively learn about the mediatised world (Baacke, 1996). Media interactions occur within a structural, institutional, legislative, or regulatory context that influences individual actors (e.g., children, students, teachers and other media user groups) and the environment in which interactions take place. Consequently, the concept of MRC can be understood both as the general user's ability to utilise media in a self-determined, organised, reflective and creative manner (Hugger, 2006), as well as being a goal for various structured media education activities and initiatives (Tulodziecki & Grafe, 2019). Since 2006, media competencies have emerged as a crucial element of key competencies within the EU's education policy framework.

User knowledge and understanding of media, information and digital literacy are crucial factors in deliberative communication and the public debates that take place in the media space (e.g., Mansell, 2010). Higher levels of these competencies support deliberative communication, while lower levels undermine it. Conceptual variables related to ROs for deliberative communication within the domain of MRC are grounded in a comprehensive, holistic and anthropological perspective. This approach arises from the interplay of and interaction between media and users, is rooted in social practices and encompasses individual competencies acquired in the context of both active and passive media usage, reinforced through lifelong learning processes.

In the Mediadelcom framework, we delve into the study of media users' competencies across two specific dimensions. The first encompasses a broad array of social practices rooted in an individual's social environment and the wid-

er social, cultural and political contexts. The second involves key personal characteristics that contribute to effective self-realisation in today's dynamic and mediated society.

In light of these elements, this domain is investigated based on three key dimensions: (1) The social context of MRC (variables such as the institutional, strategic and legislative context of competencies; competencies in sociodemographic groups; competencies of teachers); (2) Users' cognitive abilities (variables such as rational argumentation in public communication, critical evaluation of information, authenticity of communication, knowledge and understanding of communication contexts, digital skills and digital literacy); and (3) Users' skills (variables such as utilisation of media and media technology, privacy, data protection skills).

The domain of media-related competencies should be considered multidisciplinary since its practices, methods, approaches and the dissemination of information and knowledge are not limited to journalism and media communication studies alone, but also to pedagogical fields. Consequently, we had to make certain choices and address such questions as which research areas should be included? How broadly should we focus the domain? As a result of the selection criteria and complexity of data gathering, the data could show certain inconsistencies.

## THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF MEDIA-RELATED COMPETENCIES

One crucial factor shaping the development of media competencies is how media literacy is approached conceptually and anchored within the legislation and policy documents of the respective countries. EU initiatives have contributed significantly to this process, particularly through the adoption of the revised *Auditorial Media Services Directive (AVMSD)*, which has been transposed into the legislation of individual EU countries (European Commission, 2021a). Article 28b(3)(j) of the revised *AVMSD* obliges internet services providers to supply adequate media literacy measures and tools while raising user awareness of these resources and tools. The transposition of these tasks into member state legislation also encompasses the role and obligation of national regulatory authorities or relevant ministries with respect to media literacy, either independently or as overseers of self-regulatory measures. This mandate obliges member states routinely to inform the European Commission about media literacy progress and measures implemented to promote and develop media literacy competencies. The meta-analysis highlights the variety of approaches taken by different countries, as well as those that share similarities. It also identifies individual, societal, technological, cultural and other factors that directly or indirectly influence the integration of media education into education systems. In numerous instances, the development of media competencies has been driven by recommendations and documents adopted by the European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe, UNESCO, OECD and other international organisations.



The most comprehensively covered variables include the use of media and media technology within the primary variable user skills (predominantly in Poland, Slovakia and Czechia). This is followed by digital skills and literacy (mainly in Bulgaria and Italy), and critical consideration of information (in Bulgaria and Latvia) as part of the primary variable user cognitive abilities. In contrast, the user ethical capabilities variable receives the least coverage (especially in Italy, Estonia, Germany and Greece). Overall, the primary variable social context of MRC is addressed well (notably in Czechia, Romania and Sweden). However, the coverage of individual variables exhibits significant variation depending on context and country, as will be discussed below.

Countries such as Hungary and Slovakia demonstrate comprehensive and well-articulated media literacy policies. Their strategies encompass a variety of approaches, from fostering critical thinking and content creation, to combatting disinformation and incorporating media education into lifelong learning. However, in Hungary at least, execution leaves much to be desired, particularly over the long term. Hungary's Digital Education Strategy, part of the *Digital Success Programme* (2016), sets out infrastructural, substantive and methodological goals for the education system. Another key area of the programme is effective child protection, which Hungary's Digital Strategy for Child Protection (another element in the *Digital Success Programme* (2016) aims to achieve. One of the three pillars outlined in the document is the development of media literacy. The main legal document framing media education policies in Slovakia is the *Concept of Media Education in the Slovak Republic* (MCSR, 2009). The document integrates social sciences knowledge and presents the main goals and strategies for media literacy policies and media education activities within the lifelong learning process.

A *White Paper* from Greece's National Centre of Audiovisual Media and Communication (EKOME 2018), emphasises media and information literacy (MIL) skills and how they enable citizens to adopt an active, critical attitude towards news agendas, contributing to high-quality media content. This policy encompasses three levels of skill. The basic level involves safe access to storage and (re)use in the digital environment. The advanced level involves critical evaluation and analysis and content creation. The vocational skills level involves education and lifelong learning procedures for media professionals, focusing on new trends in audiovisual and digital media in the creative industries, as well as safe digital access and content creation. In contrast, Romania's National Defence Strategy targets the development of the education system, developing curricula that include the "large-scale" development of critical thinking and digital skills, particularly in cybersecurity, to counter disinformation from hostile states and non-state actors (Romania Presidential Administration, 2020).

Czechia, Estonia and Austria showcase various ways of incorporating media literacy into broader education policies, from specific mandates for schools to integrating media education within digital literacy initiatives and nationwide

curricula. Czechia's *Framework Educational Program and Digital Focus* mandates media education for all elementary and high schools and understands media literacy as a tool for analysing media content and evaluating its trustworthiness (JSNS, 2018). Estonia takes a different approach by integrating media literacy within digital literacy initiatives. The concept of media literacy is part of political documents and strategies that focus primarily on digital literacy. The Estonian *Lifelong Learning Strategy* (REMER, 2021) aims to improve the digital skills and literacies of the entire population through efficient and effective use of digital technologies in learning and teaching. As a prerequisite to implementing this goal, Estonia launched the *Digital Focus* program in 2015 (REMER, 2014, 2021). Austria's media literacy efforts began in 2001 with the *Media Education Directive*, which introduced media education as part of the school curriculum. Government ministries are responsible for supporting and shaping media literacy in the country, with school curricula serving as the most relevant legal sources. In addition to EU-level actions, in the 2018/19 school year, Austria also implemented the compulsory Digital Basic Education exercise nationwide at the lower secondary level (Oppl et al., 2021).

Bulgaria, Latvia, Croatia and Poland have underdeveloped or implicit media literacy policies that lack clear definition or anchoring in national legislation. These three countries demonstrate the challenges of implementing media literacy policies without clear definitions or strong legislative support, relying on implicit inclusions and the efforts of non-state actors. Bulgaria's *Preschool and School Education Act* (MEScRB, 2015) implicitly includes media literacy, but lacks an official definition, and media education is not explicitly connected to resource allocation. Texts in the *Radio and Television Act* (CMRB, 2012) define what the media literacy policy should contain. The *Act* states that the Minister of Culture leads national policy making activity in this direction, while the Council for Electronic Media works for the development of media literacy in cooperation with the Ministries of Culture and Education and prepares an annual report. In the curriculum up to grade 12, classes are also provided, although fewer in number. In Latvia, media literacy has no long-term tradition, and until recently there was no concept, document or legislation addressing the issue of its development. Only in 2016 was the *Plan for Implementation of the Mass Media Policy Guidelines of Latvia 2016–2020* developed, which began to address issues of media literacy development (RLCM, 2016a). Croatia has seen new media literacy initiatives developed by regulatory bodies, such as the Agency for Electronic Media, and by civil society organisations. However, there is no conceptual anchoring or definition of media literacy in national legislation. Most activities are initiated by various stakeholders from civil society (with weak cooperation), rather than by state institutions. In Poland, considerable focus has been placed on the necessity for regulation in the realm of media literacy, primarily concerning defence and protection against threats. This attention mainly originates from social and education organisations. The key issue lies in the absence of systematic approaches to developing a national media edu-

cation program. Nonetheless, policymakers have not reached an agreement on progressive and supportive education policies (Ptaszek, 2019).

Italy, Germany and Sweden have decentralised or regional media literacy policies, with initiatives coming from regional bodies, academic sectors and NGOs. These three countries demonstrate the potential for media literacy initiatives to emerge from regional and decentralised structures, relying on collaboration between various stakeholders and adapting to local contexts and needs. In Italy, there is no national concept of media literacy, and initiatives are primarily driven by the academic sector, regional governments and non-governmental organisations. Regional Commissions for Communication (CORECOM), operating within the territory of the Apennine Peninsula, have become active in media education. These commissions are part of the Communications Regulatory Authority (AGCOM) organisation and collaborate with the Ministry of Education, local universities, NGOs and the media. Germany's media education policies are managed at the regional level, reflecting the autonomy of each of its 16 federal states in the field of legislation and rules governing education institutions. In 2009, the country adopted a media pedagogy manifesto entitled *No Education without the Media!* The manifesto's requirements and recommendations have been discussed with education policymakers in individual federal states, leading to the creation of various documents, recommendations, activities and projects supporting media literacy development (Herzig et al., 2010). For instance, in 2001 the media authority of North Rhine-Westphalia (LfM) identified media competencies as a core field in its program for the future of the media, focusing on digital media risks such as cyberbullying and extensive media use (LfM, 2020). MIL has a crucial role in the Swedish public sphere, as various stakeholders emphasise their significance in upholding democracy and freedom of expression. In many respects, Sweden exemplifies best practice for integrating media education into both formal and non-formal education systems (Mihailidis, 2005). The Swedish Media Council (SMC), established in 2011, is a leading organisation in this domain and serves as a coordination centre for all matters directly or indirectly associated with the media landscape. Since 2018, the SMC has spearheaded a national initiative to bolster MIL. This responsibility entails leading a multi-stakeholder network and conducting annual evaluations of policy development and implementation efforts. Drawing on its expertise, the SMC develops guidelines and educational materials for parents, educators and other professionals who interact with children and young people (Swedish Media Council, 2021). Nordicom, which collects, adapts and disseminates academic knowledge to various user groups across the Nordic region, Europe and beyond, is another important player.

This meta-analysis reflects current and systemic trends and knowledge related to the issue of media literacy, analysing the strengths and weaknesses of individual approaches and examples of good practice, and identifying new opportunities for replication in other countries. Even in some geographically or culturally very close countries, the development and implementation of media education

strategies differs considerably (e.g., in Slovakia, Poland and Bulgaria). On the other hand, we find some very similar concepts and initiatives, as well as problems, in countries that are relatively far from each other (e.g., Greece, Austria and Estonia). At a general level, further research is needed to address the limitations on the implementation level of media literacy policies (especially in countries with recent EU membership).

## MRC EDUCATION CONTEXT

This meta-analysis focuses on the current state of media literacy, particularly in terms of effectiveness and success in implementing it in formal and informal education settings. The general aim of media literacy is to equip individuals, professionals and citizens with the necessary MRC for interactive, inclusive and critical perception of the ever-expanding spectrum of media communications.

Groups of countries demonstrate varying degrees of success and challenges in implementing media literacy across the numerous areas of education systems. Germany, Sweden and Austria have good practices in formal and informal education that have well-established and integrated media literacy programs. Germany serves as a model for good practice in both formal and informal education. Institutional standards for schools fall under the jurisdiction of the *Bundesländer*, which can result in variations across regions. To partially harmonise these efforts, the standing conference of ministers of education and cultural affairs of the Länder has agreed upon a common strategy (KMK, 2012, 2017). Formal offerings in schools are supplemented by various programs at both federal and regional levels (Puffer, 2019). The Federal Agency for Civic Education has developed a database to help simplify access to the numerous training opportunities available for children and adults. To enhance media education in German schools, an extensive inventory of specialised literature, including manuals and professional magazines (e.g., *Medienpädagogik*; *Merz – Zeitschrift für Medienpädagogik*) has been created. As education is important, a nationwide agreement on students' media competencies is implemented through 16 specific strategies. Moreover, individual schools have a certain degree of flexibility to incorporate these frameworks into their teaching practices. Commonly, competency goals are addressed by incorporating media education into most or all school subjects. The addition of the specific subject of media education to the curriculum remains a less common approach, primarily seen in pilot projects. Sweden is a good example of where media education is an integral part of the education system's comprehensive approach to preparing students to navigate the real world, including the rapidly evolving landscape of information and media content. In this context, essential skills and techniques hold significant importance for individuals. In Sweden, MIL is incorporated into the civics curriculum, with media literacy being one of the six core aspects of civics. Consequently, teaching media literacy relies heavily on individual schools and

teachers. Media education elements are also present in other subjects. Education content standards require students to work with various digital technologies and applications, analyse media content across formats, effectively search for relevant information from diverse sources, and evaluate their informational value and source credibility. Media literacy programs are a compulsory component of the curriculum in Austria. The Austrian approach to media education emphasises not only practical media creation, but also media effects, diverse forms and formats of media communication, and individual contexts in which media systems function. Consequently, media education aims to equip individuals to become critical thinkers, active participants and democratic citizens. Extracurricular activities are provided through support programs for students and adults of all education backgrounds. These programs, designed to enhance media skills, target young people and employed and unemployed individuals, while initiatives for older people are limited and require enhancement. In Greece, media literacy is incorporated into primary and secondary education curricula, both as a cross-curricular subject and within the ad hoc school projects (EMEDUS, 2014). Since 2006, media literacy education has been available in primary and lower secondary education as an optional subject under the Flexible Zone of Inter-Curricular and Creative Activities Programme. In September 2022 the Skills Labs module was introduced to the primary and lower secondary education curriculum, featuring digital literacy elements within specific subjects for schools and teachers to select. Additionally, the Educational RadioTelevision and Digital Media Department, overseen by the Ministry of Education, offers students opportunities and tools to engage in multi-media content production, such as the Fotodentro i-create project.

Poland has had mixed success in research on and integration of media literacy. This country was initially among the first Central European countries to incorporate media education into schools. As early as 1999, reading and literary literacy became components of the primary and lower secondary school curriculum, with several topics directly or indirectly linked to media education. However, in 2009 new state education programs significantly reduced most media education-related thematic units, effectively dismantling the original media education project in Polish schools. Only a few media-related elements were retained in the curriculum, with their instruction reliant on optional cross-curricular topics that teachers could incorporate into their subjects (Boroń, 2010; Iwanicka et al., 2014).

