Erasmus+

The Newsreel Project Consortium

NEWSREEL2

NEW TEACHING FIELDS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF JOURNALISTS

RESEARCH REPORT

UNIVERSITATEA DIN BUCUREȘTI
VIRTUTE ET SAPIENTIA

Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism

hostwriter

iscte
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF LISBON

MASARYK UNIVERSITY

PÉCSI TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS

About the project

An indispensable ability that journalists need to acquire is the creative and responsible use of digital tools. Journalists should be reliable and trustworthy sources of news amidst the digital din as they need to provide a counterpoint to the wealth of unverified information that affects the raw emotions and tempers of audiences around the world. The target audience of the EU-funded *NEWSREEL2 - New Teaching Fields for the Next Generation of Journalists* project is the millennial and post-millennial generations of journalists whose lifestyles are inherently linked to digital devices and social media. The primary aim of *NEWSREEL2* is to improve their digital skills in a creative and responsible way in order to enhance the societal benefits of the digital era. To achieve these objectives, the *NEWSREEL2* project team will develop innovative teaching methods and materials for media and journalism students. The project is the extension of *NEWSREEL - New Skills for the Next Generation of Journalists*, widening the scope of the original four journalistic fields covered (data journalism, collaborative journalism, new business models and ethical challenges) with nine new ones: (1) 'Storytelling in social media' enables students to learn how to present journalistic contents on social media networks. (2) 'Graphic journalism' helps students to get to know the basic tools and subgenres of comics journalism. (3) Improving students' 'democratic sensibility' enables them to be aware their social role and responsibility in the democratic society of the digital age. (4) 'Covering migration' helps to improve their research and reporting skills, and understanding migration in a global context. (5) 'Foreign coverage' enables students to contribute to a more balanced coverage of international topics. (6) 'Journalism for voice-activated assistants and devices' teaches students how to use them and see their potential in newsrooms. (7) 'AI and journalism, robot journalism and algorithms' teaches their usage, and enables students to clearly see the potential benefits and risks. (8) 'Verifying and analysing fake news' teaches students to be able to identify information and opinion going viral and to verify information with the help of suitable tools and software. (9) 'Debunking disinformation' helps students to get solid knowledge about the mechanisms used for debunking fake news and disinformation. The project aims to facilitate efficient international cooperation between university-based journalistic ecosystems. All educational materials produced by the project partners will be made openly and freely accessible through open licenses via the *NEWSREEL2* website.

Contact

Annamária Torbó

University of Pécs

newsreel@pte.hu

https://newsreel.pte.hu

Project partners:

Masaryk University (MUNI), Faculty of Social Studies, Department of Media Studies and Journalism, Brno, Czech Republic
Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism (EBI), TU Dortmund University, Germany
University of Pécs (PTE), Institute for Communication and Media Studies, Hungary
ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL), Portugal
University of Bucharest (UB), Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies (FJSC), Romania
Hostwriter, Berlin, Germany

Disclaimer

Editorial coordination: Dominik Speck, Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism (EBI)
Language editing: Marcus Denton, Derettens OÜ
Layout: Wiebke Johanna Jung (EBI)
Cover picture: Judith Wiesrecker

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The following authors contributed to this report: Klára Procházková, Lenka Waschková Císařová (MUNI), Susanne Fengler, Marcus Kreutler, Monika Lengauer, Dominik Speck, Anna-Carina Zappe (EBI), Rita Glózer, Gyula Maksa, Gábor Polyák, Annamária Torbó (PTE), Wanessa Andrade, Miguel Crespo, Ana Pinto-Martinho (ISCTE-IUL), Antonia Matei, Manuela Preoteasa, Marian Popovici, Mihaela Păun, Raluca Radu, Emilia Șercan (FJSC/UB)

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Introduction

The pace of digital disruption forces media outlets throughout Europe to become more flexible and adaptable than ever before with regard to business models, content, and the means of distribution of that content. Consequently, many journalists constantly need to acquire new skills and thus require further education. Every few years new social networks attract new users, innovative technologies require attention, especially while there is still uncertainty about whether they will ever become mainstream. Pioneer journalists "establish new organizational figurations" (Hepp & Loosen, 2021, 591) of journalism beyond the classical news organization, transforming perceptions of journalism and the journalistic workspace. Such innovations also require journalists to work in a more interdisciplinary manner, closely cooperating with software developers, data specialists, and business developers, which further transform the journalistic professionalism and the skills journalists need to fulfil expectations from both employers and the audience. This has contributed to the evolution of "hybrid" roles and types of journalism (Splendore & Brambilla, 2021).

These developments pose a challenge for journalism educators at universities, journalism schools or at institutions of further education. Adapting curricula at such a rapid pace is challenging and requires constant exchange with practitioners. At the same time, journalism schools should refrain from following every trend, and focus on the core competencies of the journalistic crafts (Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018, 90). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the "market" for young professionals in journalism is in constant transformation, and journalism educators need to consider this, in order to find a robust balance between tradition and disruption.

For the second time, our project consortium sets out to explore the need for innovation in a variety of fields of journalism education. Our first EU-funded project *NEWSREEL - New Skills for the Next Generation of Journalists* focussed on four fields – data journalism, collaborative journalism, innovative business models and ethical challenges of the digital public sphere. Following the research stage of the *NEWSREEL* project (see Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018), the team developed journalism and media curricula and e-learning materials. *NEWSREEL2 - New Teaching Fields for the Next Generation of Journalists* widens the scope with nine additional fields:

i) Storytelling in social media
ii) Graphic journalism
iii) Improving democratic sensibility
iv) Covering migration
v) Foreign coverage
vi) Journalism for voice-activated assistants and devices

vii) AI and journalism, robot journalism and algorithms
viii) Verifying and analysing fake news
ix) Debunking disinformation

Some of these fields have only recently emerged following technological change, such as 'Storytelling in social media' and 'Journalism for voice-activated assistants and devices'. Others are more deeply rooted in journalism education – such as 'Foreign coverage' or the responsibility of journalists in a democracy through 'Improving democratic sensibility', but these fields are arguably in need of a thorough update given the current challenges. These are multiple, such as the global rise of populism (e.g. Moffitt, 2016) and its impact on a free media landscape, the developments and role of digital platforms in today's public sphere (e. g. De Blasio et al., 2020), and calls for a more cross-cultural and cross-border collaborative stance on international reporting (e.g. Grzeszyk, 2019).

Our project consortium consists of media and journalism scholars from the *University of Pécs* (Hungary), *Masaryk University* (Brno, Czech Republic), the *Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism*, an affiliate institute of TU Dortmund University (Germany), *the ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon* (Portugal) and the *University of Bucharest* (Romania). *NEWSREEL2* has a solitary 'journalism practice' partner- *Hostwriter*, an international network based in Berlin that helps journalists to easily collaborate across borders. In this report, each of the nine fields is introduced in a chapter consisting of i) a review of the relevant literature and industry information and ii) the results of interviews conducted with journalists in the five project countries.[1]

The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide consisting of both field-specific questions and a set of education-related questions, which were the same across all fields. We interviewed 41 journalists between March and June 2021, either via video calls or in written form through email-based questionnaires.[2]

We conducted most of the interviews in English. However, in some cases where both interviewer and interviewee had the same mother tongue, these were conducted in the respective language and subsequently translated. Rather than drawing a representative picture of the fields and how they are anchored in the respective countries, the interviews serve as an illustration of relevant challenges and trends in the studied fields of reporting and their implications for the journalistic job

[1] In a few cases, it was not possible to interview journalists in all five countries. Subsequently, some of the chapters only contain interviews from four countries.

[2] In total, three of our interviewees were interviewed not only for one, but for two of the fields covered, as they hold expertise across fields. For a full overview, see the list of interviewees annexed to this report.

market. We also assessed the expectations of our interviewees towards journalism education and gathered their ideas on how to better implement relevant skills in teaching.

The results will help our consortium throughout the next steps of our project, as this research report is the outcome of just the first phase of *NEWSREEL2*. Our project is embedded in the Erasmus+ action type “Strategic partnerships for higher education” and will run until August 2023. To contribute to a strengthening of the aforementioned fields in journalism education throughout Europe, we will develop model curricula and teaching materials for each of them. Based on these, we will deliver pilot courses at the participating institutes and during a joint summer school, and we will further develop a summarizing teaching guide for all fields. A glossary of key terms for each field will be provided at the project website newsreel.pte.hu, where we will also make available all educational materials developed.

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Storytelling in Social Media

Rita Glózer

Changing boundaries of journalism

The digitalization and increasing convergence (Jenkins, 2006) of the media environment has led to a profound transformation of the journalistic practice. Research shows that key elements of the high-impact paradigm shift are the ongoing modification of journalistic work (ways of gathering, editing, and producing news), rearrangement of the relationships between journalists, their readers, and their sources (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2019; Vázquez-Herrero, Direito-Rebollal, &López-García, 2019; Nah & Chung, 2020) as well as transformation of the media organizations, the business practices and models. Media content and storytelling have faced fundamental challenges (Pavlik & Bridges, 2013; Boesman & Costera Meijer, 2018). Approaches from across disciplinary backgrounds emphasize various components of this transition, but each underlines the current blurring of boundaries of journalism. In this context, researchers interpret changes in journalism as *boundary work* or even a *boundary struggle* (Carlson & Lewis, 2015; Boesman & Costera Meijer, 2018). The transformation mentioned has affected the external and internal boundaries of journalism as a profession and a practice: the ideologies and politics of journalism, the professional roles and norms, the ways of constructing news narratives, and – among others – the traditional hierarchy of journalistic genres (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Further changes have occurred in newsroom structures such as the emergence of not only new job profiles (such as community manager or comment moderator), but also new types of legal and ethical issues.

One of the most significant fields, in which this boundary work occurs is the increasing participation of the journalistic audience. Though reader participation in journalism has a long history, the digital media environment provides more opportunities for audience members to participate in journalistic workflows than ever before. The notion of *participatory journalism* refers to various forms of reader input at all stages of news production (Singer et al., 2011). Current forms of audience contribution, such as citizen media, citizen blogs, citizen stories, collective interviews, comments, content hierarchy, forums, journalist blogs, polls and social networking have become increasingly integrated into news production processes of online newspapers and websites in recent years (ibid., 17). Scholars interpret this as a consequence of journalists' effort "to accommodate input from the audience within the spaces that media institutions once tightly controlled" (Singer et al. 2011, 18), although this process is quite controversial (Jurrat, 2011; Carlson & Lewis, 2015; Salaverría, 2019).

Deeply rooted in the notions of democracy and public sphere, the concept of *citizen journalism* enables media researchers to investigate dramatic transformations in journalistic roles, norms and values caused by active participation of citizens in journalistic practice. Although the phenomenon itself is not entirely new, the emergence of digital communication and media technologies has enabled citizens to control news content by writing, publishing and delivering to the audience with more ease (Nah & Chung, 2020). *Citizen witnessing,* another related concept, explores shifts in journalistic practice in the context of political and ecological crisis, in which several forms of 'accidental journalism' occur (Allan, 2013). The same scholar characterizes citizen witnessing

> as a type of first-person reportage in which ordinary individuals temporarily adopt the role of a journalist in order to participate in news making, often spontaneously during a time of crisis, accident, tragedy or disaster when they happen to be present on the scene.
>
> (Allan, 2013, 9)

Typical contributions of 21st century accidental, amateur journalists are smartphone videos and photographs shared via social networking sites and even social media posts. Recent literature often uses the concept of citizen journalism as a synonym for participatory journalism, social media journalism, grassroots and amateur journalism, open source journalism, hyperlocal journalism, distributed or networked journalism, and "produsage" (Bruns, 2008). All of these are closely related to the notions of user-generated content and user-created content.