Other Central and Eastern European countries, such as Slovakia, Czechia, Latvia and Estonia, are gradually incorporating media literacy into their education content and as a research matter. In Slovakia, media education was first introduced as a component of education content following the 2008–2009 school curriculum reform. According to the relevant school legislation, media education is a compulsory aspect of the curriculum, with individual schools having the flexibility to determine how to incorporate it. Schools can opt for one of three academic program options: (1) Cross-topic media education integrated into the education

content of suitable teaching subjects; (2) Media education as a separate subject; and 3) Media education implemented as a project, course or other practically focused activity (Vrabec, 2014). Meanwhile, in Czechia media literacy is incorporated into a policy known as the *Framework Education Program*, which requires all elementary and high schools to provide “media education”. This policy defines media education as a means of equipping students with basic media literacy skills, such as analysing media content, evaluating its credibility and understanding the communication objectives of the information. The non-profit sector also contributes significantly by creating education materials, organising seminars, courses and conferences, holding media education weeks and researching the state of media literacy in the country (JSNS, 2018). In Latvia, media literacy was explicitly established as a compulsory component of digital literacy in primary and secondary education standards in 2020. According to Rubene et al. (2008), researchers emphasise the integration of media literacy into language study courses, with social science courses offering another effective avenue for incorporating media literacy into the curriculum. In contrast, due to political and conceptual discrepancies, media literacy was only clearly defined as a compulsory aspect of digital literacy in Latvia’s basic and secondary education standards in 2020. Like Latvia, researchers in Estonia also highlight the significance of language study courses for incorporating media literacy into the learning process. Additionally, social science courses provide another set of study courses that facilitate effective media literacy integration. Media literacy and communication competencies in Estonia have been incorporated and contextualised as crucial components of civic education. However, political upheavals at the national level prevented the implementation of the new curriculum. The most significant barrier to widespread adoption of media literacy and communication skills was the lack of a political decision on citizens’ education in the information society (Ugur & Harro-Loit, 2010). In formal education, media education held a more prominent position in the curriculum at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the operation of the information and media centre as the so-called final theme. Later, media education was reduced to a single topic within the Estonian language curriculum, where the primary focus was on journalistic genres.

Since 2016, Hungary’s Digital Education Strategy has outlined infrastructural, content-related and methodological objectives for the education system. The program also offers a comprehensive status report on all education levels. The Bűvösvölgy Media Literacy Training Center, operated by the media authority, provides thematic programs for school groups at three locations nationwide and publishes textbooks, guides and other education resources to support teachers in media education. Academic discussions and research on media literacy education performance in schools are ongoing.

Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia are developing media literacy initiatives and actively engaging in projects and collaborations to strengthen media literacy education. Similarities between these countries include focus and efforts to incorpo-

rate media literacy elements into education content, either through formal curricula or collaborations with non-governmental organisations. Although they all aim to enhance media literacy education for the benefit of society, the three countries have distinct approaches. In Romania, media literacy elements are already incorporated into the education content of individual subjects, with NGOs also implementing initiatives in this area. A media literacy teacher education project, carried out by the Ministry of Education and the Center for Independent Journalism, involves 100 pilot schools and 600 teachers. In Bulgaria, the Media Literacy Coalition has been in place since 2021, aiming to emphasise the importance of media literacy for society. The Coalition has introduced an online training series for teachers, featuring a practical guide titled *Media Literacy through Distance Learning*, which provides ready-made lessons and team-based homework projects, and is also developing a comprehensive media literacy education program (Danov, 2020). Since 2018, the Coalition has also been organising the annual Media Literacy Days campaign. In Croatia, media literacy programs are incorporated into formal education curricula as a part of media culture within the Croatian language and culture curriculum (Ciboci & Labaš, 2019). The 2017 proposal of the National Curriculum for the Croatian Language advocates a more holistic approach to integrating media literacy into the education program. For instance, it highlights the need for media culture to underline critical engagement with media content, comprehension of media effects, various communication competencies, media content production skills, cultural and intercultural understanding and appreciation of diverse opinions and ideas (Alerić et al., 2019).

In Italy, the curriculum incorporates the elements of media education following the 2003 school system reform. Instead of being taught as a separate subject, media education is typically integrated as a cross-disciplinary topic. It is most often included in mother tongue and foreign language curricula, as well as in informatics, social science and art subjects. A strong emphasis is placed on establishing a meaningful link between pedagogical interventions in schools and the experiences and knowledge gained by children and young people through informal and peer learning processes. However, as Falcinelli (2007) highlights, the implementation of media education in the Italian education system faces challenges, as media education programs often rely on teachers' initiative, leading to fragmented media literacy development in schools.

## ASSESSMENT OF MRC AMONG CITIZENS

### *Users' cognitive abilities*

The countries in our sample vary in their monitoring of users' cognitive abilities in the context of media literacy, differing in the extent of monitoring, focus areas and approaches to media literacy. However, they all share an interest in understanding and improving MRC to help individuals navigate the information landscape.

Germany, Austria and Estonia have strong monitoring systems and research initiatives in place to better understand and improve MRC. Germany exhibits excellent result in this variable, ranking the 8th out of 35 European countries in the Media Literacy Index (OSIS, 2021). Although it experienced a negative trend, the Media Pluralism Monitor identifies a low risk for Germany around media literacy. Evaluations are primarily based on the existence of legal provisions for projects and training programs by media authorities. Data on MRC in adults has been collected in recent survey studies, while assessment of media-critical competencies in school children has been developed and tested through various test procedures, including international efforts such as *International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS)* by Sowka et al. (2015). In Austria, monitoring is also very good, with research on media competencies including the prominent example of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). This program provides indicators of cognitive ability and rankings that allow for comparison of national performance and changes over time. Austria's results have typically been around the OECD average (OECD, 2018). As with Germany and Austria, Estonia has a very good monitoring system in place. Between 2011 and 2022, six research projects focusing on the digital and media competencies of children and young people were conducted. The EU-funded *Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28* report (2016) provides a comprehensive analysis of media literacy in Estonia. In 2018, scientists from two Estonian universities (Tartu and Tallinn) developed digital competence tests for schools, with a new pilot digital competency test taking place in 2019 for students in the ninth and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, and the third year at vocational education institutions.

Sweden, Croatia, and Greece all exhibit good monitoring of MRC during the 2000–2020 period, with each country focusing on distinct aspects of media literacy and education. All three countries have good monitoring systems in place, but while Sweden emphasises civic development and deliberative communication, Croatia concentrates on hate speech and understanding the communication context and Greece faces challenges in literacy and digital skills. The Swedish model of media education is strongly oriented towards civic development and readiness for deliberative communication. Research has been conducted on evaluation skills of journalistic quality and skills of discerning between journalistic and non-journalistic production (e.g., Francke & Sundin, 2019). Croatia also has good monitoring of this variable, with many studies devoted to analysing various aspects of



hate speech and the understanding of communication context. Research on disinformation and trust in media contributes to this understanding (Ciboci, 2018). However, Bubalo and Jelić (2015) also reveal that students do not develop enough critical thinking as they fail to recognise stereotypes in media content representations. According to the OECD's survey (2018) of adult skills, Greece ranks relatively low in terms of information-processing skills. Regarding literacy, which is measured as the ability to understand and respond appropriately to written texts, 26.5% of Greek adults were found to have poor skills. Differences in proficiency related to sociodemographic characteristics exist, but they are not particularly pronounced, especially among age groups. Student performance is also a concern. In the 2018 PISA (OECD 2018) study, the mean reading score of Greek students was 457, lower than the OECD average of 487. In terms of digital skills across the population, the county has made progress but remains consistently below the EU average. According to Eurostat, in 2009 the proportion of citizens with basic or below basic digital skills in Greece was 51% (EU average, 58%) compared to 44% in 2015 (EU average, 55%).

Although contemporary Hungary explores the transformation of debate on social networking sites and the role of cognitive communication skills in the education system, studies of variables like cognitive and user skills are sporadic and non-representative. Gerencsér and Szűts' (2020) analysis of the transformation of debate on social networking sites and the shift towards emotion-based argumentation is particularly relevant in this context. Furthermore, Tomori (2021) conducted a document analysis of the current core curriculum, mapping the theoretical appearance of different cognitive communication skills in the education system.

Bulgaria, Czechia, Poland and Romania all have partial monitoring of MRC. These countries face challenges in terms of comprehensive monitoring and assessment, with fragmented research approaches and limited data available to address this issue effectively.

In Bulgaria, research on MRC is mainly conducted by universities and non-academic institutions, with a notable increase of interest from researchers in this topic after 2016. Between 2016 and 2021, studies notably addressed topics such as media pluralism, media consumption and media freedom (e.g., Milenkova, 2019). However, apart from scientific research and surveys conducted by non-governmental organisations, a comprehensive and systematic approach to gathering and studying data on the subject is still missing. Czechia also has partial monitoring of this variable, as there is no standardised approach to assessing MRC due to the risk of non-cooperation among different agents (e.g., academia, NGOs, etc.). Each agent approaches the task differently, leading to a fragmented view of the situation. Longitudinal research on Czech youth and their digital and media literacy is primarily provided by the NGO One World at School (JSNS, 2018). Poland's studies on media competencies and user literacy are still in the emerging phase.

Simultaneously, while numerous international organisations, NGOs and regulatory bodies (e.g., the National Broadcasting Council) have made efforts, scholarly investigations into media users' abilities and skills remain relatively scarce, accounting for only 15% of all coded items. The discourse is dominated by academic studies calling for improvement in digital skills and literacy, as well as understanding the Polish context of media-related abilities in digital and data-driven communication (Ptaszek, 2019). However, the perspective of self-expression and the ability to be heard in online and digital spaces are largely missing. Romania's monitoring of this variable is also partial, with limited information on research in media competencies and a lack of high-quality research and theoretical literature on the subject. The most important research data come from studies by UiPath<sup>1</sup> (a privately owned Romanian AI solutions company) of digital literacy in over 2.8 million students (1<sup>st</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade) and by the EU Kids Online<sup>2</sup> network.

In Italy, Latvia and Slovakia, there are distinct areas of focus within the study of users' cognitive abilities. In Italy, the most studied variable, although recently, is the authenticity of communication. Vegetti and Mancosu (2020) found that people tend to perceive news as more plausible consistent with their partisan beliefs, but politically sophisticated individuals are better at distinguishing between real and false news. This suggests that political sophistication can reduce the likelihood of citizens falling for false information. In Latvia, research highlights the relationship between media, media messages, and individuals' mental and emotional cognitive processes (Rubene et al., 2018). These processes directly impact thinking, behaviour, attitude formation, values, understanding, meaning structures and critical thinking. Researchers such as Rubene et al. (2008) advocate the integration of media literacy into all study courses. In 2016 Latvia implemented the *Latvian Mass Media Policy Guidelines 2016–2020* (RLCM, 2016b), which includes specific activities aimed at conducting regular and comparable media literacy studies, establishing a UNESCO Chair on Media and Information, and improving media literacy understanding across different social groups. Finally, Slovakia has relatively good monitoring of this variable, with a growing number of research examples on critical thinking, disinformation and fake news (Kačínová, 2019; Slovak Security Policy Institute, 2018). The focus has shifted from digital literacies and general internet safety to recognising fake news and developing critical thinking skills in online environments.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uipath.com/company/about-us>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.eukidsonline.net/>.

## *User skills*

Austria, Estonia, Germany and Latvia boast well-established systems for monitoring and researching users' skills in media literacy, providing a comprehensive range of studies, projects, and data sources. On the other hand, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden exhibit partial monitoring with less extensive research and data collection on user skills. These countries tend to have a more fragmented approach, focusing on specific age groups, target populations and aspects of media literacy.

In the first group (Austria, Germany, Estonia and Latvia), both public institutions and private initiatives play crucial roles in conducting research and promoting media literacy. This group demonstrates a focus on various aspects of media literacy, such as digital skills, critical thinking and media usage among different target populations. In Austria, research on media literacy includes user skills, and is primarily conducted by public institutions such as universities and university colleges. However, various measures to improve media competencies are predominantly realised through private initiatives, often supported by the federal ministry. Additionally, numerous private institutions and organisations, mainly financed by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, are dedicated to promoting media literacy and competencies in media use among young people and pupils. Germany has a strong focus on collecting data on MRC in adults. A recent survey study examined areas of skills and competencies in digital news media use (Meßmer et al., 2021). Germany incorporates both internationally oriented programmes and national test procedures (Herzig & Martin, 2017). In Estonia, the media literacy level of the population is quite high, with a significant part of the population possessing well-developed digital skills. According to the *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)*, at least 62% of the adult population has basic digital skills, which is above the EU average. The measurement of digital competencies was developed in 2018 by scientists from two Estonian universities, with a new pilot digital competency test taking place for students of the 9th and 12th grades in April 2019. Additionally, students from the 3rd year of vocational education institutions were included in the test. In contrast, Latvia's approach focuses more on specific projects aimed at developing media competencies. The 2016 report from the Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28 project highlighted 20 major projects since 2010 related to research (nine projects) and end-user engagement (four projects). These projects concentrated on enhancing awareness of issues such as critical thinking and media usage, audio-visual content creation, online security risks, and the functioning of the media industry across different audiences.

Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden all share the commonality of having only partial monitoring of user skills. There are, however, differences in the types and focus of research conducted in each country, as well as the availability of data sources. Croatia and Sweden

both prioritise media literacy among children and youth, but the scope and focus of their research methods differ. Croatia's approach is broader, while Sweden's is more targeted, focusing on specific aspects of media usage and the experiences of young users. In Croatia, most research sources concentrate on media literacy in general, with less focus on digital or data literacy within society. Research methods include the evaluation of media literacy programs within the education system, assessments of informal media literacy education programs, and testing media literacy among schoolchildren and students. Moreover, studies also analyse the role of family and parenting styles in shaping children's media literacy (Kanižaj, 2016). On the other hand, Sweden's research is primarily driven by the Swedish Media Council's survey, titled *Young People & Media*, which is specifically targeted at children and young adults. This survey investigates various aspects of media usage, such as time spent on different media platforms (including news, social media and gaming), digital skills, the role of interaction with parents and factors that cause anxiety. Greece and Romania struggle with fragmented research and limited national data collection in the context of user competencies. While Greece's research is centred around media education and the evaluation of media literacy initiatives. Romania focuses on digital services usage and relies on a few data sources, the EU Kids Online being one of the few that offer information on children's self-perceived abilities in using various digital skills or functions. Some surveys partially explore subjects such as the ability and willingness of Romanians to use digital services, such as online banking and shopping. These surveys provide some insight into the level of competencies among the population. The academic literature on this topic is equally absent. In Greece, research on users' competencies consists of fragmented studies that investigate students' and schoolteachers' attitudes to media education (e.g., Papadimitriou & Sofos, 2019). Consequently, the research basis for analysing ROs related to the competencies of media users is limited. Furthermore, Greece lacks regular national data collection on relevant aspects; instead, it primarily relies on international and European sources for data on user competencies. Czechia and Hungary share a common focus on specific age groups (or generations). In Czechia, media education is examined in relation to other topics such as political communication and family participation. However, when examining media literacy more closely, Czech authors tend to concentrate on age groups at higher risk of underdeveloped media skills, such as seniors, generation Z, or children in general. In Hungary, it is quite typical to find very sporadic research on specific groups, typically motivated solely by the individual interest of the researcher. A study by Bak and Kóvári (2021) on social media usage habits across generations is certainly a deviation from this practice. Similarly, the ELTE Information Society Education and Research Group delved into the digital competencies of students and teachers at various stages of the education system. In contrast, Bulgaria has taken a more comprehensive approach. Although most studies have not been conducted systematically, there are recent annual analyses that provide valuable insights. One notable example is the

Reuters Institute survey, which offers a wealth of information on population, internet consumption, top media brands, data on media ownership, media consumption, trust in the media, and social media usage in Bulgaria since 2018. Finally, while Italy struggles with limited research and low media technology use, Poland has made considerable strides in addressing media literacy concerns through national efforts and the involvement of non-governmental organisations, while Slovakia has only partially monitored media literacy and competencies, facing challenges in digital transformation and education. In Italy, research is limited and conducted by a small group of scholars or researchers affiliated with European universities and centres outside of Italy (e.g., the Bracciale, Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, and the European University Institute). This trend prevails across all study areas related to media competencies. Consequently, the use of media and media technology in Italy remains relatively limited compared to neighbouring countries, which can be attributed to the health crisis and the delay in the development of user skills among Italian citizens. In contrast, Poland has made significant national efforts to address the knowledge gap in media literacy. The National Broadcasting Council, along with various non-governmental organisations such as the Center for Civic Education (CEO), Press PressCafe.eu and the Polish Association of Media Literacy (PTEM), have contributed to this effort by providing recommendations and tools related to media literacy. The DESI ranked Slovakia 22nd of 27 EU member states in 2019 (European Commission 2019). Two years later the use of public money to promote digital transformation had not yielded the expected results (European Commission, 2021b) in the digitisation of education. However, the country is taking steps to improve its position by focusing on digital transformation through the Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan (MFSR, 2021). The country is currently implementing strategies in line with EU policies to enhance its DESI results and address the gaps in digital transformation and education.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have analysed the potential ROs pertaining to the degree of research and monitoring of media users' competencies across 14 European countries (Figure 17). Under the Mediadelcom umbrella, these competencies and skills were examined in two dimensions: (1) A wide range of social behaviours, deeply ingrained in an individual's societal surroundings and wider cultural, social and political contexts; and (2) A comprehensive collection of key personal traits necessary for successful self-realisation in the dynamic and media-saturated society of today.