As well as its contribution to the democratic process, the risks of citizen journalism need to be mentioned. Since citizen journalists are not professionally trained, "not all contributions from citizen journalists adhere to ethical standards that can be expected of professional journalists" (Jurrat, 2011, 13). Experience shows that many citizen journalists do not consider themselves journalists, but rather activists, and therefore do not feel bound by the rules of journalistic ethics. For readers of media offering both professional and amateur content – such as most social media – , readers may not always easily distinguish between amateur and often unverified content on the one hand and professional content on the other hand, which media organizations have checked for accuracy, objectivity, truthfulness, and fairness. Civil journalists often remain anonymous, which makes it even more difficult to verify the credibility of the information they publish.

In addition to increasing civic participation, the literature also reports on the entry of other institutional actors (for example NGOs) into the field of journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2015).
All these transformations occurred in the midst of a severe economic crisis affecting the news industry, closely related to changes in news consumption patterns (Singer et al., 2011). Under these

circumstances, research found new economic motives behind the practices of (allowing) participatory journalism: strategies of building loyalty to the news brand, boosting website traffic or competing effectively in general (ibid.; Carlson & Lewis, 2015).

The emergence of social media (the increase of political and news blogging first) (Bruns, 2008) led to the rise in optimistic expectations for the democratization of journalism. Ordinary people's widespread participation in media content production (Jenkins, 2006; Burgess & Green, 2009) has promised both to reduce the barriers to news production as well as to break down the divisions between professional journalists and citizens. Burgess & Hurcombe (2019, 360) envision future journalism as a participatory practice, the internal logic of which brings journalistic work and everyday oral practices of news sharing (gossip, conversation, letter writing) together. Towards the close of the 2010s, a small number of proprietary digital platforms have a near-global dominance of, and influence over, the circumstances of journalism, which the concepts of the "platform society" (van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018) and the "platform paradigm" (Burgess, 2015) in academic discourse reflect. Indeed, Burgess & Hurcombe (2019) contend that

> in practice, it is evident that the concept of journalism and the figure of the journalist (as opposed to writer, blogger, contributor, or poster) remain deeply entangled with the industrial structures and routines of news and media organisations (…) even when these structures and routines are undergoing digital transformation.
>
> (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2019, 361)

Digital journalism

The concept of digital journalism refers to new genres and modes of journalistic storytelling by exploiting the interactive multimedia affordances of digital media technologies (Burgess & Hurcombe, 2019, 361). The concept's tools and techniques – data driven digital storytelling, data visualization, digital video, and new digital ways of newsgathering, interviewing and documenting – have been used since the early 2010s (ibid., 361). Using a co-evolutionary approach, Burgess & Hurcombe (2019, 360) highlight the ways "journalism not only symptomatically reflects, but also pragmatically adapts to and influences the changing media environment".

Burgess & Hurcombe argue digital media technologies and business models have a transformative impact on the practices, products, and business of journalism, which enable the journalistic discourses, practices and logics to shape cultures and technologies that in turn enables the practice of digital journalism, and the dissemination and consumption of its products. The authors point out

that digital journalism connects with new ways of distributing news and reaching audiences taking advantage of the interactive and conversational affordances of social media platforms. These offer attractive opportunities for journalists to share and promote their work and to have a direct discussion with their audience as well as to develop their personal professional brand. Social news, a sub-genre of digital journalism, has the core features of vernacular conventions and pop-cultural sensibilities (use of memes, GIFs or acronyms), as well as platform-based social justice politics (support of and identification of with politically progressive causes). Social news illustrates the mutually constitutive relationship between the new form of journalism and the logics of social media (ibid., 363). At the same time, digital journalism has the opportunities to investigate and criticize the platform practices used to curate and moderate news content and user discussions around it (or cases of misinformation, deep-fake and so on). Consequently, digital journalism has some agency in, and responsibility for, the changing media environment (ibid.).

Social media journalism

According to the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report* 2020, access to news continues to become more distributed:

> Across all countries, just over a quarter (28%) prefer to start their news journeys with a website or app. Those aged 18–24 (so-called Generation Z) have an even weaker connection with websites and apps and are more than twice as likely to prefer to access news via social media. Across age groups, use of Instagram for news has doubled since 2018 and looks likely to overtake Twitter over the next year.
>
> (Newman et al., 2020, 11)

While social media is becoming increasingly integrated into media routines, news consumption is also increasingly taking place on social media. In the "contemporary flow of media content, news can be found 'via third-party platforms but accessed on publishers own sites' (distributed discovery) or 'both found and accessed on third-party platforms' [sites] (distributed content)" (Sehl, Cornia & Nielsen 2018 cited by Vázquez-Herrero, Direito-Rebollal, & López-García, 2019, 2). Mobile, networked, and portable media platforms such as smartphones and internet-linked tablets offer a number of innovative communication capabilities. Following the standardization of mobile news consumption as well as the trends in social media use, media outlets made efforts to adapt these news distribution routines, and also experiment with native formats adjusted both to the changing news consumption behaviour and to new functionalities of the social networking sites (ibid., 2).

Becoming increasingly important for online news distribution, social media platforms provide a popular point of access to news, especially for young users who get the news on their mobile devices as part of their permanent social media presence. The centrality of social media in the news consumption habits modified ways, in which users are exposed to and engaged with information as they can find the news on social media sites even when they are not actively seeking it (due to their friends' sharing or commenting). Nonetheless, accidental exposure makes users feel that they are well-informed. This type of interaction between audiences and news content tends to be ephemeral in the sense that "users spend less time watching these stories and their attention is brief, partial, and fragmented" (ibid., 2). Consequently, the media make efforts to produce native formats such as journalistic microformats, "prioritizing the use of 'horizontal storytelling mode' and Snapchat's 'tap to advance mode', Twitter moments, Facebook and WhatsApp status, as well as Instagram Stories" (ibid., 2). The allure of Instagram for the media is due, among other things, to its ability to interact with young users, and also to enhance the brands' visibility. New features of these social networking sites (such as streaming, Instagram and Facebook Stories) also offer promising opportunities for experimenting with new creative ways of storytelling.

New ways of storytelling in digital journalism

In the context of journalistic work, the term *storytelling* has become multifaceted being used to name both a specific journalistic genre (such as narrative or transmedia journalism) as well as a journalistic practice (Boesman & Costera Meijer, 2018). In the latter sense, it is often seen as the opposite of, or at least something different from, truth-seeking. According to the results of a study among newspaper journalists, "news makers and storytellers - experienced as roles, identities or positions - differ in their preparation and presentation practices when making news stories" (ibid., 18), while both strategies are seen as responses to the emergence of online news.

Storytelling as a practice has always been an integral part of journalistic work. In previous centuries, journalists often used literary elements in their writings, but as a consequence of the professionalization of journalism, "the narrative style of news articles was replaced with a neutral and objective style" (van Krieken, 2018). Under the influence of New Journalism, storytelling returned to newsrooms in the 1960s and 1970s by applying literary techniques, such as point-of-view writing and scene-by-scene reconstructions. These techniques encourage immersive reading experiences involving the audience in the described scenes.

Whereas in print journalism, text-linguistic narrative techniques facilitate the immersive reading experience, journalistic multimedia stories are also able to immerse the audience in distant news events by combining text, image, video, audio, and graphic animations (ibid.). Neither is the combination of multiple media formats a new development, "the rise of new media and technologies has actually introduced new possibilities for journalists to create immersive stories, for example, by producing multimedia stories" (ibid., 4). Multimedia stories, especially if they also contain interactive elements, are able to immerse the audience "by offering an encompassing, distraction-free environment" (ibid., 4). Van Krieken's case study about *The New York Times'* multimedia story, *Snow Fall*, convincingly demonstrates how multimedia journalism can successfully adapt text-linguistic storytelling techniques (scene reconstruction, event structure and viewpoint techniques) to create an immersive experience.

To engage an audience increasingly disengaged from traditional news and to provide them with more contextualized information, Pavlik & Bridges (2013) examine the opportunities of using augmented reality (AR) in digital storytelling. Applying this technology, "a camera equipped smartphone or tablet pointed at a newspaper or magazine can recognize a two-dimensional image and then recall an overly pre-recorded video or 3-d object onto that image" (ibid., 12). Thus, AR can enrich an individual's experience with the real world, while digital storytelling conducted by AR technology offers a more immersive experience due to the complex nonlinear storytelling model of the new media. A good example of implementing immersive storytelling via AR is the *situated documentary* that is "more contextualized and placed within a broader environment of events, trends, and issues" (ibid., 22). However, the authors also emphasize that newspapers have not fully integrated AR into the storytelling experience so far, but rather use it as a marketing tool as well as for some cultural and sport reporting.

The digital content revolution on the internet over the past two decades enabled this development of media storytelling. The main features of this revolution are both maximum personalisation and delivery of content to a global audience as well as a profound transformation of the language of digital journalism, characterized by the extensive use of hypertext, multimedia and interactivity (Salaverría, 2019, 8).

Journalism and the usage of Instagram[1]

With 1.2 billion users, Instagram was the fourth most popular social network worldwide in January 2021[2]. The United States and India head the ranking of countries with the most Instagram users (140 million), while Germany (26 million users), Italy (25 million), France (24 million) and Spain (21 million) have the largest Instagram audience in Europe. Instagram is especially popular among young adults. When joining, users can establish personal, creator or business accounts and besides the private users, there are increasingly more business accounts on the site. Although journalists and media outlets are active on Instagram, recent studies observed that "content on Instagram is predominantly apolitical and focuses on topics like fashion, travel, food and beauty" (Maares & Hanusch, 2018). Originally created to share photos, the app now also allows users to post videos in five formats that are reels, Live, IGTV, Stories and video posts in the feed. The primarily audiovisual nature of the app makes it a particularly suitable tool for social media storytelling.

Social media in general, and Instagram in particular "shape journalistic norms and practices in spaces that operate outside of the institutional structures and logics of news organisations" (Hermida & Mellado, 2020, 2), while these spaces have their own institutional media logics (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). To understand the media logic of Instagram and to explore the journalistic norms and practices that this logic shape, Hermida & Mellado (2020) suggest a framework with five analytical dimensions: (1) structure and design, (2) aesthetics (3) genre conventions, (4) rhetorical practices and (5) interaction mechanisms and intentionality. Regarding structure and design, visual clues (mostly photographic) dominate Instagram. The design aim of these clues is to capture moments primarily in a mobile-only experience. Textual content is additional, and similarly, active links can only be added in profiles, rather than on individual posts, "meaning that Instagram serves as more of a destination for media consumption than a transit node" (Hermida & Mellado, 2020, 6). The aesthetics of Instagram – referring to the verbal and visual styles – can be characterized as Manovich (2017) coined it, *Instagramism*, which is an artistic and expressive tonality of the construction of scenes and images "that are atmospheric, visually perfect, emotional without being aggressive, and subtle as opposed to dramatic" (ibid., 81). Photos posted on Instagram are often manipulated by

[1] While this research focuses on the role of Instagram in journalistic storytelling, it is important to note that other social media apps are also playing an increasingly important role in news distribution. There are very promising new developments in the use of Twitter for journalistic purposes, and emerging new platforms such as TikTok are also becoming more open to news and political topics. According to the latest data, the number of people using WhatsApp (24%) to search, discuss or share news during the coronavirus outbreak also increased compared to previous years (Newman et al., 2020).