The MRC are an umbrella term for the array of skills required by participants in the contemporary media-saturated social environment, both traditional and social, and a precondition for fostering free and deliberative communication.

These competencies are crucial for citizens in a democratic society, forming the core of media and information literacy. MIL represents the overall level of cognitive, emotional and moral development of informed and responsible media users, including their communication skills and patterns, all of which contribute to a “style of media usage that is conscious and critical” (Trültzsch-Wijnen et al., 2017, p. 100). These skills are acquired and deliberately developed by users themselves through everyday media usage, as well as the varying degrees of media education present in a certain country.

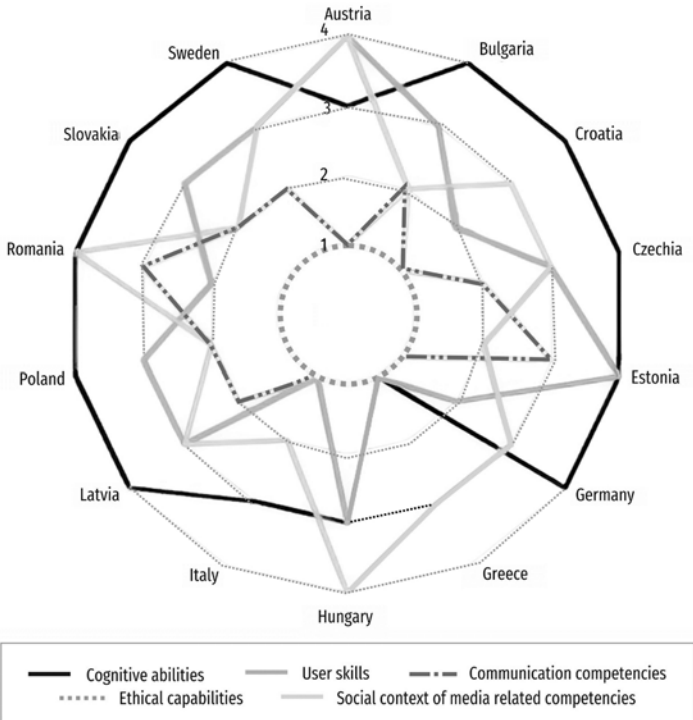


Figure 17. Illustrative comparison of the available knowledge and knowledge gaps in the domain of media related competencies:

1. Lack of knowledge, no interest
2. A few rather small-scale studies (lacking continuity)
3. A wide range of studies, problems with continuity, scale and complexity
4. Sufficient and good quality knowledge.

Comparative research highlights not only the gaps in monitoring the selected competencies, but also the lack of continuity and sustainability in policies and measures designed to support their development. One identified issue is the inconsistent use of terms and concepts in the field. For example, the term “media and information literacy” has been advanced by international organisations and European policymakers, enabling a comparative approach. However, in national

education and social sectors, a wide range of terms (e.g., media literacy, digital literacy, information literacy, media education, media wisdom, etc.) are used to describe the same spectrum of competencies, skills, problematic issues, policies and solutions (Carlsson, 2019; Trültzsch-Wijnen et al., 2017; Jaakkola, 2020).

To circumvent the gaps that emerge between the various literacies mentioned in the theory, policy papers and practices of the countries included in the research, in this study we employ the term “media-related competencies”. This approach also helps us avoid the challenges of measuring overarching and generalised concepts such as MIL. Nevertheless, when analysing national cases, we consistently return to the discourse of policy documents and descriptions of practices in national languages that are, at least partially, perceived as sources of the identified problems when viewed critically in cross-country comparisons. The differences in discourses used in various countries to refer to the evolving field of MRC are rooted in the traditions established within those countries. This could clarify why, even in countries with well-developed democracies and education systems that offer basic MRC as part of their civic education, there are few or no studies of some vital MRC variables such as users’ communication competencies. Conversely, in some newer democracies, either or both MRC in general and specific competencies are popular research areas.

The analysis of the research available in 14 European countries participating in the Mediadecom project shows that there are gaps and inconsistencies in particular fields of MRC that can affect the development of deliberative communication in specific countries, as well as in Europe in general. Some variables related to media competencies are scarcely monitored across the analysed European countries. For instance, the ability to listen is an essential but scarcely examined communication competency. Only Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovakia and Poland have identified studies in this area. In general, variables connected to communication competencies receive less attention than others. In Austria and Greece, no publications were found addressing users’ communication competencies across the period in question (2000–2020). Hungary, Germany, Italy and Estonia also exhibit a limited number of publications. There are no publications found on the ability to communicate assertively in Austria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania and Sweden, with only one publication touching upon it in the Latvian sample. Monitoring efforts on self-expression ability is similarly scarce.

Another significant but often overlooked area connected to users’ communication competencies is their ethical capabilities. Only Bulgaria, Slovakia and Poland have more than 10 publications monitoring ethical capabilities, while Estonia, Germany, Italy and Greece have not examined this competency at all. Additionally, variables connected to users’ cognitive abilities are also understudied. Although Croatia, Greece, and Latvia lack any monitoring on a general level of this variable, important areas such as rational argumentation in public communication are not monitored in Austria, Estonia, Germany, Greece and Romania. Only Bulgar-

ia, Czechia, Poland and Slovakia have conducted more monitoring in this group of variables, focusing on knowledge, understanding of communication contexts and critical consideration of information. However, even in these countries, the monitoring efforts remain limited.

In general, the most attention concerning MRC has been given to two variables. The popularity of the first variable – digital skills and literacy – is understandable, given that the development of digital technologies during the observed period has elicited a broad response from various agents (e.g., government and regulatory bodies, education systems, professional associations, NGOs, media, software companies, etc.), promoting research agendas related to users' digital practices and competencies. However, Greece and Romania are exceptions to this trend. The second relatively well-monitored variable involves the use of media and technology connected to users' skills. Almost all countries have information and extensive research and discussion contributing to a deeper understanding of this variable. Nevertheless, such related and crucial areas as privacy and data protection skills are much less well monitored in all countries, despite EU-level policy initiatives. The research conducted on this variable is generally limited, except for in Czechia, Slovakia and, to a lesser extent, Poland.

The monitoring capability of the domain's variables is positively influenced by regular international studies focusing on various aspects of MRC. These international initiatives facilitate monitoring in most countries. For users' cognitive abilities, a good example is the PISA (OECD) studies on reading and other literacies. In part, the relative abundance of studies on digital literacies and the use of digital media and technologies can be explained by the accessibility of EU and European Commission sources, such as Eurostat and Eurobarometer data, as well as the existence of long-term comparative projects such as DESI and EU Kids Online. Another source of comparative knowledge, which combines much of the previously mentioned data since 2017, is the Media Literacy Index (OSIS, 2021).

Throughout the early years of this century, countries such as Bulgaria, Czechia, Poland and Slovakia have displayed a positive trend in research relating to MRC. Despite certain drawbacks, Hungary, Latvia and Croatia have devoted considerable effort to exploring the social context of this subject. In contrast, countries with a longer and more successful history of incorporating MRC into both policy agendas and education systems (e.g., Austria, Germany, Italy and Estonia) do not appear to invest as much in additional targeted research on specific variables. Similar results are found in Romania and Sweden.

Three clusters of countries can be identified based on the embeddedness of MIL and MRC in the social context and education systems, as well as the emergence of social and political context. The first cluster, mainly including Western European countries with longer traditions of teaching critical literacy and rational self-expression (e.g., Austria, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Estonia), has well-developed monitoring systems and traditions, although some of the areas of com-



petencies are outside the current research. The second cluster, with more active research development in many MRC subfields, includes Bulgaria, Czechia, Poland and Slovakia. The third group, characterised by a limited tradition in MRC research, but displaying an increasing interest in the field, encompasses Hungary, Croatia, Latvia and Romania. These countries are in the process of developing their approaches to digital literacy, use of media and technologies, and other variables such as the institutional, strategic and legislative contexts of competencies.

MRC must evolve in tandem with the advancement of media and technology. Digitisation and the rise of social media in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century have led to changes in this area, with generation gaps emerging due to biases and fears of the unknown or unexperienced. This issue is often not addressed by national policies and falls outside the scope of most conventional education systems. Furthermore, not all countries have lifelong learning programs for digital literacy as part of a broader MIL framework. The development of MRC and their monitoring capacity are strongly influenced by the political situation both within and outside countries. National governments introducing systems to apprehend and monitor MRC depend on the political will of elected leaders and their understanding of the importance of developing these competencies in today's world. In some emerging democracies within the sample, predominantly situated in Central and Eastern Europe, political issues are influenced by their relationship with the Russian Federation. However, this can have varying outcomes, as some governments' political positions may not be supportive of critical media use development.

In the age of disinformation and fake news, critical media use, fact-checking, and recognising propaganda tools (including those specifically designed for networked digital environments) are seen as essential competencies for individual safety and national security. On the other hand, research is needed to shift the focus of MIL programs from a defensive philosophy towards fostering creativity and citizen participation. Our analysis reveals that almost all countries lack consistent research on users' communicative skills and ethical understanding, which are crucial areas for development.

At the same time, the initiatives of the AVMSD play a critical role in fostering political will for MRC to be implemented in the form of national policies and legislative acts. However, research results are not always translated into broader reflection and perspective. The absence of a clear vision for a network of supporting actors and their collaboration models in certain countries appears to place the entire responsibility for developing audiences' MRC on the state and its education system. This hinders the introduction of a model more deeply rooted in defining and understanding audiences, which is crucial for reaching target groups with MIL education. The role of private companies in the implementation network, for example, remains unclear. In most countries, more consistent research must be conducted on the normative framework and institutional, strategic and legislative contexts of MRC. This is because a well-defined normative vision at the national

level, in turn, determines the possibility of developing and funding research in the field, formulating research questions, and using research conclusions in priority areas.

We have identified the following risks for monitoring and studying user competencies in the MRC domain:

- Absence of a universally accepted and utilised definition of MIL, as well as fragmented and inconsistent data, complicates comparisons and hinders the promotion and adoption of evidence-based policies. Consequently, shared or similar MIL public policies are lacking, making the transfer of good practices and learned lessons challenging;
- Deep dependency of MIL policies, the development of MRC, and the level of monitoring capacity of those competencies on internal political will. This is particularly crucial given the lack of clear vision and coordinated action from other agents, leaving elected authorities in charge of MRC and allowing for their politicisation. This also obstructs the promotion of an education model more profoundly based on defining and understanding audiences;
- Dependency of MIL policies, development of MRC, and the level of monitoring capacity of those competencies on external contexts, especially for some Central and Eastern European countries, where the government's political stance toward MIL is influenced by geographical proximity to and the close relationship with the Russian Federation.

Despite insufficient and inconsistent data, our qualitative meta-analysis also revealed some opportunities for the development of users' MRC in the studied countries:

- The interest of the EU and its role as a driving force to promote MIL. EU norms play a crucial role in stimulating political will at the national level (manifested as policies and legislative acts) and provide models (and funds) for MRC actions;
- The complex international context, which deterred media literacy efforts in some countries, may act as a stimulus in others. Fact-checking and awareness of propaganda tools (including those specifically developed for networked digital environments) are understood as competencies needed for individual safety and national security, creating a foundation for the necessary actions;
- Digitisation and the advent of social media in the first decades of the century have created the background for change. Although this has created new challenges (e.g., the generation gap, which is generally out of reach for most conventional education systems and rarely addressed by national policies), it has also raised awareness and mobilised various agents;

- The transnational nature of the problem has stimulated interest in cross-border research, helping less connected research communities to participate in European and global projects and generate country-specific data in the process.

The meta-analysis has also revealed some directions for further development and research into user MRC:

- Harmonisation of visions and coordination of actions among different agents to ensure coherence at the national level and efficient use of resources;
- Conducting more research on the normative framework and institutional, strategic and legislative contexts of MRC;
- Shifting approaches from the current defensive philosophy in MIL teaching programs to creativity and citizen participation.

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## Risks to the capability of monitoring mediascapes across Europe

Halliki Harro-Loit

Wisdom-based media governance that supports deliberative communication requires good capability of monitoring mediascapes (CMM). While the previous chapters of this book presented DIKW analysis per domain, the aim of this chapter is to identify groups of countries according to the risk levels of their CMM: low, medium or high.

As explained in the theoretical chapter, the basic concept of the CMM is described via three basic conditions and monitoring governance (see Figure 6). To use the concept of CMM for the analysis of risk level by country, it is necessary to connect risk and opportunity (RO) indicators to the CMM. For this purpose, four basic conditions of the CMM and monitoring governance need to be defined as conceptual variables. Each conceptual variable has operational variables that enable more specific description of low, medium and high risk.

The four conceptual variables in Figure 18 comprise: (1) DIKW (deduced from the 4 domains); (2) structural conditions; (3) agents (their motivation, competency and activity or behaviour), and (4) monitoring governance. These conceptual variables are not of equal weight in the context of the Mediadelcom project. The first, and most comprehensive, variable is formed from the DIKW conditions, which enables us to assess the sufficiency or lack of knowledge as well as any gaps or overproduction in each domain. The second conceptual variable, structural conditions, is strongly linked to the process of the institutionalisation of journalism, media and communication (JMC) research, i.e. the diachronic development of the discipline, the institutionalisation of research and higher education devoted to JMC, as well as the financing conditions (see Chapter 3). The degree of risk can be assessed by operational variables such as the degree of institutionalisation of journalism, media and communication studies and education, the existence and quality or rank of the field's journals, the level of funding, academic freedom, and the possibilities offered by various databases to find information.