[2] https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/; The definition of Statista for social networks includes also video-sharing platforms (Youtube) and messengers (WhatsApp).

using inbuilt filters which raises questions about the authenticity of images, especially in context of photojournalism. Concerning the genre conventions, the original idea of Instagram as a platform for taking and sharing photos captured in the moment seems to be challenged by more measured and idealized forms of representation that require craftsmanship and attention to details. Rhetorical performances on Instagram are based on their visual style determined by three distinct visual practices: the casual, the professional and the designed ones (Manovich, 2017). Finally, Instagram offers ways to connect (follow) and communicate with others (liking or commenting a post, mentioning someone...). Indeed, Hermida & Mellado (2020, 17) contend that by using the aforementioned analytical framework it becomes possible to examine how the logic of Instagram can influence journalistic performance at both the personal and the professional levels.

Vázquez-Herrero, Direito-Rebollal, & López-García (2019) analyse how the media use Instagram Stories[3]. Their aim has been to identify the strategies that media outlets apply, as well as to investigate the adaptation and innovation features on this platform. The researchers had analysed if the media are using Instagram Stories as a channel for news distribution, and also the types, topics, resources, and purposes for which Instagram uses them. Their findings "show that the media are producing ephemeral stories for Instagram with the main purpose of adapting their news contents to the functionalities of this platform and the users' preferences" (ibid., 2). The study reveals the most common purposes of using Instagram by media outlets which are about to reach young audiences, to drive traffic to the website, to inform and expand content, to direct interaction with followers (i.e. the audience), to get feedback, to improve the brand image, to generate associated incomes and to encourage public participation. The results also show an upward potential in ephemeral news production.

Research does indicate "that the spread of social media differs between groups of journalists and that social media usage is related to the journalist's age, gender, type of work and workplace" (Djerf-Pierre, Ghersetti, & Hedman, 2016, 4). The central questions of their representative, longitudinal research examining the relationship of Swedish journalists to social media was how they appropriate social media in their professional life, as well as how their social media use changes across time. One of the most interesting findings of their study is the decline in the perceived usefulness of social media for different professional purposes (finding sources or interviewees, getting audience feedback, crowdsourcing) (ibid., 9). At the same time, the only category that has increased was the use of social media because both "the managers and editors want it" which indicated increased

[3] Instagram Stories can be described "as an ephemeral microformat with a significant visual component, portrait orientation, and horizontal navigation adopted by Instagram in August 2016" (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019, 3).

organizational pressure. Research scholars interpret these data as *disappropriation*, "that is, journalists who abandon social media after a period of trying out and incorporating them into their daily professional practices" (ibid., 10). This team of researchers (ibid.) formulate their conclusion as the impacts of personal and organizational factors of social media use changes over time. For example, between 2012 and 2014 the excessive optimism decreased significantly (presumably because active users experienced usage burn-out).

As part of the transformative processes that are taking place on the boundaries of journalism, a "twilight zone" of lifestyle journalism formed on social network sites especially on Instagram where amateur or semi-professional journalists, the so-called influencers, publish their content in micro-blogging formats (Maares & Hanusch, 2018). While journalism scholarship still predominantly focuses on journalism's relationship with political life, there is the argument that considers lifestyle journalism as soft news is increasingly significant at a time of accelerating societal changes (ibid., 4). Indeed, research suggests amateur content about lifestyle topics tend to provide entertainment and relaxation; service, advice and news-you-can-use; orientation, exemplars of lifestyles; and inspiration. Maares & Hanusch (2018) reveal significant similarities between the traditional concept of the journalistic role and the role perceptions of Instagram micro-bloggers. Having conducted interviews with Austrian and German influencers, the study found five definitional markers resonating with traditional journalistic roles and norms. A majority of the respondents conceptualized journalism as (1) text and also as (2) a set of practices, as well as (3) a profession following a range of norms which primarily concern immediacy, autonomy and ethical responsibility. A minority of respondents conceptualized journalism as (4) serving the audience and (5) a vocation (ibid.). The same study also found five role perceptions resembling the professional views of lifestyle journalist which are (1) showing a specific lifestyle, (2) offering inspiration, (3) educating followers and providing them a journalism specific orientation, (4) offering service and advice, and (5) providing entertainment and relaxation (ibid., 12). The study emphasizes that lifestyle journalism "can be considered a twilight zone of journalism", and the Instagram influencers they interviewed "located themselves within an additional twilight zone", however, the description of their work practices and roles places them "very much within, rather than outside of journalism" (ibid., 13). The study concludes "traditional journalists are moving more toward the activities of micro-bloggers", and what they observed is a "process of transformation within the journalistic field, which is arguably related to the activities of actors in the twilight zone of journalism" (ibid., 13).

In addition to the academic literature, manuals are also available to support journalists in developing effective professional Instagram use. Bettendorf (2019) not only gives a short overview of the

current state of Instagram journalism research, but also presents successful examples and summarizes the expectations and needs of the audience as well as the daily work of the Instagram journalist.

Interview results

The interviews conducted for this study focused on the use by newsrooms of social media, including the purposes, tools and strategies used in the production and dissemination of news. To understand the respondents' answers and opinions, we need to consider the various characteristics of the investigated media, as we explored social media storytelling in assorted types of media. The possibilities and characteristics of this form of online publishing are largely determined by the ownership of the medium, its main profile, the knowledge, and resources available. I conducted interviews with journalists from three TV stations, two public and one private, one independent news portal and one online magazine. The market positions of the media outlets in the research are highly diverse, involving long established market leading news brands and new small market share businesses, independent news portals, both public service media (PSM) and privately owned and grassroot community specific media. The aspects they all have in common is that they not only recognize the importance of a digital media presence but also have a conscious online strategy on social media news distribution. This social media activity is an important part of their overall strategy to reach and grow their audience, and all the professionals interviewed consider active communication on social media essential and unavoidable.

Challenges and strategies

It is noteworthy that social media content production is proving to be an important strategic tool for both public service, private, and community media in terms of their own specific objectives and markets, according to the interviews. The newsrooms of the interviewees face slightly different challenges, so by entering social media with their professional accounts they choose the same strategy and tools to achieve their own distinct goals. The main issue for *Tagesschau*, the long-established public service news brand in Germany was that the average age of their audiences was, in line with the demographics of the country, old (65+ years and growing older) and the brand was struggling to reach young audience segments. *Tagesschau* did so via a complete digital transformation of the brand:

> There was nothing else to do than to transform this TV brand that is familiar for its tv show every night at 8 o'clock in German television to a more 360-degree brand and I would say to a full media brand.
>
> Patrick Weinhold, Head of Social Media, *ARD Tagesschau*

For Hungary's emerging, community-based, politically pro-opposition news portal *Mérce*, the challenge is to increase audience reach and to persuade the audience to habitually consume its news on a daily basis. Privately owned free-to-air TV channel *Televisão Independente (TVI)* is the most watched channel in Portugal, yet it needed to effectively connect its content to digital platforms. By contrast, Romania's online *Decât o Revistă*, previously a print-only, quarterly non-fiction magazine, wanted to better meet the needs of its audience.

Objectives

The interviewees said the main aim of social media content production was primarily the same or very similar in most of the cases examined: to reach young people who are only available on social networks, thus rejuvenating the audience in the case of long-established, traditional media outlets. Moreover, the aim of recently established media outlets was to develop and increase their audience and encourage them to make regular visits to the their accounts on various dissemination platforms (e.g., TV, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). As Oana Barbonie (*Decât o Revistă*) puts it, "we have shifted from a print product to a digital first editorial strategy in the recent years to include more online storytelling, with a focus on growing our community of members." Paula Oliveira from Portugal's *TVI* explains that "data shows us that we have a younger audience on our online television brands, including social media than on TV".

> Our goal is to create news for the broadest range of audience as possible. TV broadcasting does not attract many young people in CZ, some of them according to researchers do not even have a TV set at home. We are much more successful within social networks.
>
> Ondřej Šimeček, news editor, *Česká televize*

> We have (…) a duty to inform the whole German public about politics, about current affairs and to make them able to form their own political decisions. But if you reach only one part of the audience, that is that old, you do not fulfil your duty (...). That was why we had to find different solutions, and therefore we looked at and put a lot more resources into digital spheres.
>
> Patrick Weinhold, Head of Social Media, *ARD Tagesschau*

Within this, the operation of the Instagram accounts serves several purposes, depending on the content posted there. With content created specifically for this platform and adapted to its specificities, it is possible to distribute news separately and independently from the original platform. Another common function of content posted on Instagram is to drive traffic to the website or the medium's Facebook page, where the primary news distribution takes place. A further function of Instagram storytelling, which several interviewees said, is the development and improvement of the media outlet's brand. For both the PSM brand *Tagesschau* and community-based independent media outlet *Mérce*, the aim is to inform and educate the audience and to shape their attitudes.

Team and resources

All the interviewees have a management role, partially or entirely, in the field of visual and social media. Patrick Weinhold leads a large social media department of 15-20 people at *ARD Tagesschau*. The regional newsroom of *Česká televize* in Brno, *Mérce* as well as *TVI* have small teams of 4-8 people, while *Decât o Revistă* does not have a dedicated social media content production team at all. In all cases, the coordination of tasks related to the management of social media accounts and the work of journalists and editors seems to be a key issue. The PSMs, *Tagesschau* and *Česká televize,* achieved this through some degree of separation and specialisation of editorial and journalistic work. The alternative is to allow the journalists, with the help of graphic editors or motion designers, to produce the social media content. This was the strategy of *TVI, Mérce* and *Decât o Revistă*. In the regional newsroom of *Česká televize*, young journalists or student interns are involved in the production of social media content because they are the most experienced on these platforms. The professional skills needed to manage social media are mainly present in the advertising industry rather than in the news media field, but as Oana Barbonie (*Decât o Revistă*) points out, cooperation with its members is not without difficulties due to different goals and preferences. For journalists and newsrooms, learning these skills and adapting them to journalistic objectives and standards is a particular challenge.

> ”We have tried to work with a few social media people in the past, but there are not that many (...) who do this job in journalism. Many come from jobs in advertising, for example, and it has often happened to be a clash between our needs and their ideas.
>
> Oana Barbonie, Visual Editor, *Decât o Revistă*

Newsrooms are trying to support their journalists to produce social media stories with a variety of solutions, including manuals and templates for creating social media content. Patrick Weinhold

mentions that *Tagesschau*, which has a team of 20 people producing social media news, has a small but dedicated Innovation Laboratory, which is constantly creating and testing new formats to keep up with current social media trends. These formats and templates also ensure the consistency of content in terms of genre and style, which is necessary given that several journalists are producing content independently for the same platform.

> It is hard to find the right tool for journalists to promote and rethink their own stories for social media. Using set templates (created in Google Slides for example) helped with this and kept the content consistent in the beginning.
>
> Oana Barbonie, visual editor, *Decât o Revistă*

Several interviewees point out that creating high-quality social media content, which is appropriate for the platform is a resource-intensive task. For example, as much as 50% of Tagesschau's online human resources spend their professional time on social media news distribution. At the same time, an emerging, community-based, independent news portal, such as *Mérce*, while keen, does not have sufficient resources to optimize its website for smartphones.

Platforms, content, and resources

A focus of the interviews was the use of Instagram for news distribution, but other social media platforms were discussed. In this context, the use of Facebook seems to be common. Four out of the five newsrooms interviewed report having Twitter (*Tagesschau, TVI, Decât o Revistă* and the regional newsroom of *Česká televize*) and YouTube (*Tagesschau, TVI, Decât o Revistă* and *Mérce*) accounts. *Decât o Revistă* regularly uses LinkedIn, and Patrick Weinhold of *Tagesschau* reports the highly successful use of TikTok, which allows access to the youngest age groups, which *Decât o Revistă* is also planning to do. The need to differentiate content in terms of type and genre, and the need to reach a variety of user groups, are the main reasons for the presence on multiple platforms. The journalistic content posted on Instagram accounts ranges widely, most respondents report that they produce content specifically for social networking sites. The interviewees said their media outlets used one or more of the following types of content (social media genres or subgenres): summaries of articles, recommendations (movies, music, books), original stories (for example photo reportages), IGTV videos, Instagram takeovers from people invited, polls created to find certain information from the readers, quotes, posts that promote their other media content (newsletter, podcast, video, article) or other platform. Each newsroom has developed its own set of tools, i.e., a

set of certain types of resources such as native texts, own photos, own videos, emojis, infographics, illustrations, collages, mentions of other profiles, journalists or contributors and hashtags. Instagram provides certain features that can be used effectively for journalistic purposes: the so-called highlights, the swipe up option, or the poll and question box in stories allow journalists both to archive ephemeral content (stories) and to direct traffic to a website or connect with their followers.