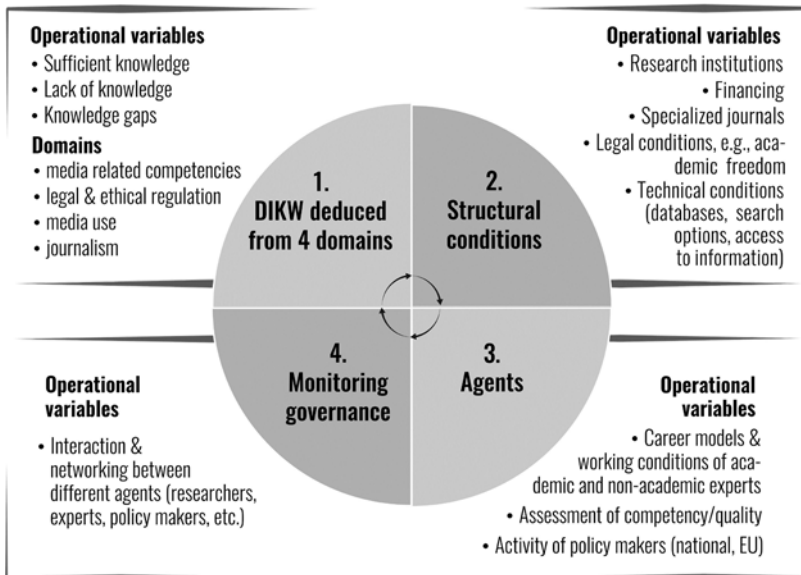


Figure 18. Four conceptual variables deduced from the basic concept of the capability of monitoring mediascapes and operational variables for assessing each country's risk level.

The third conceptual variable focuses on the agents of knowledge and information production, their motivation, competency, activity and behaviour. For the risk level analysis, operational variables have been created to ask: Do the career models of academic and non-academic experts support the objectives of media monitoring? What quality criteria do career and funding systems support? Are the policymakers in a particular country active commissioners and users of media research knowledge? The risk analysis should go even further. It should ask about the number of scholars and non-academic experts, their employment conditions, qualifications, and income, i.e. the attractiveness of the academic job market and the influence of a specific community of professionals who play a significant role in research agencies related to monitoring capabilities. In most of the countries there is no efficient way to get systematic information about human capital, either in- or outside academia, about the researchers who are engaged in JMC studies. Therefore, in the analysis of country risk level, the key criterion is the status of the academic community engaged in JMC research and its competitiveness.

The final conceptual variable, monitoring governance, is a notion that was created during research for the country reports and is directly related to cooperation and networking between various agents. The Medielcom consortium gathered best-practice examples of such initiatives from various monitoring agents. The risks associated with monitoring governance, often mentioned in the country reports, mainly concern fragmented knowledge production in certain topic areas, and the dependence of the research agenda on the interests of individual re-

searchers more than on society's needs for relevant information to advance monitoring governance.

The grouping of countries as low, medium or high risk enables us to identify countries with similar RO profiles. However, the risk level can be the same, although the reasons differ. The ROs of the CMM are finally described as a matrix of all operational variables. In some cases, high risks in one field are balanced with opportunities in another. The tendency towards high risk might have developed over time due to similar and unidirectional policy decisions, which create path dependencies. For example, the development and financing of only one narrow branch of research in the JMC discipline could support outstanding expertise in this narrow field and attract additional funding. Because of high competition in science, it could then become difficult to get funding for the other groups who study topics of societal importance alongside this extremely strong research group.

## CONFIGURATIONS OF RISK AND OPPORTUNITY INDICATORS REFLECTED IN THE DIKW PYRAMID

If RO indicators identifiable using the DIKW pyramid relating to detrimental aspects of knowledge, or lack thereof, or gaps, defects or overproduction of knowledge become apparent, the CMM and consequently good media governance are at risk. When policymakers have only inadequate knowledge, the opportunity to benefit from the available knowledge decreases while simultaneously the danger of making the wrong decisions or no decisions at all increases (Durst & Zieba, 2020). Durst and Zieba (2019) (whose approach is focused on organisational knowledge management) refer to the risks that can appear in the course of agents processing and using the available knowledge, i.e. the risks of waste, obsolete or unreliable knowledge, and difficulties acquiring knowledge.

In the context of the Mediadelcom project, the first empirical task (when preparing the first case study and compiling bibliographic databases, was to map existing knowledge, as well as the aforementioned detrimental aspects, although overproduction is difficult to assess. A lack of knowledge could also be described as an uneven body of knowledge, which means that some studies are available but that researchers could not draw significant conclusions on ROs.

In the context of the CMM, a lack of knowledge might be caused by four types of problems with academic and non-academic research:

- The scope of research with reference to the focus or the sample. The risk is that most studies have either a very narrow focus or cover a tiny empirical sample, or both. Fragmented knowledge like this does not help to identify media-related risks of deliberative communication.

- The diachronic dimension of the research. The risk is research that covers only a short period and does not enable researchers to produce knowledge on changes taking place in mediascapes.
- Ruptures of longitudinal studies diminish the ability to monitor changes in mediascapes and causes the risk of knowledge loss (Durst and Wilhelm, 2011).
- The knowledge loss might have a variety of reasons, for example, a turnover of researchers (departure of key researchers of a certain field of expertise), or a project-based research policy. Here, continuity is an opportunity.

Knowledge gaps are situations where almost no research on the subject can be found. ‘Almost’ means that this topic is not the main research focus, in either publications or reports, and the results are very difficult to find. Knowledge gaps occur when a field is not considered worthy of attention. The reasons are broadly twofold. Firstly, there is no practice or problem in a particular society. For example, when media accountability instruments are very scarce in society, their functioning is rarely studied. In some cases, however, the problem is so hidden or new that the need for investigation is not recognised.

Secondly, the practice is so self-evident that it is not considered to be a specific area of study. For example, in Sweden and Estonia, freedom of the press and freedom of expression have been taken for granted to such an extent that empirical research on the practices of the latter barely exists.

Knowledge defects (low quality knowledge) give rise to misleading or inaccurate knowledge. In the context of the Medielcom project, knowledge defects were not specifically assessed, but the academic peer reviewing system (a category in the Medielcom bibliographic database) is designed to reduce defects.

Knowledge overproduction becomes a risk if it complicates the transformation of knowledge into wisdom. A broad base of information does not always lead to good knowledge, and an overproduction of knowledge does not itself guarantee wisdom. The problem of knowledge overproduction is a wide area of study. In the context of the Medielcom project, knowledge overproduction could become a risk if the research community produces an increasing quantity of studies covering a variety of topics, but there is a lack of review articles that critically evaluate methodology and results. The problems could be solved via excellent databases and search possibilities, which enable knowledge users as well as research community members to aggregate information via keywords. The risk of knowledge overproduction can be turned into an opportunity if the motivation system, in addition to the production of scientific publications, encourages people to critically synthesise and interpret existing research results and debate their applicability.

Information risks (documents, cases, news about media, discussion forums, editorial metrics, etc.) relate to the quality of information, source transparency, or access. For example, one increasing risk is that editorial metrics as information collected by media companies is not processed into publicly available knowledge.

Usually current information (especially news and public discussions) keeps public discourse on certain topics active and therefore is useful for the public awareness of media-related ROs. However, it is important to discover if there is the possibility to translate this kind of information into knowledge (collected systematically, assessed and recorded). In some cases, trade publications and websites (produced by individuals as well as organisations) aggregate relevant information, which, if the public can gain access, becomes knowledge.

The grouping of countries as to low, medium or high risk depends on configurations of RO indicators of DIKW (Figure 19). An overview on the detrimental aspects of DIKW per domain has been presented in the previous chapters. As stated before, the difference between domains and between operational categories within domains is significant.

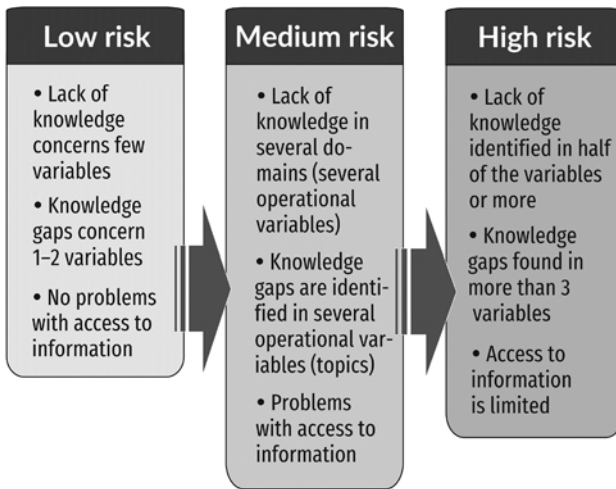


Figure 19. Configurations of indicators that cause risks to DIKW.

Because of an absence of research on the topic, the ethical competence of the general public as it relates to public communication is the one category that has received no attention. The probable reason is that people’s opportunities for free participation in public communication have only developed rapidly since the beginning of the 21st century. Simultaneously, the problems of the ethical awareness of public communication are growing (for example, cancel culture, extremist speech, insults on social media, etc.). This category was excluded from the grouping of countries based on DIKW.

*Countries of low risk and sufficient opportunity:  
Austria, Sweden and Germany*

Austria, Sweden and Germany are characterised by sufficient knowledge. Information collection and knowledge acquisition is conducted regularly, enabling scholars to conduct longitudinal analysis of the main RO categories. Very few variables indicate a lack of knowledge production. In Austria, knowledge production relating to journalistic accountability is relatively fragmentary. The reason is that the accountability system itself has a turbulent history in this country. However, information is available on the decisions of the Austrian Press Council, and thus there is good potential for further research and knowledge production. In Germany, regional diversity should be considered although the few extant risks are mainly related to the end of several long-term monitoring efforts.

*Medium-risk countries: Czechia, Croatia,  
Estonia, Greece, Italy and Poland*

The characteristic feature of this group is few knowledge gaps in combination with a lack of knowledge on two to eight variables. There is a difference between countries as to which domains suffer from the lack of knowledge and the reasons for this lack of knowledge vary. In some cases, theoretical and normative articles are published, but there are no empirical studies (e.g., Poland, Czechia). Another typical reason for the lack of knowledge is that the studies conducted focus on very narrow topics and are empirically small-scale (e.g., Romania, Estonia).

Czechia has a scarcity of knowledge on freedom of speech and information, accountability, market and organisational conditions, journalistic competencies and access and diversity as it relates to media usage. Croatia has insufficient knowledge on accountability, market and production conditions, professional culture and journalistic competencies. Estonia has a shortage of knowledge on freedom of information, market conditions, organisational conditions and media users' trust in more than one media source. Italy has a lack of knowledge on accountability, market conditions, professional culture and access and diversity as it relates to media usage. Greece has a shortage of knowledge on the market and organisational conditions of journalism. Poland has a deficit of knowledge on the implementation of freedom of expression, accountability and communication competencies. In the case of Poland, this is because a long tradition of normative research dominated over empirical studies. Some knowledge gaps are related to production conditions (Czechia, Croatia, Estonia); implementation of freedom of speech, freedom of information and working conditions (Poland); accountability and cognitive abilities and media users' skills (Greece).

### *High-risk countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Latvia*

These countries are characterised by a high degree of inconsistency of research: there is both a lack of as well as several gaps in knowledge in some domains, while quite a large amount of research exists in other domains. For example, Hungary has knowledge gaps in the journalism domain (accountability, market and production conditions) while the legal regulation and media usage variables are very well covered. The same applies to Bulgaria, where the legal framework investigation and audience studies are well developed. While Bulgaria's journalism studies and accountability issues contain inconsistent knowledge, the domain of media-related competences is of growing scholarly interest, especially in the fields of media literacy initiatives and maintenance of professional standards<sup>1</sup>. The main risk factor for Romania is a lot of restricted-scope studies that cover a long list of topics, while knowledge is in fact thin, except for the working conditions of journalists and citizens media-related cognitive abilities.

High DIKW risk is also reflected in the knowledge gaps that simultaneously appear in two or more variables: organisational conditions and professional culture (Bulgaria); public service conditions, organisational conditions and professional culture (Romania); implementation of freedom of expression, and accountability plus working and organisational conditions in journalism, professional culture, journalistic competences (Slovakia); and implementation of the freedom of speech combined with accountability and professional culture (Latvia).

## RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS

As previously stated, Mediadelcom defines structural conditions as disciplinary settings and organisations that carry out the monitoring, plus economic, legal and technological contexts that affect CMM (Figure 20). Structural conditions (especially resources) are directly connected with agents (human resources).

The Mediadelcom project approaches institutionalisation from several perspectives. First, we ask about the development of the JMC towards official recognition as an autonomous discipline (or disciplines). Tight (2020) points out that while parameters such as the object of research, accumulated knowledge, theories, terminologies and methods are all of critical importance, the paramount elements comprise the whole gamut of departments, chairs, learned societies, specialised academic journals, conferences, interest groups and so forth. Therefore, the existence of research units and institutions, associations, journals and funding are included in the structural categories of institutionalisation. From the perspective of institutionalisation, the length and continuity of the research tradi-

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://hdl.handle.net/10062/89281> for Bulgarian country report.

tion is important. The diachronic overview in Chapter 4 shows that the official recognition of JMC as an autonomous discipline has some positive consequences, such as easier access to funding, and supports continuous development of the discipline.

| Structural conditions                                                                                                                   |                                                  |                                                                                 |                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Institution-<br/>alization</b>                                                                                                       | <b>Economic<br/>conditions</b>                   | <b>Technology<br/>conditions</b>                                                | <b>Legal<br/>conditions</b> |
| Attributes that define JMC as a recognized discipline: Existence of specialized institutions, journals, professional associations, etc. | Financing end possibilities to apply for funding | The possibility to use search engines to find JMC researchers, studies, reports | Autonomy of academia        |

Figure 20. Categories of the structural conditions that affect capability of monitoring mediascapes’ Risks and Opportunities.

Key: JMC – journalism media and communication

If JMC studies are indistinguishable from other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences (in which they are usually situated), the attention to the field is much smaller. Indeed, it is difficult to find information about the development of the field (e.g., numbers of researchers, research projects, publications, etc.); and the research is hampered by lack of funds.

Institutionalisation is always influenced by economic conditions (i.e., resources), which often depends on country size. On the one hand, low financing could create the risk of certain research branches going extinct or becoming overly competitive (i.e., overly focusing on competing for projects). As Fan and Yan (2023) point out, allocation of resources under the ‘incremental drive’ model might lead to blind expansion of projects, people and publications and could therefore create all sorts of risk: competition for an excessive number of projects and a tendency to expand the thematic scale as much as possible might result in low incentives to use existing resources efficiently.

Fan and Yan (2023) also argue that another risk is the ‘Matthew effect’ of accumulated advantage (the tendency of individuals to accrue social or economic success in proportion to their initial level of resource). Universities and research institutions with better resources provide better output and have advantages in obtaining more resources, as performance indicators measure output. The same applies to individuals and research grants: positive feedback through funding can be a key mechanism through which money is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few extremely successful scholars or research groups.



The ROs of CMM can be broadly described via financing bodies and systems. In Europe the research is funded via public bodies (research councils), private funding or European grants. Kropp (2021) points out that while there has been increasing Europeanisation of social science knowledge production, the social sciences have only recently been integrated into EU research policy, yet still in a marginal position.

Success in obtaining EU grants can, in some cases, compensate for small national funding. The European Commission started the Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence Actions under Horizon Europe with the aim of building research and innovation capacity for countries that were lagging behind. However, the 'Matthew effect' still applies. O'Grady (2022) states that just four countries – Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom – bagged a total of half of the €53 billion in research funding doled out by the European Union between 2007 and 2013. Many other countries, even comparatively large ones such as Poland and Romania, each managed to win less than one percent of the funding on offer. Under the Horizon framework, Estonia nearly doubled its share of EU funds. But Croatia saw no increase at all, and Hungary's share fell by 14%.

The EU funding of JMC studies correlates to the proportions of general EU funding, as the qualitative findings and bibliographic database of Mediadelcom confirm. Legal conditions could create risk if the academic freedom (to teach, research and learn) is restricted and there is no assessment method or procedure that systematically and specifically examines the situation. Technological conditions (various databases, access and search possibilities) create risks specifically for JMC research if this sector is not considered sufficiently important to be searchable via keywords.

The aim of the Mediadelcom country reports was to map symptoms of ROs as they relate to these variables (Figure 20). To translate these symptoms into ROs and to group the 14 countries, we created a risk assessment template in which we describe three possible configurations of risk (Figure 21). Very few countries belong entirely to one type or another.

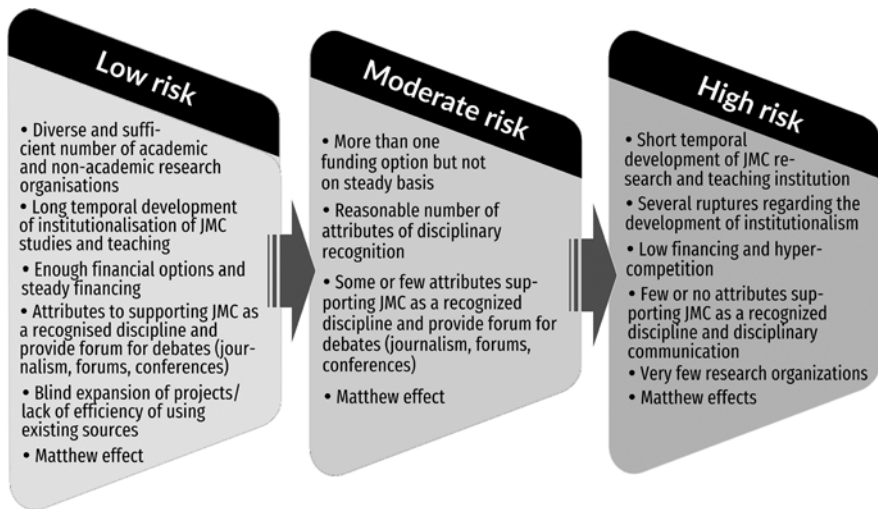


Figure 21. Configurations of indicators that cause risks to structural conditions.  
JMC – journalism, media and communication

*Low-risk countries: Germany, Sweden, Austria and Italy*

These four countries belong to the group in which the overall number of research institutions and the gross domestic expenditure on R&D is the highest among the 14 EU countries and the institutionalisation of JMC research and education is highly developed. The technological conditions (multifunctional databases) are also very good or at least reasonable, and academic freedom is guaranteed. This means that in these countries the organisational structure is significantly better, and economic resources for monitoring are significantly higher, than in the other 14 countries, and therefore opportunities dominate. Both research on JMC as well as the discipline are well recognised and have a long development history (see also Chapter 4).

Austria provides some best practice examples concerning the technology variable, especially databases. The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) finances specific JMC projects, which can be identified through the FWF Project Finder. A similar database of projects is made available by the Oesterreichische Nationalbank Anniversary Fund (OeNB). Information on the funds administered by KommAustria and RTR are also published online and in the annual Communication Reports. These and similar sources make it possible to identify notable fluctuations in both the amount of funding made available for media research and the preference for certain issues that are deemed worthy of funding. In the Swedish context, funds for media research primarily derive from the Swedish Research Council; *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*; *Forte, Formas, Vinnova* (innovation-oriented research); the Wallenberg Foundations; *Hamrin-stiftelsen*; and *Anderstiftelsen*. However, within

Swedish academia the widespread opinion is that JMC as a discipline is still the disfavoured relative of the more established disciplines, such as political science. It is therefore difficult to estimate whether the low number of successful applications (usually about 10%) is linked to structural discrimination or a lack of quality in an overabundance of media and communication applications. During the examined period (2000–2020), several large projects or programmes were funded by some of the above-mentioned councils, or other funders. Since there is no specific media-oriented database to use when searching for media research, the *SwePub* national database is of essential importance.

In Italy, the development of JMC studies started in the 1960s, and has faced no significant ruptures. Italy (the largest country in this group) hosts about 40 public and private research and higher education institutions that focus on various sub-disciplines of JMC. However, Italy has also been successful in attracting European funding. Hence, organisational network and funding enable Italy to be classified as a low-risk country.

However, an element of risk can also be observed in these countries. For example, Germany has few risks that are related to its size and federal system. Research infrastructures and archive institutions are evenly distributed across the country. However, key data on financing and the resources of JMC research are comparably hard to find and are incomplete, partly because of the blurred borders of the field. The ‘Matthew effect’ can also be observed in these countries, where existing structures support the stability of monitoring.

*Medium-risk countries: Bulgaria,  
Czechia, Croatia and Poland*

This group is rather a spectrum of countries with a few isolated high-risk factors. All the countries have comparatively good organisational frameworks and resources for funding, enabling continuous development.

In Bulgaria, JMC studies is recognised as a discipline and has a long tradition of sustainability. There are relatively many academic publications devoted to JMC and many academic institutions that carry out pertinent research. Five specialised open access online journals are published. In 2022, the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia’s St. Kliment Ohridsky University published a scientific bibliography of the research on media and communication and related fields consisting of 6,480 entries (1990–2022). The risks for Bulgaria’s monitoring capability relate to the low visibility of academic research and the absence of research articles in high-profile international journals. A large amount of academic research is directed towards domestic users and the number of internationally renowned media outlets and scholars is proportionately lower than in the low-risk countries.

In Czechia, there are three main departments of JMC studies. Czech academics are dependent on institutional financing for their research, which can cover only a small fraction of their needs (especially in large studies). There are two main grant agencies, the success rate for projects in the social studies and humanities is around 20–30%, which is relatively high. The main structural risks are related to the scarcity of financing opportunities.

Croatia has a long research tradition and six peer-reviewed media and communication journals that support academic discussion and the dissemination of results. Since 2000, JMC research has experienced an expansion due to an increase in the number of research units, university departments and specialised academic journals. JMC studies are conducted in five universities, and there are two main research centres and groups at the academic level. The national funding of research projects is limited and therefore creates some risks. The University of Zagreb finances the research of its members on an annual basis. Several communication and media projects have been selected for grants each year (although still on a much smaller scale than other disciplines). Some research projects are funded by non-academic actors or NGOs.

In Poland, six university-based JMC research (and education) centres provide sufficient basis for knowledge production. In addition, Polish JMC research is supported by a strong international journal and several other academic publications in English and Polish that maintain the necessary academic discussion.

*High-risk countries: Estonia, Greece, Hungary,  
Latvia, Slovakia and Romania*

While the profiles of low-risk countries are comparatively similar, high-risk countries in this group differ as high risk stems from some specific factors. This may, for example, be radically reduced academic freedom (Hungary); an extremely low chance of obtaining a domestic grant (Estonia, Greece, Latvia); either or both a relatively short period of institutionalisation and repeated interruptions (Greece, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia); low-impact journalism and professional forums (Estonia, Latvia); structural bias towards teaching (Romania) or absence of solid research infrastructures and relevant databases (Greece, Hungary). The gap between medium- and high-risk countries is indistinct, so we consider the structural risks are high if there are no signs of improvement in a high-risk area.

In none of the countries in this group has the JMC sector been among the areas of priority development. Differences begin with the institutional development aspect: of the six countries, only in Estonia has the development of JMC as a discipline occurred for several decades without interruption (see Chapter 3). However, when assessing the attributes of discipline support, Slovakia and Romania have a variety of specialised journals and, in this specific area, the two countries belong to the medium risk group.

The risks for Estonia and Latvia mainly relate to the size of both the countries and financial resources. In Estonia, JMC research and education are established in two universities, and in Latvia five. In both countries, private commercial research companies (TNS/Kantar Estonia, Gemius Latvia, SKDS Latvia, Latvijas Fakti, etc.) are involved in regular surveys of media audiences. A few NGOs and research centres carry out single studies, but this input is modest.

In Estonia and Latvia, there is one national research funding body that supplies JMC grants. In Estonia, the success rate of national grant projects in social sciences is 10% or lower, thus falling short of the 20–30% probability of success that is considered reasonable. The JMC success rate is much lower (about 0.2%). In Estonia, much of the project-based funding comes from the EU. Most publications (81% of all Estonian publications included in the bibliographical database<sup>2</sup>) are in English. Only one semi-academic annual yearbook exists for articles on JMC in Estonian. The cyclical and uncertain nature of grant funding periodically leaves a few researchers without funding, and consequently without jobs. The risk of losing valuable research competency in the discipline is already a reality in Estonia. In Latvia, most of the JMC projects are small-scale research initiatives carried out by individual researchers, as no stable and successive JMC research system has been established during the period covered by the Mediadecom project. Databases of JMC research and researchers in both Estonia and Latvia are easily accessible, partly because there are just a few research institutions and the research community is very small. There has never been funding for an academic journal of JMC studies in either Latvia or Estonia.

Slovakia and Latvia being high-risk is related to the brevity of institutionalisation. Structural possibilities in Slovakia suffered because of the ruptures in disciplinary development at the end of the 1990s and start of the 21st century. Currently there are five faculties specialising in JMC in Slovakia. Four academic JMC journals give sufficient space for publishing in Slovak and English for the 110-person community of scholars.

Research and Development (R&D) in Greece is below the EU average and the private sector is less important than the public. However, European Union funds are the major international funding source for JMC studies, and the national science and innovative system has a strong international orientation. In Greece, there was no regular research grant scheme for the social and political sciences until 2016, when the Greek Research and Innovation Institute (ELIDEK) was established. Much of the research available is small-scale, carried out by individual researchers. In addition to the universities, public research centres contribute to the research. Solid research infrastructures and relevant databases are largely missing. There is no comprehensive and cohesive approach to data collection by public and private bodies alike. At the national level, there is no public funding

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<sup>2</sup> <https://datadoi.ee/handle/33/515>

mechanism specifically addressing JMC studies. Private research grants, mostly from civil society organisations, are not provided on a regular basis. Research into JMC is fragmented, and the main risk is the low degree of financing, and as a result, much of the academic research conducted is small-scale. Greece does not have any specifically JMC focussed academic journals, but others (such as *Law of Technology and Communication*) do occasionally publish JMC articles. The National Documentation Centre offers online access to research produced by the Greek academic community in the field.

Romania has the lowest R&D investments in Medielcom sample countries and concurrently a low overall scientific performance of the public research system. The report points out that research, in addition to the academic organisations, is also carried out by public organisations, which leads to high fragmentation of knowledge production. This overall tendency is also applicable to JMC research. Structural bias is towards teaching with 31 accredited academic programmes in journalism, 10 specialised programmes in advertising and seven in digital media active in 2022, a further 39 programs devoted to communication and public relations, and four to information and documentation sciences. Romania's Journalism faculties and departments are involved in international consortia, which conduct research projects focusing on journalism and media, although not as coordinators. Over the last three rounds of competitive calls (2016, 2019 and 2021) only one project pertaining to media was retained for funding.

The ANCOM (National Authority for Management and Regulation in Communications) and CNA (The National Audiovisual Council) use standardised methodology in their reports and provide consistent data year after year. These are some of the very few data sets produced and published by the Romanian authorities in the field of media.

The structural conditions of Hungarian JMC research have been turbulent during the 21st century for political reasons. In 2015, 74 institutions provided JMC education and training, among them 21 university departments, although this number has since significantly decreased. Communication and media studies do not appear as a separate discipline in the structure of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, although in 2018 the Scientific Committee on Communication and Media Studies was established to provide a platform for coordination between communication and media studies and related disciplines. This also paved the way for the possibility of professorial appointments in this discipline at university level.

The official scientific database in Hungary is the Hungarian Scientific Works Repository, in which Hungarian scientists record their studies. The database does not offer keyword-based content search, which would help give a complete picture of the Hungarian JMC research and researchers. Indeed, JMC research projects (especially those related to journalism research) are rare.

## THE AGENTS: ROs FOR MOTIVATION, QUALITY, COMPETENCY AND ACTIVITY

Monitoring capability is directly related to human resources. In the context of the Medielcom project human resources issues are addressed via an agent-based approach. The conceptual variable 'agents' is defined through motivation to create knowledge (i.e., what is on the agenda), and the way in which knowledge is created (i.e., study design, methodology). The output is assessed according to quality criteria, which in academia are usually related to the h-index, which Google Scholar, Scopus and Web of Science all calculate differently. Although the index system has been much criticised, it is still one way of answering the question of how much of the JMC research community in a country is internationally recognised and competitive for research funding. In other words, from the CMM point of view, the issue that matters is not so much whether the h-index is 3 or 13 (especially since older researchers inevitably have a higher score), but how many of the JMC researchers have an h-index above 3. As Maarit Jaakola explains:

The field of media and communication research is broad and diverse, ranging from natural and formal sciences to the humanities, and even covering branches of artistic research. There are major field-internal differences, and it may be more appropriate in some disciplines to be involved in the h-index concurrence than others. (2022)<sup>3</sup>



Figure 22. The core elements of the conceptual variable 'agents'.

<sup>3</sup> <https://nordmedianetwork.org/latest/news/are-you-happy-with-your-h-index/>

Quality of knowledge is related to the competence of knowledge-creating agents as well as the feedback and assessment system, which we can link to motivation. Activity is related to the research activity and interaction between knowledge producers (Figure 22).

Operational variables that enable translation of descriptions into possible ROs for CMM are: (1) career models and working conditions of CMM agents (academic and non-academic experts); (2) an assessment system of both competency of CMM agents and the quality of the knowledge produced; (3) activity of policy-makers, and any systematic interaction between the agents. Based on these variables actual risk levels can be identified.

The most influential agents for the CMM are (see also Figure 18): researchers (academic and non-academic) and media policy makers. Both can appear as primary agents (e.g., uncoordinated researchers, single politicians) or corporate agents (e.g., vested interest groups such as members of European Communication Research Association, higher education and research employer organisations, who shape the labour market and national research councils who decide on funding).

The analysis of ROs concerning the CMM starts with questions about the availability of academic (and non-academic) jobs with certain qualification criteria and the number of researchers in each country. Knowledge societies are generally witnessing continuous growth in numbers of both students and professors. The same applies to the Mediadecom sample countries, with the number of academic staff rising noticeably between 2005 and 2020, except in Romania (see Figure 11). The steepest rises have occurred in Greece and Hungary. There is no possibility to draw statistical conclusions about the expansion of the JMC research community as databases in most countries do not include JMC keywords. However, the bibliographic database enables us to draw the indirect conclusion that the increase in academic researchers approximately mirrors the general trend in R&D. In smaller countries, it is also possible to count the number of academic researchers who primarily focus on JMC research: in Estonia, it is from 30 to 40 (PhD students and retired researchers, with partly active professors also included); in Latvia, about 20; in Czechia about 50; in Slovakia and Bulgaria about 110; in Sweden about 250. In Greece, four JMC research organisations have an aggregate of more than 100 researchers. For large countries, the numbers presented in this study are based on expert estimates with Poland having about 600 researchers and Romania about 200.

There is insufficient information or data on the number of jobs for non-academic experts in JMC, therefore Mediadecom could not carry out analysis of this. It is only possible to acquire this data if non-academic corporate agents play an important role in processing a specific type of information. For example, public bodies in Sweden and Austria collect and process information about media economy and ownership; NGOs are important agents in knowledge creation in the field of media related competencies in Romania. Significant information on and



knowledge of mediascapes also comes from international agents (network, initiatives).