Social media skills in journalism education

In most cases, our interviewees acquired the necessary knowledge and skills for social media through hands-on practice in previous jobs, rather than through formal education. Several interviewees mention they had also gained a lot of useful knowledge in their own private social media practice, which they then use for their professional tasks. All interviewees say there is a need in journalism education to teach skills that will help journalists to work in the field of social media. They all emphasize, in particular, the need for skills in visual editing, social media management, social media analysis (understanding metrics and native tools) and general digital competences. Karina Csengel (*Mérce*) points out that as branding is also an important function of these social media accounts, journalists involved in this should also be aware of the techniques involved. All the interviewees shared the opinion that the use of social networking sites for journalistic purposes requires not only continuous learning, but also experimentation and analysis of social media metrics and audience behaviour.

> I would appreciate it if universities put at least one mandatory subject “Basics of Social Media Storytelling” in every Journalism or Media Studies program. Lecturers should explain how the most popular social networking sites work, audience behaviour, different alternatives of creation of posts etc. For Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
>
> Ondřej Šimeček, news editor, *Česká televize*

> I think it is our duty as journalists to make ourselves familiar with these networks that are important for millions and millions of our audiences. We can't ignore it, should not ignore it, we shouldn't be journalists who simply focus on TV or radio. (...) Journalism without the digital field is something I cannot imagine anymore, and I don't think there is a chance that this side-low thinking between TV, radio and digital ever comes back. I think it is more transversal and cross functional than ever in this spheres, and journalistic education needs to deal with that.
>
> Patrick Weinhold, Head of Social Media, *ARD Tagesschau*

Weinhold also emphasizes that in addition to journalism and social media skills, journalism education should also include basic political and social skills, and that a combination of the two is the best way forward.

Public service in the social media

A surprising lesson from the interviews is that with the right structure, sufficient allocation of resources and appropriate social media strategy, any traditional PSM can have an effective presence on social media sites. This is despite the widespread assumption that PSM typically lag in the context of reaching audiences online.

Of the two PSM in this study, *ARD Tagesschau* had the most successful and effective social media storytelling strategy. Beyond the limits of the current study, *ARD Tagesschau* is a nationwide leader in terms of market position, audience reach, number of social media platforms used and share of resources devoted to social media content production. *ARD Tagesschau* was an early adopter of social media in journalism, as the corporation has significant financial resources, a comparatively large number of staff working in social media news distribution, and a focus on continuous improvement (see above for *Tagesschau's* dedicated Innovation Laboratory). Interestingly, the use of digital platforms and portable devices can also open up possibilities of participatory journalism for PSM, as the example of *Česká televize* shows.

> We have to fulfil our public-law character every day, which doesn't leave us (especially in daily news) much room for manoeuvres. On the other hand, we implemented mobile journalism as an everyday routine, which means that some reporters go to the field only with a tripod, handy [mobile phone] (as camera) and microphone. We also use more public generated content. Our TV created a project called "iReporter" which means that everyone could become part of the broadcasting. People send us video of weather, car accidents, local events etc.
>
> Ondřej Šimeček, News Editor, *Česká televize*

At the same time, social media sites also create a robust competitive environment for PSM.

Conclusion

In summary, the components of effective and efficient social media communication for newsrooms include providing the necessary human and financial resources for social media news distribution, continuously monitoring digital trends, analysing audience behaviour, developing and constantly innovating formats that are appropriate for the platform and audience expectations. All this requires well-trained journalists with social media storytelling skills, marketing and advertising knowledge as well as societal (political, public, economic and cultural) awareness, which is currently in high demand in the market.

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Graphic Journalism and Comics Reportage

Gyula Maksa

Two Trends in Graphic Journalism

In recent years, we have seen two major tendencies in graphic or comics journalism that are at first glance distinct from each other. One is the flourishing of data journalism that works with data and creates data visualization, such as infographics, figures, or maps. Media discourse analysis conventionally treats figures and infographics as having an objectivity effect (Koren, 1996), i.e. as a tool or procedure designed to develop and reinforce a sense of objectivity (or an illusion of it), while it is also obvious that the construction of maps and infographics is culturally determined. For example, in connection with the current maps that school systems and the media use, it is reasonable to ask what interests, beliefs, worldviews and mental maps lie behind the individual instances of cartographic representation.

The other tendency, a contrary one, is the ongoing "reinvention" of decidedly subjective journalistic drawing, regarded as an opinion genre, while more recently comics reportage also gains increasing popularity through its subjectivity and its expressed relationship to the represented. However, these two types of graphic journalism and their use show similarities. They demand time from both the creator and the recipient — and they encourage the reader to dwell on the work, due partly to the expectations stripped from the routines of linear reading, and their tabularity, and the visual representation placed within the space of the page. Comics journalism, the explicitly subjective comics reportage, and data journalism reinventing objectivity with data visualization and infographics are versions of graphic journalism and investigative journalism as well. Instead of the indigestible, constantly rolling and multiplying images of news and actualities, they provide the opportunity for a slower, and deeper reception – potentially reflecting the trend of Slow Journalism (Le Masurier, 2020).

Comics Reportage as a (Trans)media Genre

Also informed by the centuries-old tradition of newspaper illustrations, but mainly reflecting the generic characteristics of the autobiographic graphic novel (and certainly inspired by its success), comics reportage developed at the intersection of journalistic practice and comics drawing. The genre became popular in both the North American Comics, and the French-Belgian(-Swiss) bande dessinée tradition since the turn of the millennium (Bourdieu, 2012). Joe Sacco's influential war

report *Palestine* (1993) played a crucial role in the recognition and institutionalisation of the genre. Indeed Sacco canonized certain characteristics of the genre through the impact of the Maltese-born US comics journalist's reports on the Middle East and the Balkan Wars. Sacco's works, although retaining some of the authentication procedures of conventional reporting, including references to real space and time, make a spectacular break with the requirement of journalistic objectivity. The author-narrator-protagonist is, therefore, in a sense, an autobiographic reporter who draws himself into the narrative, and becomes a character and participant in the events. He reflects on the impressions, experiences, and feelings he encountered during his field work, as well as on his own cultural background and biographical history. The latter feature also links the comic book report to autobiographical works. He observes, represents, and sometimes comments on everyday occurrences, and his conversations with local people are also "put on stage". Creating comics reportage presupposes both journalistic and cartoonist work and skills, and in the case of the autobiographical tradition (and the tradition heralded by Sacco) one person should possess all these skills. In a lecture, Swiss Francophone comics journalist Patrick Chappatte explained that his work in the field is similar to his traditional reporter role: he takes notes, conducts interviews and takes photographs (Chappatte, 2011b).

Based on his professional identification, the work of Patrick Chappatte clearly demonstrates the emergence of the comics reportage genre in various media environments, and its ability and suitability to spread across different medias, which media narratology equates to transmédiagénie (see Marion, 1997). Patrick Chappatte has produced over thirty pieces of comics reportage. They were published in his 2011 book *BD Reporter. Du "printemps arabe" aux coulisses de l'Élysée* (Chappatte, 2011a) and in various Swiss, Italian, French, and US-based magazines. The reportages covered a wide variety of topics and locations, from Nairobi's 'tin town' through the French presidential palace to the world of drug offenders in Guatemala and the daily life of residents in the vicinity of the minefields of South Lebanon. The bilingual website bdreportage.com/graphicjournalism.com provides web adaptations of his works published in the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps* as well as the television version of his South Lebanon report. The cartoonist's highly optimistic, hopeful, committed TED lectures in the style of stand-up shows — also in French and English — review the generic characteristics of comics reportage, and the potentials represented by its mediatic spread (Chappatte, 2010; 2011b).

Patrick Chappatte's works are not novel-like, longer narratives — unlike Joe Sacco's influential works which defined the genre, such as *Palestine* (1993 and 1996, in one volume 2001), *Goražde* (2000) or *The Fixer* (2003). There are also Francophone examples of longer journalistic graphic novels, which

are more suitable for the book medium. This is exemplified by the nonfiction graphic novel *Le Photographe* (The Photographer, 2003-2006, in one volume: 2008), a work by Emmanuel Guibert, Didier Lefèvre and Frédéric Lemercier, which prominently features photographs and the materials of the photojournalist, and combines the solutions of photography and comics in connection with the subject of Afghanistan, where the work of the photojournalist is framed by drawn comics elements. At the same time, *The Photographer* also represents a direction of comics journalism detached from the autobiographical tradition. It is precisely the diversity of the skills of the journalist, the drawer, the photographer, sometimes the inker etc., all of which are necessary for the creation of comics journalism which might create an ideal setting for collective work.

Comics Journalism and Everyday Life

Riad Sattouf, successful in a several comics genres, also created longer reportages and graphic novels which beg for a book-format. One of the most striking trademarks of Riad Sattouf is his timeliness. Sattouf tries to locate self-transforming estrangement within an area that is closer to himself both geographically and culturally, as opposed to the comics journalists who often travel to remote countries. From 2004, the French author published comics journals that are characterized by serious social criticism, and a satirical tone that simultaneously triggers worry and laughter in the reader, works which are informed by an autobiographical aspect that is sometimes even more explicit than in Joe Sacco's works. Along this line, the 2004 *No Sex in New York*, first published in sequels in the daily newspaper Libération, then published as a colour album, is about the members of the French "intern generation" living in the USA (Sattouf, 2004). The 2005 *Back to High School* (Retour au collège) is a reportage about the small world of an elite gymnasium in Paris (Sattouf, 2005). The following paragraphs discuss two series by Riad Sattouf, which cannot be regarded as clear cases in terms of either novel-like or journalism-like features, but are works also available on book media which can be regarded as examples of comics journalism and participate in the generic tradition of journalistic graphic novels.

Riad Sattouf's three-volume *The Secret Life of Young People* (La vie secrète des jeunes, 2007, 2010, 2012) occupies a unique place within the world of comics journalism. One-page micronarratives of the volumes were originally published as "editorial cartoons" in the satirical journal *Charlie Hebdo*, famous for its scandals, lawsuits, bans and the January 2015 attack. *Charlie Hebdo* usually reflects on current political and public events with its cartoons and comics. The book medium, the paper quality and the covers combine to trigger the expectations of the roman graphique in the reader, while the abundance as well as the fragmentary nature of micronarratives undermine the image of

novel-like comics reportage. Using everyday examples "seen and heard" on the streets, *The Secret Life of Young People* puts the violation of certain rules and habits of behaviour, social coexistence, and culture into spotlight, sometimes also revealing the hypocritical attempts to conceal such violations. Despite the fragmentary nature, the volumes deliver a weird, upsetting, yet ridiculous image of the metropolitan society in France. This is a satirical tableaux where traces of overemphasized, repressed, monetized sexuality can appear in various places and situations through characters ranging from prostituted middle-class girls and precocious sex-hungry little boys to headscarf wearing Muslim women licking ice-cream in an erotic way. Typical locations are the spaces of fast-food chains and public transport, and so the inescapable transience of everyday life in the metropolitan city becomes emphatic. However, the volumes do not provide the comprehensive narrative characteristic of the more traditional report books, just fragmentary notes with frequent gestures of authentication, which are further reinforced by the preface of the first book promising to expose human habits and behaviour. In *The Secret Life of Young People* the cartoonist does not appear on the scene as in traditional comics journals, and the commentary-like voice also plays a reduced role.