Detailed analysis of agents' motivation partly fell beyond the scope of Mediadelcom's empirical task. The project did not specifically gather data on risks and opportunities related to career models and working conditions (e.g. the attractiveness of an academic career) of journalism and media researchers. Hence, it is not possible to provide any comparative analysis of these risks in the Mediadelcom sample. However, the ROs relating to career models and working conditions have been the objects of academic interest in a variety of studies of academic careers. Janger et al. (2019) point out several aspects that influence the allure of an academic job: career prospects, salary, continuous performance-based employment contracts, a fair balance between teaching and research, and the acceptance rates of basic research grant proposals. Various types of financing motivate the research community to prioritise their activities, some of which are not reasonable. For example, an "increase in external grant funding – aimed at boosting incentives for scientific productivity – leads to full professors just writing grant proposals and employing lots of PhD-students who then don't have further career options" (Janger et al., 2019, p. 1005).

Another element directly linked to the CMM and risk levels is how the career model is a motivation to produce quality knowledge. Assessment of research usually involves the distinct metrics of publications (e.g., the ranking of journals in which the researcher publishes), the number of grants (received and involved in) and the total number of publications. Competency is therefore related to quality of research (quality indicators are usually related to international competitiveness and the visibility of individual researchers or research groups). The increased number of publications (a clear tendency that the Mediadelcom bibliographical database demonstrates) does not mean that the quality of research has increased. As Shin et al. (2003, p.144) explain, any "increased level of performance could be explained as the academics' strategic response – through increased co-authorship within university in this study". If the number of publications is overestimated by the assessment model (e.g., in Romania) the assessment and career system motivates researchers to publish many small-scale publications rather than focusing on large-scale projects. The first option would support the fragmentation of knowledge production, while the second is better for monitoring results.

As a general tendency in Europe the risks relating to working conditions in academia are increasing. In 2022, ECREA (European Communication, Research and Education Association) reported that the results of the organisation's 2022 survey (initiated by Thomas Hanitzsch and Henrik Bødker) suggest that media and communication scholars' mental health is alarmingly bad<sup>4</sup>. Research also shows that many countries and institutions report constantly increasing occupa-

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ecrea.eu/page-18206/12937355>

tional stress in academia on a global basis (e.g., see review articles by Shen & Slater, 2021; Watts & Robertson 2011). Academic stress has various causes, for example multiple roles (e.g. teaching, writing papers, seeking funding, administrative tasks, etc.) that end up in role conflict. For example, increased teaching duties because of diminished research productivity might affect further career possibilities, while a fair distribution of tasks between teaching and research would increase the allure of an academic career. Other stress-related factors include time pressure, heavy workloads, comparatively low salaries and unpredictable careers. Several of the above risk factors occurring simultaneously could increase risk to the sustainability of expert resources.

In sum, the risk of low CMM for human capital reasons could be extremely high if JMC research funding becomes predominantly project based. Unpredictable career prospects and poor working conditions (occupational stress and low salaries) are not balanced by factors that make an academic career desirable (e.g., academic freedom and autonomy, creative and stimulating work, environment and colleagues, clear career paths), meaning that academic careers become less popular. From the point of view of the CMM, the motivation system should direct individuals to maximise capabilities, skills and attitudes enabling them to achieve optimum quality and competitiveness in their subject area. As country size differs, a key concern should be the relative number of internationally recognised and competitive scholars (competitiveness here is the ability to get grants of a high standard and join high-quality research initiatives) in each country.

*Low-risk countries: Austria, Sweden,  
Germany, Italy and Croatia*

There is still a big difference between the 'old West' and the post-socialist countries, although there are also exceptions. Sweden, Austria, Germany and Italy do not report problems with the popularity of academic jobs. Their researchers are active internationally and get outstanding grants for various research projects. In Croatia, the internationally recognised research community consists of about 12 to 15 people. The Italian research community suffered reductions following the 2010 economic crisis, although since 2018 the situation has gradually improved. Reports do not show any tendencies that could create further risks.

*Medium-Risk Countries: Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece,  
Estonia, Romania And Slovakia*

The balance of risks and opportunities in this group varies. In the case of a small state and community of experts (such as Estonia), an inadequate human resources policy can significantly damage the expertise and competitiveness of the entire community, because a great deal depends on individual people.

While in Estonia the risks in terms of sustainability of the community of experts have increased in the second decade of the 21st century, in contrast in Czechia the capacity and number of academic communities has increased. Before 2010, academic publications were sporadic and authors were often foreign academics. Both in Estonia and in Czechia academic careers are mainly performance-based.

The international competitiveness of the expert community and the risks related to low state financing are quite similar in Estonia and Greece. In Greece, in the 1990s, many students went abroad to specialise in JMC, mainly to the US, UK and France, continuing their studies at postgraduate level, as is still the case. This has inspired some of them to conduct research on Greek media.

Greek and Estonian scholars are members of international networks, publish in international journals, and often conduct research within the framework of European projects, which have been particularly important in the domestic context of insufficient opportunities for funding. In Estonia, there are from 30 to 40 people involved in JMC research if we count retired professors and doctoral students studying journalism and media. SCOPUS shows that 20 of them have an h-index higher than 3, which indicates that this research community is relatively competitive.

In Estonia, the risk factor is increasing mainly due to project-based financing, which reduces career prospects in academia. In addition, since the introduction of free higher education in 2013, the total financing has decreased.

In Czechia, research and JMC education are established in three universities. Data is collected by the Czech statistical office and some research centres, NGOs and the media industry. Structural risk factors mainly emerge from competitive financing as academics are dependent on institutional funding for their research, which can cover only a small part of their needs (especially in large studies).

In Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia communities of researchers are large, but publications in the bibliographical database show mainly nationally oriented knowledge dissemination. Since these countries have several professional journals, this motivation is reasonable. However, the risk here relates to the low international competitiveness of the research community.

### *High-risk countries: Hungary and Latvia*

High risks associated with agents are country specific. In Hungary, the risk is related to the question of how much of the academic community can, and is motivated to, develop critical knowledge. Since 2010 the Hungarian higher education and research community have faced a gradual escalation in government pressure. The research community is mainly controlled by financing, with Hungary's grant agency under government control.

Agent-related risks in Latvia emerge because of the very small size of the research community (there are about 20 active researchers). Although Latvia and Estonia are comparable countries, there are fewer JMC researchers in Latvia, as between the early 1990s and second decade of the 21st century, funding of Latvian science was small and uncertain. Many JMC researchers devoted themselves to curriculum development and teaching, which weakened international competitiveness and in turn weakened possibilities for researchers to get funding (a reverse 'Matthew effect'). Unlike Estonia, the development of Latvia's research community has improved in recent years, although today the risk to both the sustainability and international competitiveness of the expert community is still high.

## MEDIASCAPE MONITORING GOVERNANCE

The final variable, 'monitoring governance', comprises the activities of policymakers in discussing and setting the research agenda (usually via the financing system and structural conditions) and knowledge production. The ROs in this area relate to all three of the above-mentioned conceptual variables (DIKW, structural conditions and agents). For example, if the DIKW analysis reveals that a certain country has large gaps or a lack of knowledge in some domains or subjects, this is probably because the research agenda has developed within the narrow framework of the research tradition, including the interests of individual investigators and the possibilities of funding. Society's need for news media-related knowledge is probably not discussed, defined or expressed.

From the point of view of the monitoring governance, it is important whether database search systems allow information about JMC studies and researchers to be found. What output the state expects from scientists and experts is also important, as is whether policy documents and career models clearly and unambiguously express the expectations of the state, and whether these expectations support the needs of democratic public communication culture.

Opportunities to monitor governance are better if the state is active in the systematic collection of basic information about news media. For example, through annual collection and publication of information about media usage, through the collection and update of media ownership information, through the collection and update of information on the education, status, remuneration and working conditions of journalists. Monitoring governance could be better supported by state-commissioned reports that assess trends in freedom of expression and of information, and the current status of the general public's media-related competences.

## *Low-risk countries Austria, Germany, Sweden and Poland*

Austria, Germany and Sweden represent the benchmark in monitoring governance, underlined by an active government role in agenda setting and information collection and processing. The symbiosis of state and research agents in these countries is advanced, and there is a robust system of checks, data archiving and knowledge dissemination.

In Austria, the Austrian Communications Authority (*KommAustria*) and the *Rundfunk und Telekom Regulierungs-GmbH (RTR)* publish regular reports on the financial situation and the usage of audiovisual media, as well as on other media-related studies. While RTR administers several funds that aim to increase the pluralism of broadcasting media and film productions, *KommAustria* also acts as a donor for Austrian print media. The Public Value Competence Center of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) encourages inclusivity and network-building between assorted monitoring agents. As an internal unit of a public broadcaster, the Center carries out continuous evaluation of the quality of ORF's media contents (e.g., through annual expert hearings), and publishes regular reports and a book series.<sup>5</sup>

The Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority (MPRT) was created to monitor the development of the media market and to govern the implementation of media policy tools, such as issuing broadcasting permits, administration of press subsidies and industry governance. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) is a public agency that produces regular reports and books on media performance and newsroom work during societal crises and distortions. The Swedish government instals either or both parliamentary and expert commissions that have the task of making inquiries into various aspects of the media market. Between 2000 and 2020, Swedish governments have appointed 102 of these commissions for public inquiries. The Nordicom centre (at Gothenburg University) has been collecting and publishing statistics as well as books, reports and newsletters relevant for all domains. Various organisations monitor media consumption, which indicates that there is public access to the majority of the information.<sup>6</sup>

In Germany,<sup>7</sup> research and monitoring structures are well-established, but can be regionally diverse in areas that are within the competencies of the federal states. This is the case with press-related law, regulation and monitoring of private broadcasting, education, and a large part of the public broadcasting system. Mechanisms to synchronise and coordinate activities on the national level are in place, such as the media authorities' joint efforts to collect and interpret data sources with the aim of monitoring media pluralism. Federal Commission on

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<sup>5</sup> See the Austrian country report, <https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius006>

<sup>6</sup> See the Swedish country report, <https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0019>

<sup>7</sup> See the German country report, <https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0011>

Concentration in the Media (KEK) databases and publications are the prime example of this effort.

Polish monitoring governance is characterised by high activity in the 21st century. First, there has been a discussion on the shift towards data-driven media and the de-westernisation of Polish JMC studies. Until the establishment of the Polish Communication Association in 2007, JMC research was linked to other disciplines, and in 2011 the Ministry of Science and Higher Education finally recognised JMC as an autonomous discipline. Data on scholarly achievements are collected via POLON, an integrated Information Network covering Polish science alongside the Polish Scientific Database (PBN), which covers scholars and their career paths, research interests, publications and participation in research grants.

### *Medium-risk countries Bulgaria, Czechia, Croatia, Italy and Slovakia*

For this group of countries, the activity of policymakers has gradually increased in the 21st century in terms of JMC research. However, risks are expressed in specific problems (completely absent, or considerable gaps in knowledge) resulting from the scant attention of policymakers to the research agenda, or the inadequacy of financing JMC studies. Most of these countries (except Bulgaria and Croatia) report a lack of cooperation between actors who generate data, information and knowledge.

In Bulgaria and Slovakia, the structural conditions (number of organisations and journals) are sufficient. Knowledge production is aimed at the national audience, which may partly result from the existence of many JMC academic journals in national languages. However, unlike Poland, the Bulgarian and Slovakian country reports do not indicate there is any public debate on the research agenda, the quality of the research or important decisions in these areas.

Czechia illustrates how small developments (growth of academic community, better financing opportunities) accumulated into a developmental leap after 2010. Nevertheless, the reason for the ongoing thematic heterogeneity of DIKW is related to the lack of systematic strategy in JMC research compounded by the monetisation of access to media industry data rendering it publicly unavailable, and the low interest in, and inactivity of policymakers on, research governance. The risks to good research governance are also related to insufficient connections between individual and corporate agents, as sharing information and data is non-transparent, and often non-existent. Furthermore, insufficient and unstable state funding also hinders the advancement of large-scale regular research on JMC, and there seems to be no strategy to solve the problem.

Italy and Croatia, in this group, have specific ROs concerning the monitoring governance.

In Italy, potential ROs emerge from the contrast between sufficient structural conditions, agents' activities and the low performance of research governance. In addition to the large number of academic institutions that provide JMC education and research there are two important corporate agents, both Italian (the Communications Regulatory Authority and the National Research Council) collecting and verifying information on broadcast ownership. These agents also distribute information provided by scientific departments<sup>8</sup> and monitor thousands of newspapers, magazines and journals, as well as television and radio programs. Simultaneously, there is a noticeable lack of knowledge in various domains, resulting from the lack of cooperation between research institutions.<sup>9</sup>

In Croatia, structural conditions are almost sufficient, while the lack of and gaps in knowledge seem to emanate from strong disciplinary traditions close to political science and sociology. While the institutionalisation of JMC studies as a separate academic discipline has yet to be wholly fulfilled, there is little monetisation of access to data as some market research agencies are open to share their research on request.

### *High-risk countries Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Romania*

In the group of high-risk countries, the governments' role is passive in both collecting systematic information on changes in mediascapes and setting the research agenda via efficient financing models. This group's knowledge production is characterised by reliance on the EU and global research and monitoring agents, international research collaborations and international funding. The risk level is considered high mainly because the country reports describe some risks relating to structural conditions or human resources and there is no indication of any turn or change that would signify an increase in attention. In Estonia, the state's interest in JMC studies has declined since 2014.

In Hungary, the government actively controls knowledge production and is not interested in wisdom-based media governance. However, the academic sector operated relatively independently until 2021, when most universities in the country were taken over by foundations run by boards of people close to the government. The abolition of these so-called "public interest asset management foundations" would also be problematic for a future newly elected government. Due to the unstable legal status of these foundations, the universities concerned are excluded from the EU's financed research programs (Horizon and Erasmus).

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<sup>8</sup> <https://almanacco.cnr.it/>

<sup>9</sup> See the Italian country report, <https://doi.org/10.58009/aere-perennius0014>

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## CONCLUSIONS

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# A pathway to wisdom-based media governance

Halliki Harro-Loit

The central idea of this book is the concept and method of evaluating the capability of monitoring mediascapes (CMM). From the outset we have argued that CMM is needed to develop evidence-based media policy into wisdom-based media governance.

Evidence-based media policy has been criticised for several reasons. For example, Adrian Pabst (2021, p. 88) points out that “...evidence is complex and contested, which limits its applicability to policy-making in a partisan political context”. Arndt et al. (2020, pp. 216–218) argue that barriers to evidence-based policy are created by the varied approaches that governments and researchers apply to policymaking: assorted timeframes, conflicting objectives among stakeholders, the determinants of academic advancement being skewed towards publishing records.

These aspects indicate a situation in which critical questions need to be asked in the context of transformation and crisis concerning mediascapes in European countries. Is existing knowledge sufficient and responsive enough to the questions needed for policy making? Or, as mentioned above, is the problem rooted in the varied perceptions of policymakers and researchers of how to develop evidence-based media policies, and on their motivations to do so?

While the number of research papers on JMC has been increasing, the risks to pro-democracy communication (e.g. decreasing freedom of expression and of the press, the spread of populism, etc.) have also increased in many European countries. Policy directives at EU level are reactive rather than proactive. As crises and their courses cannot be foreseen, a reactive media policy is inevitable. However, the more evidence-based knowledge is gathered on the sustainability of journalism, people's media repertoires and their resistance to propaganda, the mechanisms of action of agents repressing freedom of expression, media market dynamics, etc., the more hope there is that potential risks will be spotted. Thus,

gathering and availability of high quality and relevant knowledge is one prerequisite for a proactive media policy.

However, one of the main findings of the Mediadecom research project is that, although evidence-based policy should be based on knowledge, it tends to be incomplete especially in post-socialist countries, in which the risks to deliberative communication are higher. Our research identified several detrimental factors such as areas of data fragmentation, knowledge overproduction, diachronic discontinuity, lack of resources both human and funding and the lack of interest in methodological change.

We can identify seven indications and causes of problems that hinder the quality and relevance of existing knowledge for the analysis of mediascape risks.

- Monitoring mediascapes generally lags behind media developments. The collection of longitudinal data primarily encompasses traditional media sectors and often overlooks emerging areas of interest. Realigning and adapting the data acquisition of longstanding research bodies to fluctuating media landscapes can pose considerable challenges.
- The expansion of the volume of academic publications combined with the constriction of their scope due to project-based financing complicates the observation of long-term changes in news media and society.
- Media monitoring is often uncoordinated and random, meaning that data in some areas overlap and are over-exposed, while other issues and media sectors are neglected and have not received sufficient academic interest.
- In the academic tradition of the JMC, little value is placed on review publications. Their help is essential: to critically monitor research approaches, to evaluate the results of empirical studies with various methodologies across countries and to obtain overviews of methodologies and concepts in an optimal time frame. The production of such publications, which requires extensive synthesis and analysis, is a demanding and time-consuming process and would therefore require additional motivation for researchers.
- In countries where the research policies and academic career systems were mainly established in the 1990s and later, the ability of scholars to compete at the international level today is weak.
- Monitoring the implementation of freedoms of both expression and information at a daily level has not been sufficiently empirically studied. Therefore, at the level of nation states it is difficult to determine which stakeholders are under the strongest pressure and how they can efficiently be empowered.
- The various aspects of journalism sustainability are under-researched at the level of nation states. There are particularly large information gaps in the areas of journalists' accountability, competencies and working conditions.

- The monitoring capability of media usage in less affluent countries is influenced by business logic, concentrating data collection in areas with significant commercial appeal, i.e., in which financial investments are made. In the context of people's use of the media, the main problem is not the lack of data, but the lack of public access. While the private sector is interested in collecting data on what consumers do with media content, the public needs to know what kind of media spaces citizens live in, what their media repertoires are and what sources they trust.
- The layperson's knowledge of media competencies is fragmented. Country reports point to three reasons for this. Firstly, media literacy research is conducted by scholars from various disciplines. For example, sociologists study media use as well as the competencies of different groups, pedagogical researchers study the effectiveness of media literacy teaching and teachers' media literacy, media researchers focus on critical news analysis skills. Secondly, the discipline itself is very loosely defined (e.g. media literacy, digital literacy, news media literacy, etc.). Thirdly, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between studies that measure the media literacy of different groups, and projects that can be defined as media literacy promotion initiatives. Unless a country's database allows for a comprehensive keyword-based search of research, projects and researchers, it is extremely difficult to get an overview of what new developments have occurred in the field of media literacy.

An important prerequisite for proactive policy making is the practical application of the available knowledge. Wisdom-based governance differs from evidence-based media policy because it exploits monitoring governance and benefits from CMM. There are three important aspects worth emphasising: (1) CMM guides stakeholders to formulate jointly the problems, and their reasons, which need to be monitored in an evidence-based way. This dialogue takes time, but reduces the barriers identified by Arndt et al. (2020) and Pabst (2021). (2) CMM is a long-term and ongoing process. Accumulated knowledge of the mediascape allows researchers to formulate research questions more precisely. Indicators developed and used over a longer time will allow trends to be analysed and potential risks to be assessed. (3) If public organisations are involved in managing cooperation between monitoring agents, they can enhance synergy between various stakeholders in the media sector. In Sweden and Austria, for instance, public organisations have an obligation to support or arrange cooperation between monitoring agents.

These principles are essential in fostering an environment that upholds the knowledge mobilisation (using the paradigm proposed by Durrant et al., 2023) of the EU media landscapes of the 21st century. However, research tends to be carried out in an uncoordinated and sporadic manner, resulting in overlapping and over-exposed information and knowledge in some sectors, while leaving others underrepresented or neglected.

In the small CEE countries, the way of financing JMC studies appears to produce a risk if there is a parallel increase in the number of publications and the number of researchers, and consequently the fragmentation of research results. Such tendencies raise questionable issues concerning funding: Do we know the real return on the investment that comes from public research funds? What would be the adequate size for a grant to support large-scale studies? Where there are limited financial resources, it is particularly important to avoid 'blind funding' to reduce decision-making costs. Funding should support the JMC studies that align better with the needs of both society and science policy.

A good CMM allows for the development of wisdom-based media governance. In the context of the Medielcom project, wisdom is defined as agents' accumulation of experience and knowledge. Wisdom also presupposes orientation towards learning from others. Hence, the pathway to enhanced wisdom-based media governance requires a focus on cooperative engagement, mutual learning and a shared commitment to transparent, accountable and value-driven mediascapes. Value-driven means there is an agreed normative basis for shaping communication culture. Medielcom's approach suggests the normative basis could be the concept of deliberative communication.

Although achieving wisdom-based media governance might in theory seem simple, in practice according to our qualitative meta-analysis, it requires a long time and the overcoming of a number of challenges and barriers. However, in the era of information overload, wisdom-based media governance becomes increasingly important. The risks could be turned into opportunities by using the following strategies: (1) Introduce a network-based policy of financing JMC research as well as setting a research agenda that takes into consideration a country's needs. (2) Focus on the challenges of information overload and addressing the increasing quantity of publications. (3) Create mechanisms to help motivate agents (academics, media organisations, politicians, etc.) to dig deeper into existing knowledge, critically evaluate it and reflect on its use along with the production of new knowledge. (4) Establish regularly used open mechanisms for data and information collection outside academia. Cultivating analytical expertise in the public sector would support the creation of knowledge that is less influenced by the individual ambitions of academic researchers.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1. Background data on 14 EU countries

| Country  | No. of inhabitants <sup>1</sup> | GDP <sup>2</sup> | % of broadband households <sup>3</sup> | HDI <sup>4</sup> |
|----------|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------|
| Austria  | 9.006.398                       | 406.148,7        | 91                                     | 0,916            |
| Bulgaria | 6.948.445                       | 71.077,0         | 84                                     | 0,795            |
| Croatia  | 4.105.267                       | 58.254,1         | 86                                     | 0,858            |
| Czechia  | 10.708.981                      | 238.238,2        | 89                                     | 0,889            |
| Estonia  | 1.326.535                       | 31.444,9         | 91                                     | 0,890            |
| Germany  | 83.783.942                      | 3.601.750,0      | 89                                     | 0,942            |
| Greece   | 10.423.054                      | 181.674,6        | 85                                     | 0,887            |
| Hungary  | 9.660.351                       | 153.758,7        | 91                                     | 0,846            |
| Italy    | 60.461.826                      | 1.782.050,4      | 88                                     | 0,895            |
| Latvia   | 1.886.198                       | 33.695,9         | 89                                     | 0,863            |
| Poland   | 37.846.611                      | 574.771,8        | 92                                     | 0,876            |
| Romania  | 19.237.691                      | 240.154,0        | 88                                     | 0,821            |
| Slovakia | 5.459.642                       | 98.523,0         | 90                                     | 0,848            |
| Sweden   | 10.099.265                      | 537.309,7        | 91                                     | 0,947            |

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/population/countries-in-the-eu-by-population/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TEC00001/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=e3030c9f-8b66-48ae-b1be-43199d1060eb>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TIN00073/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=16047e4f-35b7-419c-8094-4e237cbe9366>

<sup>4</sup> <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>

Table 2. Domains, conceptual and operational variables of the four domains

| Domain                                           | Conceptual variables                         | Operational variables                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Journalism</b>                                | Market conditions                            | ownership diversity, foreign interests, labour market, news media income, and regional and local journalism                                                                                                 |
|                                                  | Production conditions                        | digitalisation, investigative resources, and foreign offices/ correspondent                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                  | Public service media conditions              | autonomy and financing                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                                  | Working conditions                           | employment conditions and satisfaction, threats/harassment/hate against journalists, education and training, and clear manifestation of commercialisation                                                   |
|                                                  | Organisational conditions                    | workforce diversity                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                  | Professional culture                         | issues of ethics and autonomy                                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                                  | Journalistic competencies                    | journalistic roles, journalistic values, knowledge and ability, skills and practices, and discrepancy between normative ideals and the practice                                                             |
| <b>Legal and ethical regulation of the media</b> | Freedom of speech                            | Defamation, disinformation, protection of personal data, protection of copyright.                                                                                                                           |
|                                                  | Freedom of information                       | access to information/ documents, protection of journalistic sources, protection of whistleblowing, ownership transparency                                                                                  |
|                                                  | Accountability systems                       | professional, market, public, political, international accountability                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Media user's competencies</b>                 | Users' cognitive abilities                   | rational argumentation in public communication, critical consideration of information, authenticity of communication, knowledge and understanding of contexts of communication, digital skills and literacy |
|                                                  | Users' communication competencies            | self-expression ability, ability to listen, and ability to communicate in an assertive manner                                                                                                               |
|                                                  | Users' skills                                | use of media and media technology, skills of protecting one's privacy and personal data                                                                                                                     |
|                                                  | Users' ethical capabilities                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                  | Social context of media related competencies | media competencies of teachers and other socio-demographic groups                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Media usage patterns</b>                      | Characteristics of the media                 | access to media and diversity in media systems, functionalities of the media, quality of news media, trust in the media, and media literacy policies                                                        |
|                                                  | Media users' preferences                     | access to the media, channel preferences, relevance of news media, trust, relevance of public service media                                                                                                 |

Table 3. EU and global monitoring projects monitoring JMC and democracy. The table contains information available from public sources, however there are some information gaps because of inconsistency.

| Name of the project                                                            | Range of countries                                                            | Frequency & duration (annual, repeated at intervals, longitudinal, etc.) | Organisations funding/or conducting the study           | Methodology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | About what                                                             | Access and link                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| World Press Freedom Index                                                      | 180 countries worldwide                                                       | Annual                                                                   | NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF)                     | Online questionnaire fulfilled by the expert panel. Each country or territory's score is evaluated using five contextual indicators that reflect the press freedom situation in all of its complexity: political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context and safety. A qualitative analysis of the situation in each country or territory based on the responses of press freedom specialists (including journalists, researchers, academics and human rights defenders) to RSF questionnaire. The aim is to compare levels of press freedom enjoyed by journalists and the media                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                        | <a href="https://rsf.org/en/index">https://rsf.org/en/index</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Media Sustainability Index/The Vibrant Information Barometer (VIBE) since 2021 | 80 countries across the world 2022, 18 countries (the risk countries, not EU) | Annual                                                                   | The International Research and Exchanges Board's (IREX) | VIBE aims to describe entire countries' information experts from the country's media outlets, NGOs, professional associations, polling firms, and academic institutions participate in panel discussions. This may include editors, reporters, media managers or owners, advertising and marketing specialists, pollsters, lawyers, professors or teachers, or human rights observers. Prior to the panel discussion, panelists will each complete a VIBE questionnaire made up of 20 indicators (5 per principle) that capture the most important elements of the four VIBE principles. Each panel of up to 15 panelists per country will be conducted by a moderator who will themselves be experts in the media and information landscape of the country. Four principles are assessed (highly vibrant, somewhat slightly, slightly vibrant, not all vibrant: information quality; multiple channels; consumption and engagement; transformative action). Scoring System Each indicator is broken into clear sub-indicators which panelists will score individually on the VIBE scale. Sub-indicators will be averaged to make the indicator score. | The aim is to provide analysis of the conditions for independent media | <a href="https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/Vibrant_Information_Barometer_2022.pdf">https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/Vibrant_Information_Barometer_2022.pdf</a><br><a href="https://www.irex.org/resource/vibrant-information-barometer-vibe">https://www.irex.org/resource/vibrant-information-barometer-vibe</a> |

|                                                      |                                                                                                    |                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The Media Pluralism Monitor</p>                   | <p>32 European countries (EU 27 plus Albania, Montenegro, North-Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey).</p> | <p>2014<br/>2015<br/>2016<br/>2017<br/>2019<br/>2020<br/>2021<br/>2022</p> | <p>The Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF) at the European University Institute</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Prior to the 2021 implementation, the tool has been implemented in 2020, 2017, 2016, and tested under two pilot-projects co-funded by the European Union in 2014 and 2015. The study uses various public sources and expert interviews. Based on 20 indicators, summarizing 200 variables, covering four areas: fundamental protection, market plurality, political independence, and social inclusiveness, pluralism and, therefore, having a holistic perspective.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>The Media Pluralism Monitor is a research project that assesses the health of media ecosystems in Europe, highlighting threats to media pluralism and media freedom in the European Union's Member States and candidate countries.</p> | <p><a href="https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/">https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/</a></p> |
| <p>Digital News Report.</p> <p>Reuters Institute</p> | <p>20 EU countries + Norway</p>                                                                    | <p>Annual</p>                                                              | <p>Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University<br/>BBC News, Google, Ofcom, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, the Dutch Media Authority (CvdM), the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, the Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway, the Korea Press Foundation, Edeleman UK, as well as our academic sponsors at the Hans Bredow Institute, the University of Navarra, the University of Canberra, the Centre d'études sur les médias, Québec, Canada, and Roskilde University in Denmark.</p> | <p>This survey deals with news consumption, has filtered out anyone who said that they had not consumed any news in the past month, in order to ensure that irrelevant responses didn't adversely affect data quality.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Media usage 2022 report reveals digital news consumption based on a YouGov survey of over 93,000 online news consumers in 46 markets covering half of the world's population.</p>                                                      | <p><a href="https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/">https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/</a></p>                     |
| <p>The Worlds of Journalism</p>                      | <p>First wave: 21 countries<br/>Second wave: 67<br/>Third wave: more than 110</p>                  | <p>Three waves<br/>2007–2011<br/>2012–2016<br/>2021–2023</p>               | <p>Network of different academic organizations and researchers</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>WJS3 will proceed in four steps, each of which forms a research module built around specific methodological aims. These include a Structural Module, a Survey Module, an Analysis Module, and a Dissemination Module. The minimal required sample size will be calculated, according to statistical conventions, based on a confidence level of 95% and a level of sampling precision ("sampling error") of not more than 5% (teams are encouraged to stay within a 3% maximum sampling error). All national samples should provide reasonable representations of the populations of journalists in the investigated countries. WJS3 conducted in four steps, each consisting of a research module built around specific methodological objectives (Structural module, survey module, analysis module and dissemination module. All national samples should adequately represent the populations of journalists in the countries under study.</p> | <p>Journalists' perception of autonomy, roles, ethics, different kinds of risks and uncertainties in journalism etc.</p>                                                                                                                  | <p>Public access to results and data – after embargo period</p>                                                |