Riad Sattouf's most influential and controversial work of recent years is probably *Les Cahiers d'Esther* (Esther's notebooks, five volumes to date: Sattouf, 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2019; 2020). *Les Cahiers d'Esther* carries on the tradition of the single-page, concise, pointed narratives of French kids' comics while combining it with the processes of graphic journalism, daily strips reflecting on current events, comics journals, and the reminiscences of autobiographical graphic novels. The selection of the media also reveals the combinations: the album-like size and hardcover format combine with the paper quality and colour management characteristic of graphic novels. The author published *Les Cahiers d'Esther* on a weekly basis in the *Nouvel Observateur* in 2014, a newspaper hardly qualifying as a children's magazine, yet after the publication of the first album some critics classified the work as children's literature (Mazerand, 2016).

Core characteristics of *Les Cahiers d'Esther*, which can be regarded as a distinctive version of graphic journalism, are intense levels of social, political, and media-cultural topicality. The intensity is sufficient to cast doubt on whether the work can become relevant outside France or even in France, but only in the future. Currently, the embeddedness created by public and media-cultural references supports the mediatic spread of *Les Cahiers d'Esther*. Perhaps the most astonishing aspect of Esther's world is the emphasis on sharp delineations, great social differences, which are striking in both the text of the child narrator and the visual representation of the reporter/cartoonist, and are often downright poignant. There are the rich and the others, who basically consist of the suburban

followers of the *racaille* ("scum") style and other children. There are schoolchildren with an elevated brand-awareness (the "club") and students in suburban, soul-crushing public schools and their peers in private schools, and later the discrepancies between the problematic suburban schools and the downtown elite institutions.

Esther is not the conventional *gamin farceur* ("funny kid") of kids' comics, but initially a "good girl" who wants to meet the expectations of her environment while also sensing the inconsistency of some of these expectations. The volumes consist of single-page works, but (unlike traditional kids' comics) the main character is aging across the narratives collected in the three albums: the first album is about ten-year-old Esther, and the new ones appearing annually always feature an Esther who is one-year-older. Riad Sattouf, trained in authenticating genres, here uses a process which can be called "found informant", after the trope of the "found manuscript". According to the author's narrative framework, which his statements confirm, he captures the stories of the daughter of one of his friends in the panel texts. The bottom of each page features an authenticating note, which confirms that we are reading a true story narrated by Esther. The question of authenticity is also addressed by Esther in one of the albums, when she reads the narratives previously recorded by the cartoonist, and criticizes and corrects the language use of the artist (Sattouf, 2017b, 17).

"Expat" Graphic Novels

An emerging genre, similar to comics reportage, depicting the experience of countries, languages and cultures distant from the home of the reporter, could be referred to as the "expat graphic novel". The genre largely originates in the work of the Canadian Guy Delisle, who was born in Quebec, but publishes in France. The narrator of these graphic novels transfers from his own country to a foreign linguistic-cultural environment. Such a situation emerges in Delisle's novels, first published in 2000, either or both because of the narrator-protagonist's work as an animated filmmaker, and the missions of his spouse, Nadège, who works for the international aid organization Doctors Without Borders. The first group includes novels describes North Korean and Chinese experiences, and the second includes "expat experiences" in Burma and Israel/Palestine, exhibiting the everyday life and the relationships with the locals and other expats (Delisle, 2000; 2003; 2007; 2011). Delisle's novels are autobiographies which are not free from geopolitical topics. However, frequent topics of international journalism, such as North Korean propaganda and Israeli West Bank Wall, here appear in the comics narrator's subjective perspective, usually depicted on the level of the practices of daily life. The novel set in Jerusalem also features a comics reportage part, but its narrative framework suggests deviation from the genre, emphasising even more that outside this

experiment we are not reading a comics reportage, and therefore it is not recommended to approach this graphic novel along the expectations of general journalism and comics reportages.

Unlike Joe Sacco, the founding father of comics journalism, Guy Delisle, is not a professional journalist. As travel literature expert Jelena Bulić points out in her thorough analysis of Delisle's novels, these works are not journalistic reports ("reportages") in the sense of Joe Sacco. They are rather accounts ("reports") that bypass the canonical conventions of travel literature and travel-related media narratives, and attempt to convey the experience of everyday life. The daily routine is also discussed in detail regarding topics such as work, cooking or childcare — a kind of thematization not unusual in autobiographical comics and autobiographies (Bulić, 2012, 63). The experience of everyday life here is also the experience of violence in Israeli-Palestinian everyday life (Fall, 2014, 100). The issue of using the generic descriptor documentary comics (*BD documentaire*) occurs precisely in connection with the analysis of Guy Delisle's novel *Chroniques de Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City). Lisa Auquier's essay provides a detailed discussion of the problem of documentary comics: the term has a narrower meaning separating it from comics journals, as well as a broader sense covering non-autobiographic historical comics (Auquier, 2015).

A Practice-Oriented Approach

Besides the academic literature, a guide entitled *Creating Comics as Journalism, Memoir & Nonfiction* authored by Duncan, Taylor & Stoddard (2016) is also available to support journalists in developing comics journalism skills and practices. The book considers comics journalism as nonfiction comics, a kind of longform journalism, narrative nonfiction. From this point of view, the creator combines journalistic and artistic approaches with the historian's process. This manual proposes tools and presents examples related to data collection, verbal and visual storytelling, publication, and production process. Certainly, the guide could be a good starting point to develop a practice-oriented curriculum and e-learning material about comics journalism under the *NEWSREEL2* project. The House of Press Caricatures (*La Maison du dessin de Presse*) in Morges (Switzerland) has its own seven pages long teaching material about comics journalism. This publication related to an exhibition focuses mainly on the francophone bande dessinée, and could be also interesting (Pernet, 2012).

From a training-related perspective of journalism education, the problem or claim of 'authenticity' related to credibility and subjectivity in comics journalism practices of representation, and generally in nonfiction comics, seems to be a crucial issue (Bake & Zöhrer 2017; Duncan, Taylor, & Stoddard,

2016, 154-158; Weber & Rall, 2017). Wibke Weber and Hans-Martin Rall focus on the investigation of visual authentication strategies in graphic storytelling: 'What are the visual strategies to demonstrate that the drawn pictures show well-researched news stories that are factually accurate and therefore authentic?' (2017, 377). They identify six visual authentication strategies that are often used in comics journalism: author's presence (to show the comics author at work), physical resemblance, visual stylistic devices (differentiating comics journalism from fictional comics), documentary evidence (e.g., maps, statistical data, interviews with experts), and metastory (the story about the story, making the production process transparent) (Weber & Rall, 2017, 385-389).

Interview results

The interviews with five journalists from all countries under study in this report focussed on the status quo of comics journalism in each country, including comics journalism education. Each interview consisted of three parts. The first part concerned the self-introduction of the interviewee, their professional background, education, relation with comics and graphic journalism in detail, recent projects related to graphic journalism, and how they could get the skills they need to become experts in this field. The second group of questions focused on the situation of graphic (comics) journalism in the respective media cultures of the interviewees, publications, financial resources, main topics, issues, graphic styles, genres, carriers, translations, current relevance and future perspectives, and the problems of credibility. The third part of the interview intended to get information about education related to graphic (comics) journalism, not only on the actual situation of graphic journalism education in each country, but also on the ideal type of comics journalism education, alongside background knowledge and practical experience students should have.

The status quo of comics journalism

While graphic journalism may include all kinds of journalistic products and activities in graphic expression, which are not in the scope of this research, a more strict definition of graphic journalism is closer to the notion of comics journalism including cartoons, comic strips and other longer narratives in comics. Comics journalism is a journalistic contribution in the comics form. Comics journalism in a stricter sense may include reportages in comics (or in graphic novel format), so a kind of graphic reportage. In summary, there are three levels of graphic journalism: 1. visual journalism (also includes data journalism), 2. comics and cartoons as a media genre, 3. comics reportage (or reportage comics). In the interviews, we focused mainly on the third level.

Comics journalism may raise some issues from the point of view of the interviewees. The main challenge is the "relative non-existence" of this kind of journalism (mentioned by German comics expert Axel Halling) in the examined countries, which equates to the almost total ignorance by mainstream media. Independent magazines, art groups, NGOs, or (as in Hungary) literary reviews provide publication opportunities for such pieces of journalism. A concern of Ferenc Vincze, who works at the Hungarian magazine *Szépirodami Figyelő* is the lack of translations into Hungarian of the significant authors of the comics reportage tradition. There are financial issues, because the main sources of revenue are advertising and digital subscriptions, although the occasional grant and public support do facilitate the realisation of the few publications that do exist. The issue of credibility, both developing and respecting it, is another important issue in the contexts of sources, talking about processes, and transparency as this interviewee explains:

> I think that mentioning the sources, as you would in traditional journalism, is an important rule even for graphic journalism. And talking about the process and the rewriting part to suit a comic after all is also a very essential step to achieve transparency, therefore more credibility.
>
> Oana Barbonie, Visual Editor, *Decât o Revistă*

Clear visuality could help building credibility, too, as Axel Halling explains: "Quality, quality, quality! Clear visuality, not too arty in style for the non-comic-readers." Credibility building faces another challenge, as Ferenc Vincze elucidates: "For the public sphere, comics belongs to the category of children's literature, or it is treated as a marginal media, which cannot explain relevant issues."

According to most respondents, either or both graphic journalism and comics journalism are nowadays even more relevant (digital and print formats of comics journalism are both equally important), but not widespread. Their lack of availability is in contrast to other genres of graphic journalism, such as data journalism or infographics, which have become increasingly popular. Some countries (like Germany and Romania in the *NEWSREEL2* project) seem to consider comics journalism projects sometimes as civic education programs, rather than as a traditional journalistic genre. For example, the Germany's initiative *Alphabet des Ankommens* [1](Alphabet of Arrival) about migration supported by the Federal Agency for Civic Education, and Romania's project on education *Școala9*[2]. Axel Halling emphasizes that the same point applies to innovations from other countries like *Revue Dessinée*, a Francophone specialized journal in comics journalism[3] .

[1] www.alphabetdesankommens.de
[2] www.scoala9.ro/
[3] www.4revues.fr/la-revue-dessinee/

The differences between the perceptions of the interviewees sometimes seem to depend on their cultural backgrounds. The interviewees from the Czech Republic and Hungary, emphasize the important satirical, caricature or humorous traditions of graphic journalism, in contrast to the other three interviewees who did not underline these traditions of graphical representation. Yet, the different perspectives and perceptions could also be the basis for the differing professional experiences of the interviewees. The respondents have worked as a data journalist (Boček), an academic/scriptwriter/editor (Vincze), a program manager and cultural manager (Halling), a web designer/illustrator (Gabriel Sousa) and a visual artist/illustrator/reporter/editor (Barbonie).

Comics journalism and journalism education

All the experts acquired their own skills and competences in the field of comics journalism by self-education and are thus autodidacts. They have backgrounds in a wide variety of disciplines such as comparative literature, journalism, visual anthropology, graphic design, informatics, political science, Eastern and South-Eastern European history, Eastern European studies, and Hungarian studies. They did not receive any formal training in graphic journalism. However, they did a lot of reading in this field and thus gained practical experience, which helped their self-education, as Oana Barbonie says: “I learned from books and from international publications and from practicing by myself.” Ferenc Vincze also points towards international sources as a core inspiration: “I did not participate in such education, because there was no opportunity for this in Hungary. I got information mainly from international publications, and I read those few Hungarian publications on this topic that were available around 2010.”

The interviewees had to rely on self-education, because they claim none of their nations’ educational systems have integrated comics journalism into the journalism curricula. Some of the interviewees point to related fields of higher education, in which comics journalism is represented: visual literacy, art education and communication studies. But comics journalism as investigative journalism may be a relatively new subject for journalism or art education. The interviewees mention practical experience as a key competence to realize comics journalism projects and to become a good comics journalist. Axel Halling, who also is a board member of the German Comics Association, says that “a lot of reading” is a core competence.

> ”Practical experiences are key here. Sometimes you can check this by only showing students real work and make them wonder how that was put together. For example, it is possible that a lot of students had never seen a comic in the pages of a newspaper. And it’s great to show them how to create

> comics but they will not feel ready to put it in practice until they have something to compare it to. Showing beginning reporters what journalism and graphic journalism actually looks like might help them more; even making them redo something in their own style might be a very important step in their education.
>
> Oana Barbonie, Visual Editor, *Decât o Revistă*

The respondents emphasize that knowledge of comics history, comics studies, journalism, comics journalism through the key texts of comics reportages, practices, practical experience are important components of graphic journalism education. Gabriel Sousa says a good graphic journalism education program will cover many aspects of comics media: “To study comics, [there] should be created a diversified program covering several areas: drawing, colour, anatomy, theoretical classes on the various phases of comics, philosophy and studies about the possibilities of new media, as well as notions of sales strategy.” The interviewees do not recall any best practices in comics journalism training, due to the perceived lack of this genre in education. They point towards the abovementioned education projects, but these are located in the field of civic education, and not in journalism or media education.

In summary, comics journalism is an emerging field that exists on the margins of mainstream media. Yet, it seems to be a promising genre, not only “because comics allow people to find themselves”, as Gabriel Sousa says. Comics can play the traditional roles of media in a new way: information, entertainment, education in graphic expression (Mbiye Lumbala, 2009, 190). While being self-educated experts, the interviewees could express expectations that can help to lay out a framework for future education in this field. The *NEWSREEL2* curriculum and e-learning development can contribute to the formation of comics journalism education.

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Improving Democratic Sensibility

Klára Procházková, Lenka Waschková Císařová

Even though their democratic role is clear for most journalists and journalism students, the new challenges of potential pressures (e.g., political, economic, public service media, technological innovation) and their ethical solutions make it necessary to focus on improving democratic sensibility in journalism and media education. This field covers the following specific three aspects: (i) the media and journalists in democratic societies; (ii) the power of the media in democratic societies; and (iii) the responsibility of journalists in a democratic society.

Media and Journalists in Democratic Societies

Unsurprisingly, researchers conclude that politicians and journalists need each other – the media needs something to report about and politicians need to be reported about (e.g., Beattie, 2019; Van Dalen, 2019). Society perceives the media in the traditional *normative theory of journalism* as an essential part of democracy: "A democracy is dependent on a well–informed citizenship, and it is up to journalism to provide the people with accurate and reliable information based on which to make informed political decisions" (McNair, 2008, 238; see also Fenton, 2009). Thus, according to proponents of normative theory, where there is no journalism, there is no democracy, and vice versa (Carey, 1999). The *independence and plurality of the media* are frequent indicators that measure the quality of democracy (Landman, 2012; Jakubowicz, 2017). For example, research by Delli Carpini & Keeter (1996) confirms that only informed citizens make responsible policy decisions because they appear to have more involvement in politics, more stable and thoughtful attitudes, and tend to choose political candidates that match their views. Well–informed citizens use the media to determine which politicians are acting in their favour and which are corrupt, and then vote accordingly (Adserà et al., 2003; Toka, 2008).

The normative theory of journalism argues the media has three functions: (i) *civic* - the media should act as a forum, in which citizens can discuss social themes and where citizens meet with the state, according to Habermas's theory of the public sphere; (ii) *watch–dog* - the media defend human and political rights and call politicians to account; (iii) *mobilization* - the media seeks to mobilize citizens to be more curious about politics and to encourage participation. Its main role is in mediating opportunities for citizen comments and public debate (Jakubowicz, 2017).

Nevertheless, society has reached a stage characterized by the weakened influence of citizens; society is permeated by media and economic forces that are trying to make the most of the opportunity to put pressure on the political system (Blühdorn, 2007; Jakubowicz, 2017). In addition, there is increasing media coverage of politics – politicians are trying to adapt to media logic, so their actions have shrunk to media–interesting topics that lose their ideological essence (Jakubowicz, 2017). The situation also incorporates other current trends, such as *commodification*, *digitization*, changing *audience routines* (Macek, 2015), and the expansion of *fake news* (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019).

Another challenge for the media is increasing *political polarization,* which Inglehart & Norris (2019) contend is caused by the division of society into socially liberal and socially conservative groups. Moreover, technological, economic, and political changes influence the *fragmentation of media*, allowing audiences to consume only the content that matches their beliefs and thematic interests, which may increase political and *media polarization* (Tewksbury & Rittenberg, 2012).

Thus, when there is a decline in *trust in traditional political elites* in politically polarized countries, there is also a decline in *trust in the professional media* (Hanitzsch et al., 2017; Van Dalen, 2019). This may be due, among other things, to the recent emergence of a large number of media outlets that hold specific positions of opinion and tend, along with far–right populist politicians, to undermine trust in professional media and label them "heralds of biased elites". A number of academic texts refer to these media outlets as *alternative media* (Rauch, 2015).

Power of the Media in Democratic Societies

To understand mutual relations in democratic societies, it is necessary to understand the power relations, which is the aim of the research field *political economy of the media* (Mosco, 2009; 1996). This field focuses on complex dynamics, as it "explores the relationship among commodities, institutions, social relations and hegemony, and explores the determination among these elements … (encompasses) discussion of the policy problems and moral issues … (and is oriented) towards actual social change and practice" (Wasko, 2005, 26–27). Golding & Murdock (1991) stress that political economy "goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with basic moral questions of justice, equity and the public good" (see also Pritchard & Stonbely, 2007; Segev, 2015).

Therefore, political economy studies focus particularly on *media ownership* (Wasko, 2005) and control (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Amado & Waisbord, 2018); *media ownership/market concentration* and conversely *media plurality* (Bagdikian, 2004; Kostadinova, 2015); and the *commodification and commercialization* of media (Gulyás, 2003). Political economists have discussed the media in relation to the *public sphere*, *public citizenship*, and democracy: "While acknowledging the powerful role that capital plays in media, researchers have argued that this relationship has a direct bearing on citizenship and public participation" (Wasko, 2014, 263).
Although this approach to media studies has been in place for over half a century, it is just as relevant today for new trends and new media. As Wasko (2014, 267) points out, "'new' media technologies often present a good deal of continuity, especially in terms of corporate involvement, commercialization and commodification". Similarly, Mansell explains:

> if resources are scarce, and if power is unequally distributed in society, then the key issue is how these scarce resources are allocated and controlled, and with what consequences for human action. Distinctions between the older and newer media relate to how and why scarcity conditions emerge and the extent to which they contribute to the reproduction of unequal social conditions. Without research that gives a central place to power as a 'headline' issue in new media studies, we can only speculate about how inequality may be reproduced and then seen as the 'natural' outcome of innovations in new media technologies.
>
> (Mansell, 2004, 98)

More particularly, the political economy of media can currently be considered as the commodification of new media; for example

> bundling services and 'walling off' electronic spaces through the use of payment systems and maintenance of a large number of people without the capacities for informing themselves (…) kinds and signs of counter–tendencies to the dominant modes of new media supply and consumption; (and, for example) some types of alternative media movements and within the open source software movement.
>
> (Mansell, 2004, 98–99)

Nevertheless, some of Europe's media systems, such as the post–communist (Gulyás, 2003; Gross, 2004) and the post–transitive (Jebril, Stetka, & Loveless, 2013) are currently experiencing a radical transformation of power relations in terms of growing state influence. Prime examples, of which, are the media in Hungary and Poland (see Castro-Herrero et al., 2016; Polonska & Beckett, 2019; Surowiec & Štětka, 2020). Local businessmen are becoming media outlet owners, which restrict

journalistic professional autonomy (Stetka, 2010; Stetka, 2012; Stetka & Örnebring, 2013; Waschková Císařová & Metyková, 2015; Štětka, 2016; Surowiec & Štětka, 2020). Štětka adds that

> other countries which have been for a long time regarded as examples of a successful transition have recently started displaying traces of backsliding as well, often congruent with the more general trend of democratic backlash and an ascent of populist politics which has been currently on the rise across this part of Europe.
>
> (Štětka 2016, 4)

Similarly, *public service media* (PSM) currently face political pressure, which traditionally is the tendency of politicians to interfere in PSM's content, control, or funding (Nowak, 2014). These pressures are broadly from ultra–right populist politicians, who label all professional media as the "mouthpiece of biased elites" (Fawzi, 2018; Krämer, 2018; Schulz, 2019; Schulze, 2020). As Schulz, Lewis & Nielsen (2019) found, in most cases, commercial television seems to reach populist audiences better than PSM (see Figure 1), and people with populist attitudes seem to trust PSM significantly less in some countries (e.g., Spain, Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, and the United Kingdom).

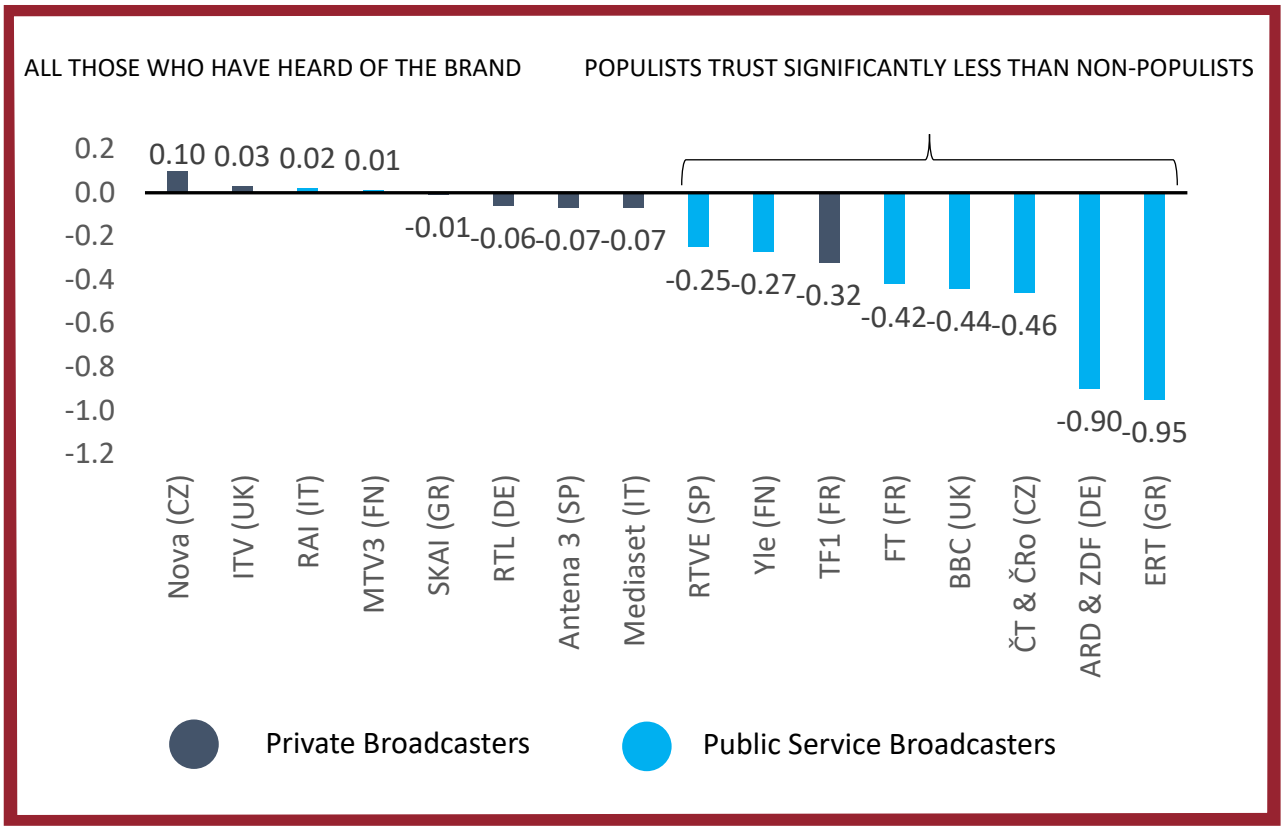

Figure 1: Difference between average trust scores of populists and non-populists

Source: Authors based on Schulz, Lewis & Nielsen (2019, 28)

Moreover, the variance in trust between non–populists and populists is far more significant than the difference between the right and the left. Another source of declining trust in the PSM could be the recent emergence of media that hold specific opinion positions, including *hyperpartisan* and *ultra–right alternative media* (Holt, 2018), which alongside far–right populist politicians tend to undermine *trust in traditional mainstream media* (Schulze, 2020). It is then much more difficult for traditional media (and especially PSM) to maintain trust and show that they have value, even if they do not hold a specific opinion position (Strömback et al., 2020). This problem is visible in data from the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report 2020,* which shows that people with a higher level of *political commitment* trust PSM less (see Figure 2 below).