| Name of the project                                                     | Range of countries                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Frequency & duration (annual; repeated at intervals; longitudinal, etc.) | Organisations funding/or conducting the study                                                                                                                                              | Methodology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | About what                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Access and link                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists | 48 countries over the world (Russia, Belarus included)                                                                                                                                                                       | Annual — since 2015                                                      | 15 international NGOs and associations of journalists are partners to the Platform.                                                                                                        | Alerts are submitted by the partner organisations. Alerts are notified to the national authorities, who are invited to REPLY, detailing preventive, protective or remedial action taken to address the threat. An alert may be labelled as PROGRESS when positive developments are recorded and as RESOLVED if the threat ceases to exist or has been remedied. | The aim is to document serious alerts of journalists and media freedom in Europe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <a href="https://from.coe.int/en/delete">https://from.coe.int/en/delete</a>                                                                                                                     |
| The Media for Democracy Monitor                                         | 2011: Australia, Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.<br>2021: Belgium (Flanders), Canada, Chile, Denmark, Greece, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, and South Korea. | 2011<br>2021                                                             | Nordic Council of Ministers, Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (NORDICOM)                                                                                     | Nordicom follows and analyses media development in Sweden and the Nordic countries. Nordicom presents statistics and facts — all freely available on website. Nordicom also conducts the Swedish Media Barometer survey.                                                                                                                                        | Based on a root concept of democracy and several empirical indicators, the Media for Democracy Monitor (MDM) delivers a panorama of the news media's performance regarding freedom, equality, and control across several countries. In 2011, the MDM analysed 10 democracies. Ten years later, it covers 18 countries worldwide and pinpoints essential strengths and weaknesses during this decade of digitalisation. | <a href="https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/publications/media-democracy-monitor-2021">https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/publications/media-democracy-monitor-2021</a>                                   |
| EU Kids Online                                                          | About 34 countries                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 2006–2009<br>2009–2011<br>2011–2014<br>2014–2021                         | Led by the London School of Economics                                                                                                                                                      | Survey, interviews.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | EU Kids Online is a multinational research network. It seeks to enhance knowledge of European children's online opportunities, risks and safety. It uses multiple methods to map children's and parents' experiences of the internet, in dialogue with national and European policy stakeholders.                                                                                                                      | <a href="https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/eu-kids-online">https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/eu-kids-online</a> |
| The Media Ownership Monitor (global)                                    | 22 non-EU states                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                          | Global Media Registry — owns and operates the Media Ownership Monitor as a public utility and implements it in partnership within a network of like-minded partner organisations globally. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | The project monitors the ownership outside EU                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <a href="https://www.mom-gmr.org/en/about/gmr/">https://www.mom-gmr.org/en/about/gmr/</a>                                                                                                       |

|                                |                        |                                                     |                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Media Literacy Index       | 41 countries in Europe | 2017–2023                                           | European Policies Initiative (EuPI) of Open Society Institute – Sofia Foundation (OSI-Sofia) supported by a grant from Open Society Foundations (OSFs)        | The MLI model employs several indicators that correspond to different aspects related to media literacy and the post-truth phenomena. Level of education, state of the media, trust in society, and the usage of new tools of participation seem to be the predictors of media literacy. The media freedom and education indicators carry the most weight, with the most importance in education attributed to reading literacy, while trust and e-participation indicators weigh the less. The index converts the data into standardized scores (z-scores) from 0 to 100 (lowest to highest) and ranks the countries from 1 to 41 (highest to lowest position) | Finland with 74 points is first in the ranking (out of 41). It is followed closely by Denmark with 73 points in 2nd place, Norway with 72 points in 3rd place.                                                                                                                                             | <a href="https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-English-22.06.pdf">https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-English-22.06.pdf</a> |
| EuroOmo                        | 27 EU states           | From 2020                                           | Euromedia Research Group (EMRG). Financed by the European Commission and coordinated by the University of Salzburg coordinated by the University of Salzburg. | Based on documents + expert assessments from individual countries can decide on the proportion of representation of regional and national media. The same applies to the selection of newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and online sources, ensuring they respect the specificities of each country. Every sector should be represented. Data shall be collected from publicly available sources.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Monitors media ownership transparency in 27 European countries, introduces a Risk Index at the country level.                                                                                                                                                                                              | <a href="https://media-ownership.eu/">https://media-ownership.eu/</a>                                                                                         |
| Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) | 202 countries          | 1789 to 2023                                        | Host Institution: University of Gothenburg                                                                                                                    | Questionnaire (about 400 scholars). Provides dataset free of charge. The Historical V-Dem project collects data for numerous indicators of democracy and other institutional features, from before the French Revolution to the early twentieth century                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Reflects the complexity of the concept of democracy by measuring also media censorship, media corruption, harassment of journalists, or Internet penetration                                                                                                                                               | <a href="https://v-dem.net/">https://v-dem.net/</a>                                                                                                           |
| Eurobarometer surveys          | EU                     | Established in 1974<br>It is conducted twice a year | Commissioned by the European Parliament                                                                                                                       | Eurobarometer surveys may employ different methodological approaches, depending on the type or topic of the survey. Each survey publication contains technical specifications and explanations on the methodology and sample size used in each of the countries or territories surveyed, as well as information on confidence levels.Face-to-face, telephone, online.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Eurobarometer is the polling instrument used by the European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. | <a href="https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home">https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home</a>                                                         |

| Name of the project                    | Range of countries                                                                                                          | Frequency & duration (annual, repeated at intervals, longitudinal, etc.)                                                               | Organisations funding/or conducting the study                                                                          | Methodology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | About what                                                                                                                             | Access and link                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The European Broadcasting Union (EBU)  | 112 member organisations in 56 countries and have an additional 30 Associates in Asia, Africa, Australasia and the Americas | Annual from 2011                                                                                                                       | Most of the members are from EU                                                                                        | The methodology used for the EBU annual report typically involves a combination of data collection, surveys, and research. Nearly 2,000 television, radio and online channels and services, and offer a wealth of content across other platforms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Provides an overview of industry cross-media measurement developments advertising, public service and other annual or biannual reports | <a href="https://www.ebu.ch/home">https://www.ebu.ch/home</a><br>Most of the reports are from only or the members                                         |
| Democracy Index                        | 167 countries                                                                                                               | The first was published in 2006, next every two years until 2010 and next annually thereafter.                                         |                                                                                                                        | The index is based on 60 indicators grouped in five categories, measuring pluralism, civil liberties, and political culture. In addition to a numeric score and a ranking, the index categorizes each country into one of four regime types: full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. produces a weighted average based on the answers to 60 questions, each one with either two or three permitted answers.<br><br>Most of the answers are expert opinions and it is not stated how many or what experts were involved. Some answers are based on public surveys in each country. Where survey data does not exist for a country, the gap is filled by results from comparable countries and expert opinion. | This index attempts to measure the state of democracy and is centrally concerned with political institutions and freedoms.             | Public access <a href="https://www.eiu.com/ny/campaigns/democracy-index-2022/">https://www.eiu.com/ny/campaigns/democracy-index-2022/</a>                 |
| Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) |                                                                                                                             | Every five years since 1995 and annual reports since 2023. Our work at a glance ( <a href="http://waccglobal.org">waccglobal.org</a> ) | WACC carries out this work in partnership with UN Women, UNESCO, and the Global Alliance on Gender and Media (GAMAG).  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                        | <a href="https://waccglobal.org/our-work/global-media-monitoring-project-gmmp/">https://waccglobal.org/our-work/global-media-monitoring-project-gmmp/</a> |
| Baltic Media Health Check              | Estonia<br>Latvia<br>Lithuania                                                                                              | Annual                                                                                                                                 | Baltic Centre for Investigative Journalism Re: Baltica in collaboration with the Centre for Media Studies at SSE Riga. | Journalistic study that analyses trends, finances and issues of importance in the Baltic media markets.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                        | <a href="https://mediacentre.sse.riga.edu/baltic-media-health-check/">https://mediacentre.sse.riga.edu/baltic-media-health-check/</a>                     |
| The Beacon Project                     | More than 40 partners in west and central Europe                                                                            | Since 2022                                                                                                                             | International Republican Institute                                                                                     | Analysis of data from online media in multiple Central and Eastern European countries to track key narratives that have the potential to weaken support for Ukraine.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Beacon Project developed a unique proprietary media monitoring tool for online media content of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)       | <a href="https://www.iribeaconproject.org/">https://www.iribeaconproject.org/</a>                                                                         |

|                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Media Responsibility Index (MRI)</p>               | <p>Bi-annual MRI was created in 2020</p> <p>IPG Mediabrands (media and marketing solutions division of Interpublic Group).</p>                                                            | <p>More than 150 major media brands are surveyed (Social Media, Broadcast &amp; Cable, Connected TV, Online Video, and Display). The Media Responsibility Index (MRI), an initiative that strives to raise media and marketing industry awareness and standards around harm reduction for brands and consumers in brand and consumer safety priorities into their investment decision-making for a variety of media types, from the largest global social platforms to local broadcast media outlets.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Addresses problems of social media platforms to acknowledge, measure and reduce the harmful effect their practices were having on consumers and brands.</p> <p>No public access</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>The Safe Journalists Index</p>                     | <p>Annual, since 2016</p> <p>7 countries: Serbia, Croatia, Monte Negro, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia</p> <p>Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia.</p>      | <p>The methodologies used for data collection and analysis were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative Documents Analysis (QDA): research studies and analyses produced by other research organisations, academia, NGOs, individual researchers etc.; official documents produced by public institutions (legal acts, by-laws, strategies, annual reports, minutes from meetings, press releases) and media coverage (texts, articles, news reports and other published materials).</li> <li>Qualitative interviews - 9 interviews (journalists, lawyers, media experts, representatives of public institutions or NGOs).</li> <li>Official statistics requested from public institutions or collected from available websites or from other published sources.</li> <li>Survey with 242 journalists, conducted as a part of the project 'Media for Human Rights 3', financed by the European Union.</li> </ul> | <p>The Safe Journalists Index is an annual ranking of countries compiled and published by Safe Journalists experts based upon the organisation's own assessment of the countries' press freedom records in the previous year. The project allowed partners to form an informal network and build own capacities to monitor levels of media freedoms and safety of journalists, resulting in an online database of attacks against journalists and annual national and biannual regional (comparative) reports.</p> <p><a href="https://safejournalists.net/safety-index/">https://safejournalists.net/safety-index/</a></p> |
| <p>European Public Accountability Index (EuroPAM)</p> | <p>2012</p> <p>2015</p> <p>2016</p> <p>2017</p> <p>2020</p> <p>34 countries</p> <p>EuroPAM is an extension of the Public Accountability Mechanisms Initiative (PAM) of the World Bank</p> | <p>The EuroPAM database includes the following countries: Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Experts assess the relevant laws, 48 indicators (questions).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>One aspect among other is freedom of information. The EuroPAM database is part of an EU-funded digital whistleblowing project (DIGWHIST) that aims to improve trust in governments and efficiency of public spending across Europe.</p> <p><a href="https://www.europam.eu/">https://www.europam.eu/</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>European Social Survey</p>                         | <p>Every other 2 years</p> <p>39 (but depends on data collection rounds)</p> <p>Financed by participating countries</p>                                                                   | <p>Used to face to face survey, but during 2021 data collection different methods were used. Data collection method will be recompleation in future.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>Some surveys of ESS contain questions about media use.</p> <p><a href="https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/">https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/</a></p> <p>Open access database</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

| Name of the project                         | Range of countries                               | Frequency & duration (annual; repeated at intervals; longitudinal, etc.) | Organisations funding/or conducting the study                                                                                                                | Methodology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | About what                                                                                                                                                                                 | Access and link                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trust in media in Europe – statsits & facts | 28 countries                                     | 2021, 2022                                                               |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Share of respondents who tended to trust the written press, internet, television, radio in countries in the European Union Trust                                                           | Statista<br><a href="https://www.statista.com/topics/3303/trust-in-media-in-europe/#topic">https://www.statista.com/topics/3303/trust-in-media-in-europe/#topic</a><br>Overview, registration and payment. Only very basic data is freely accessible |
| Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)    | 27 EU states, but not all countries provide data | Annual since 2014                                                        | Financed by EU                                                                                                                                               | Most of the data in the DESI have been collected by the national statistical offices or by Eurostat, by the national regulatory authorities (by data experts appointed by the members of the Communications Committee in every Member State. Several European companies carry out surveys and document analysis.                                                                                                                     | Summarised indicators on Europe's digital performance and tracked the progress of EU countries.                                                                                            | Open access                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| State Media Monitor                         | 157                                              | Since 2004, updated yearly                                               | State Media Monitor is a project of the Media and Journalism Research Center, a research institute that specializes in carrying out media research globally. | Overall, since 2004, a team of 625 researchers participated in collecting data that have been used to create this database, through a spate of research projects including Television Across Europe, Mapping Digital Media and the ongoing Media Influence Matrix.<br><a href="https://statemediamonitor.com/methodology/">https://statemediamonitor.com/methodology/</a>                                                            | The aim is to provide classification of state media according to three key factors that affect the independence of the state media: funding, ownership/governance, and editorial autonomy. | <a href="https://statemediamonitor.com/">https://statemediamonitor.com/</a>                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Media freedom in V4 countries               | Slovakia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland (V4)          | 2022                                                                     | MEDIAN is a stable research agency with a long tradition in the field of market research, media and public opinion.                                          | The survey was carried out on 4 069 respondents aged 18+ and was evenly distributed among the populations of Slovakia, Hungary, Czechia and Poland. It was conducted in the first half of February and was mediated through online forms, face-to-face and telephone interviews. The main question of the survey was whether the participants think that the media is really free and not influenced by the government of the state. | The aim is the analysis of the state of media freedom in the V4 countries                                                                                                                  | <a href="https://mediafreedompoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Media-Freedom-Poll-V4-2022.pdf">https://mediafreedompoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Media-Freedom-Poll-V4-2022.pdf</a>                                                          |

Media Freedom  
Rapid Response

Since 2020

European Centre for Press and Media Freedom. The MFRF is organised by a consortium led by the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), the International Press Institute (IPI) and Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Trans-europa (OBCT). The project is co-funded by the European Commission.

FRR have a system to monitor global events and developments that could pose risks to human rights defenders and civil society activists. This includes keeping an eye on political changes, legal developments, and incidents of harassment or violence against such individuals.

The Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRF) Tracks monitors and reacts to violations of press and media freedom in EU Member States and Candidate Countries.

<https://www.mfrf.eu/>

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## Monitoring Mediascapes A Premise of Wisdom-Based EU Media Governance

Seldom in the era of the convoluted Gordian knot of mediatised societies has a theoretical concept emerged that has the potential to cut through the tangle of information, misinformation and disinformation. Seldom have theoretical concepts allowed academia and media policymakers to trumpet EUREKA!

In the era of mediatised societies simultaneously experiencing information overload and scarcity of truthful and reliable information, societal potential for deliberative communication becomes more important than ever.

A central proposition of this book is that contemporary democratic societies ought to create a resilient communication culture to strengthen European democracy. Proactive, wisdom-based media governance is proposed to mitigate the risks for deliberative communication resulting from media transformations. The novelty of this book is the methodology for detecting those emerging risks through regularly analysing and assessing each country's capability of monitoring their mediascapes.

This monitoring of mediascapes means asking critical questions, such as: What exactly is known about the consequences of media transformations producing risks for deliberative communication and consequently, democracy? What is the worth of this knowledge (or What is this knowledge worth)? What knowledge is not known and where are the information gaps? This book focuses on the capability of a sample of 14 EU countries to collect relevant data, carry out research and analysis and finally assess the risks and opportunities associated with media development in terms of the societies' potential for deliberative communication.

To turn the risks into opportunities, three strategies can be used: (1) setting a research agenda that takes into consideration the needs of society, not enterprises, and establish a policy of sustainable funding of journalism, media and communication research; (2) addressing the trend of the increasing volume of publications and the challenge of information overload; (3) improve the mechanisms for data and information collection outside academia.

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