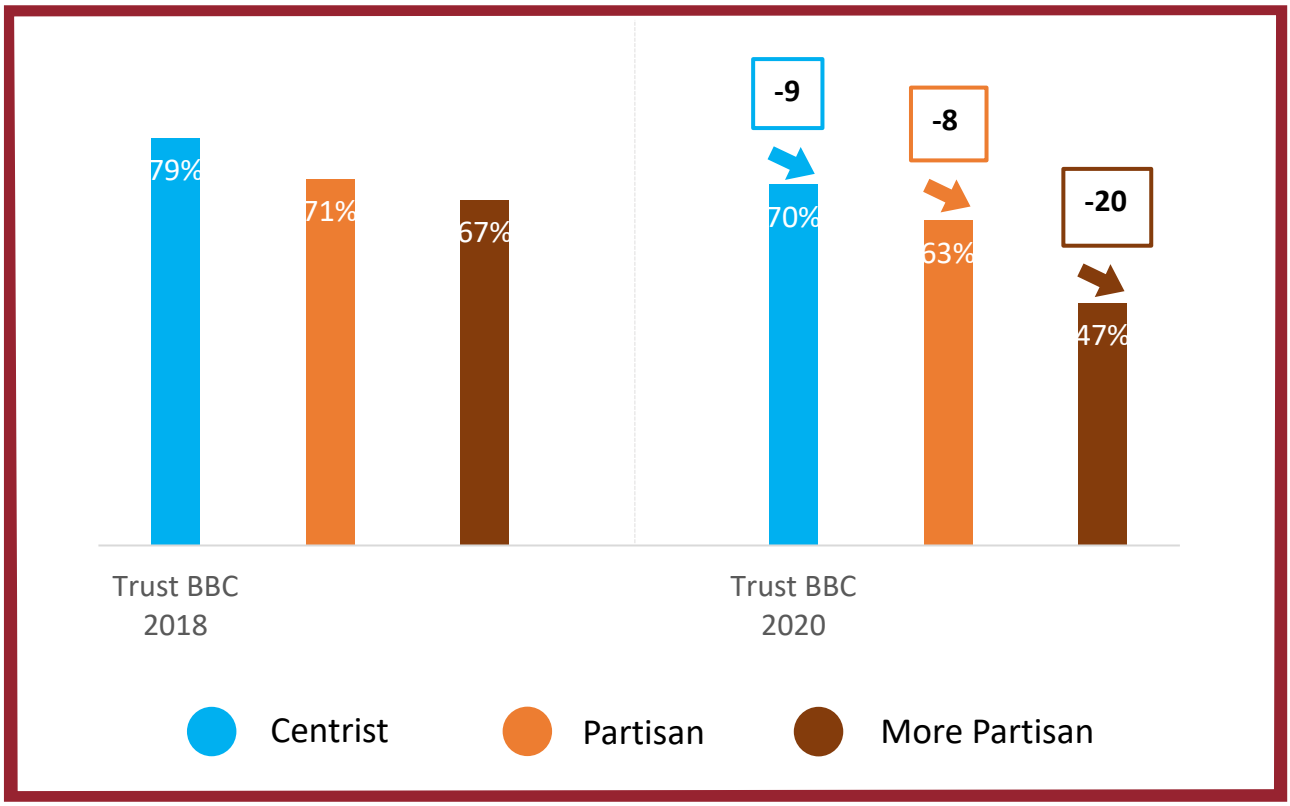

Figure 2: Proportion that trust BBC News by level of political commitment (UK, 2018 and 2020)

Source: Authors based on Newman et al. (2020, 15)

PSM were originally created because of the vulnerable frequency spectre and the tendency of state power to control the broadcast media. However, in the early 1950s, the idea emerged that PSM could contribute to the development of democracy (Donders, 2012). Along with this tendency, the requirement also emerged of PSM providing information that citizens need for opinion formation and democratic participation. PSM should be an adequate alternative to the commercial media (Wrabetz, 2017). Today, they are perceived as the most trusted news brands in many European

countries (Schulz, Levy, & Nielsen, 2019). Research of the challenges that PSM face has focused primarily on technological changes and adaptation to the *converged media environment* (Cushion, 2019; Donders, 2019). Additionally, the pressures of commercial media, which perceive PSM as a natural rival that is freely available to all and thus disrupts the media market, are also widely discussed (Horsti et al., 2014; Cushion, 2019; Vyslouzilova, 2019). These current tendencies towards the instrumentalization of both private media and PSM have an impact on journalists' autonomy and self–censorship, and this affects public *trust in media*.

Particularly in the Czech Republic, "opinion polls have been continuously showing declining trust in media – which has sunk by 20 per cent during the last ten years, according to the Centre for Public Opinion Research" (Štětka, 2016, 7). A similar trend can be seen around the world. For example, as the *Digital News Report 2020* shows, the level of trust in the media in that year was at its lowest point since the Reuters Institute first measured it (Newman et al., 2020).

Responsibility of Journalists in Democratic Societies

Society traditionally considers politicians and media owners to be the sources of not only pressure on the media but also the disruption of *journalistic professional autonomy* (Borden, 2000; Nygren, 2012; Matić, 2016; Amado & Waisbord, 2018) and the reason for journalists' *self-censorship* (Schimpfössl & Yablokov, 2020; Schimpfössl et al., 2020). However, these pressures usually do not manifest as open and direct interference; they are rather more subtle (e.g., economic constraints, the spread of certain values, the organizational culture; Coulson & Hansen, 1995; Meier, 2002; Metyková & Waschková Císařová, 2009). Moreover, journalists rarely reflect openly on professional pressure. Journalistic professional autonomy is an important part of how journalism fulfils its democratic function and how journalists manifest their *independence* and *professionalism* (Deuze, 2005). Örnebring (2013, 39) suggests journalistic autonomy is "the degree of self–governance within the profession, and the extent to which the profession is independent of other societal institutions" (see also Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013; Skovsgaard, 2014; Örnebring et al., 2016; Lauk & Harro–Loit, 2017). Similarly, Witschge and Nygren (2009, 39) point out that core parts of autonomy are "a clear division of labour, and the power to keep others outside the profession" as well as organizational constraints and owner interference. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) remind us, if practitioners of journalism fail to maintain independence from those they cover or if they are unable to serve as independent monitors of power, the content they create ceases to be professional journalism. The concentration of media ownership has a potential impact on journalists' autonomy (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). For example, data from the *Worlds of Journalism*

Study show that Czech journalists feel the rising influence of owners upon their news organizations and suggest that they feel decreasing job satisfaction; nevertheless, the perceived autonomy of journalists since the ownership changes has not changed in a statistically significant way (Hájek et al., 2015; Němcová Tejkalová et al., 2015; see also Worlds of Journalism, n.d.). Concurrently, Singer (2006) considers journalists on the individual level as *socially responsible journalists*, who choose *accountability*, *trustworthiness* (see also Waisbord, 2018; Carlson, 2018), and *serving the public interest* in the framework of *journalistic ethics.* Other authors stress the *individual roles of journalists* (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018; 2017). Moreover, new technology, and specifically social media, bring new challenges for journalists and their responsibilities (e.g., *online branding*; Hanusch & Bruns, 2016; Olausson, 2017; Molyneux, Lewis, & Holton, 2017; Molyneux, Lewis, & Holton, 2018; Molyneux, 2019).

Interview results

The interviews we conducted focused on how journalists perceive the relationship between media, journalists, and democracy; both regarding the traditional assumption of their co-dependence and its development as well as the new economic, political, and technological trends which can influence it. Our sample of interviewees was quite coherent, most of them work for non-profit organisations, in either investigative institutions or training centres. In the context of *improving democratic sensibility*, the interviewees mainly emphasize the importance of emancipating professional journalism from online platforms and strengthening trust in media; as well as the importance of up-to-date, long-term and ongoing training for journalists.

Media and Journalists in Democratic Societies

The interviewees understand media as a vital part of democratic society. They mention mostly the *watch-dog function* of the media and the *civic function*, both of which can be understood as parts of the public service of media (Jakubowicz, 2017). As the Czech investigative reporter Pavla Holcová adds, “anything that isn't critical is PR and I think all those clichés about watchdogs are true”. Respondents also mention the *mobilization function* of media, but in a specific sense – as the director of the Centre for Independent Journalism, Ioana Avădani points out, “journalists should obey all the laws of the country and if they don't like them, they should not break them but rather try to change them”. But at the same time there are several catches: those media which should be vital for democracy have to be free and independent; and there should be boundaries between

media outlets with own professional content and those platforms that only present content created by someone else (e.g. Facebook; Google).

> The media are called the watchdog of democracy and also the fourth estate. But media are powerless power, they cannot change anything by themselves. They can be impactful, if the other three powers are correctly performing their tasks. The role of the media is just to expose wrongdoing and it is up to the other three powers to take the issue from them.
>
> Ioana Avădani, Director, Centre for Independent Journalism, Romania

> I am not the kind of person who thinks that media and journalism are essential to democracy. Why? I think that journalism is very important for the notion how our democracy is built. But I am not sure, in the era of social media, when I have to use the quotation of prime minister from Twitter, what my role is as a journalist? We mixed the notion of Internet with the notion of media outlets, but it is not the same. Journalists preserve the accountability to the audience, so journalists should control the channels of distribution. Can they gain it back? Yes, if we have the political will. It is like trying to stop a wave with a bare hand.
>
> Paolo Agostinho, Editor, *Lusa news agency*, Portugal

Media and power

The biggest challenge for mutual relations in democratic society are the power relations of the actors – journalists, owners, advertisers, and politicians. As the interviewees point out, one of the consequences of economic and political developments in European countries is the transition of business-oriented media to the non-profit sector. On one hand, this move can be understood as a consequence of journalists' assumption that the key concept is that of *striving for media and journalism independence*. This refers to independence from ever-concentrating media ownership of local businessmen; from advertisers; or from growing state influence (Polonska & Beckett, 2019; Surowiec & Štětka, 2020; Castro-Herrero et al., 2016). As investigative reporter Holcová notes: "The media scene is in a bad shape, but even this doesn't reflect on the will to support independent media. It's hard to motivate someone to donate."

> Advertising is the biggest source of revenue, but it gives advertising agencies a lot of power, so they are very aggressive. They've started challenging editorial conditions to get a contract. They think they can have their say in what the content looks like.
>
> Ioana Avădani, Director, Centre for Independent Journalism, Romania

On the other hand, the transformation of media organizations into NGOs can be understood as a way to solve problems with the sustainability of the traditional business models. These new types of newsrooms usually have other sources of funding than advertising, e.g. donation-based financing; membership programs or partnerships with other media. Nevertheless, that does not mean it's an easier way. As director of *investigace.cz* Holcová says: "We need to devote more and more time and energy to fundraising at the expense of investigative work." Co-founder of the Hungarian investigative reporting centre András Pethő has experience with a supporter who tried to influence the content: "We gave our supporters the opportunity to get in touch with topics that interest them. Once a supporter came to us to write a story about him and we refused. He was quite grumpy."
The story of Paolo Agostinho, the editor of Portugal's *Lusa* news agency, shows that blurring of ownership and organisational status are elements in the problematic framework of media existence: the financing of *Lusa* is partly public and partly private.

> The ownership of the news agency – it is awful, you can quote me. Historically, we are the losers, partly public, partly private. I think we have the worst scenario. The private sector doesn't invest anything, they want the revenue. And we have the rules of the public employer, so we are locked in several areas. The best model is either completely private or completely public. What we have is a recipe for disaster.
>
> Paolo Agostinho, Editor, *Lusa news agency*, Portugal

Other connections to the power relations between media and society are based on the connections between journalists and politicians. In line with journalistic faith in the watch-dog role of media, interviewees consider the relationship between journalists and politicians as unwanted and ideally non-existent at all, so as not to interfere with journalistic work. Nevertheless, the interviewees admit that journalists need politicians as sources. As news agency editor Agostinho expresses: "I don't believe in a friendship between a journalist and a politician, because the politician is a source. If the source is my friend, I have a problem. I am either his friend or the journalist. I can't be both."

> There should be no relationship between journalists and politicians at all. I mean, of course, on a personal level. I'm more of a purist. I don't think journalists should have any personal contact with politicians, precisely because they might become part of some political game. But there are plenty of journalists who say that to understand what's going on and the motivations that these politicians have, you need to go out for a beer with them as well. Our rules are such that when we go to a politician and ask a question, we should know the answer in advance. At the same time, any information we get we must verify from someone else.
>
> Pavla Holcová, Investigative journalist*, investigace.cz*, Czech Republic

The relation between journalists and politicians is further complicated by the current trend of politicians who communicate with citizens directly through social media; therefore, they are no longer dependent on journalists and professional media (see Van Dalen, 2019). By contrast, journalists are perceived as being increasingly dependent on politicians' online posts and willing to take anything as a quotation. The interviewees see a clear link between this development and the weakening of democracy. As Avădani says, "media consumers started to think that they no longer need journalists because they have direct access to the circles of power. No one understands that they have access to what the circles of power want."

> It is a distribution problem and obviously we can't get back to the old times, when journalists were the gatekeepers. And I don't think that it was good, it was not very democratic, but what we have now is bad for journalists but also for democracy.
>
> András Pethő, Editor, *Direkt36*, Hungary

> Politicians start to understand that populism is to wipe off media and speak directly to people without mediators. They [politicians] use big words, and we quote them because we want to survive, and we need it for our economic model. And they talk through us, they are using us to defend their ideas. We have an opportunity to build a structure to defend media and defend democracy, I am an optimist, but we have to play the right cards.
>
> Paolo Agostinho, Editor, *Lusa news agency*, Portugal

On the level of individual journalists, the power struggle can manifest itself in various forms and is reflected by the perceived degree of *journalistic professional autonomy* (Amado & Waisbord, 2018; Matić, 2016; Nygren, 2012; Borden, 2000). The interviewees from the non-profit newsrooms consider themselves lucky as they do not need to fight for their autonomy against internal or external pressures. Nevertheless, they see the potential problems of mostly owners' and economic pressures in other newsrooms. As Avădani points out, in Romania journalists have autonomy, but they do not think separately from the company interests – "They see their duty in protecting the interests of their company." Jonathan Sachse, co-founder of the German non-profit investigative newsroom *Correctiv*, considers media owners' pressures in Germany as a problem: "It is the conflict between money and editorial independence."

Nevertheless, the interviewees mention other individual challenges for the improvement of democratic sensibility – *burn-out* and *insecurity*. Security is also one of the most common themes among respondents when discussing technological innovation in investigative newsrooms. As investigative reporter Holcová sums up: "We have very strict rules and only encrypted

communication. We do not put anything personal on social media, I have strictly separated personal and work phones and e-mails."

> Burnout happens a lot. A lot of journalists have burned out. Some have become addicted to drugs, some have become addicted to alcohol, and we talk about it a lot. But I have great colleagues, which is one of the biggest motivators. I don't do the job to take someone down, like the government, but because I see meaning in the work and I see that my colleagues see that meaning in the work.
>
> Pavla Holcová, Investigative journalist, *investigace.cz*, Czech Republic

> Like every newsroom, we receive hate messages every day. Especially our fact-checking team gets a lot of hate feedback. They make corrections to misinformation. And especially women in the team get aggressive emails. It really is an issue. During the pandemic we had issues with attacks on demonstrations. Compared to the years before, you are not really safe in demonstrations as a journalist.
>
> Jonathan Sachse, Manager, *Correctiv.Lokal*, Germany

Media and responsibility

For media to fulfil their role in democracy, journalists consider themselves at the individual level as *socially responsible*, choosing accountability, trustworthiness, factuality and serving the public interest in the framework of journalistic laws and ethics (see Waisbord, 2018; Carlson, 2018). As editor Pethö points out, "I think we have to take our job seriously, but I think it's better not to take ourselves too seriously."

The interviewees stress the importance of accuracy, using *factchecking*, which further contributes to media trustworthiness and secondarily to the safety of journalists. Furthermore, they emphasize the transparency of what journalists do and how they do it as another element of building trustworthiness. Most of the interviewees at the same time stress the importance of the editor in the editorial process.

> Anyone who applies cowboy journalism gets fired. That's why we try not to have an opinion on the things we write about, we try to disengage, listen, and hear both sides. And we try to completely move away from opinion journalism, I think we're supposed to be much more of an observer, putting things in context, rather than a commentator on what's going on. And the other thing that enhances security is factchecking.
>
> Pavla Holcová, Investigative journalist, *investigace.cz*, Czech Republic

At the same time, the interviewees are aware of the obstacles and challenges journalists face in terms of responsibility. Those can be summarized as a decline in quality of journalistic work and the violation of expected journalistic rules. Ioana Avădani sums up: “If the journalists don't do their best, the trust of the people or the respect is going down, which is actually happening here. People are rejecting the media and I think that this is a real problem for democracy.” This theme is linked in the interviewees' statements on the importance of the editor in the editorial process. They stress they miss a stronger editor’s role or intervention. “If you look at how today’s content is made, you feel that there is no editing. Reporters report from the field, they need an editor to have a broader look,” says Avădani. Pavla Holcová adds, that quite often editorial responsibilities do go to journalists, “mainly because of the rush and the marketing pressure, and at the same time editors don't make money for the newspapers”.

> I am very critical. I think that journalists are deluded to have a power. They believe that having social access means have a social status, it is not the same. They see journalism as a social level, not as a job. Journalists got drunk with the idea they have power, but they don’t. They were consumed by the real power. The new generations of journalists were blinded by the spotlight.
>
> Paolo Agostinho, Editor, *Lusa news agency*, Portugal

> Media that are unable to differentiate between opinion journalism and news reporting dull the sensitivity in that what people would have once taken as shocking information, they now say: well, yeah, everybody steals, there’s nothing to be done about it.
>
> Pavla Holcová, Investigative journalist*, investigace.cz*, Czech Republic

Education related to democratic sensibility

Considering education, all interviewees have a journalism degree or degree from a related field. All of them think that training throughout the whole career is essential for journalists. Some of them have even been actively involved in training journalists or teaching journalism at the university.

There are a range of topics and knowledge journalists should acquire and be trained in repeatedly, according to the interviewees: not only writing but also understanding the logical structure of the text; foreign languages; analytical thinking skills; basic economic education; journalistic ethics; software usage.

Investigative reporter Holcová considers investigative journalism as “simply journalism + time + money, so I don't think it requires any super special education”. Nevertheless, some respondents

also name specific characteristics and skills that journalists focused on political or investigative journalism should have: patience; discipline; be a good interviewer; understand data; be able to work with documents and open sources; teamwork; be able to handle sometimes uncomfortable situations; be able to think about larger media topics as projects: define what they want to say, how they want to say it, what they have to do to fulfil it, and how much it's going to cost. Editor Pethö sums it up: “You have to have soul of a gambler and mind of an accountant.” Such a journalist is a good journalist and should have no problem getting a job, according to the respondents. As Holcová puts it, “I don't think a journalism degree is crucial, but it is useful. The school made me think about some of the important things. The most important subject was ethics. It should be given much more emphasis.”

The interviewees think that learning of journalistic skills can take place in praxis, in specialized training as well as at a university, but none of this is a substitution for lifelong learning. Some of these types of education also have partial shortcomings according to the experience of respondents: obsolescence; unclear boundaries of the field; or lack of emphasis on key topics in the field.

> Teachers at the university are frustrated that journalism is changing so rapidly that by the time students graduate, their knowledge will be irrelevant. But there is a need for more practitioners to work in universities so that the trends are reflected in teaching earlier.
>
> Ioana Avădani, Director, Centre for Independent Journalism, Romania

> We have to put a stamp on what is journalism and what is not. We can’t mix public relations and journalism and I don’t like university programmes which combine these fields. Academia has to be more modest. Academics believe that they don’t need to update themselves, but that’s an illusion. Academia has to make itself important in the lifetime training of journalists. Journalists have to understand that they have to learn and adapt to society development. It is vital for the trust in media.
>
> Paolo Agostinho, Editor, *Lusa news agency,* Portugal

Thinking about how the media and democracy relation will develop in the future, the interviewees are aware of the current problems in this relationship, connected mainly with *trust in media*, and hope for an improvement.

> The way society has been changed by the internet can be broadly compared to the way society has been changed by the printing press, and just as after the invention of the printing press there was a great deal of uncertainty about what was and wasn't verified and what was and wasn't true, and so the journalistic profession was born. So here is that epoch, when people equally believe conspiracy

theories because they've seen them on the Internet. That era will pass and people will go back to discerning what is credible news and what is not.

Pavla Holcová, Investigative journalist*, investigace.cz*, Czech Republic

> Democracy will always need journalists as a counterpower, as opposition. The problem is media, because journalists don't control the media, politicians can control the media. Journalists have to stress their position without being in the ivory tower: journalists either theoretically stress impartiality or practically eat off the same plate with politicians.

Paolo Agostinho, Editor, *Lusa news agency*, Portugal

> I believe in being transparent as journalists with our work. I see it as a good chance to build trust and it is important in the long terms to help democratic structures. If people don't trust us, they can vote for a politician who will destroy independent media. We have to have in mind, that everything is built on trust. But my general feeling is that we are on a good way to it.

Jonathan Sachse, Manager, *Correctiv.Lokal*, Germany

> I think it's going to be hard to fix the broken information system – if journalists want to make a public service, then we should act like public service, so whenever I see journalists breaking the rules, it's not helping.

András Pethő, Editor, *Direkt36*, Hungary

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Covering Migration

Susanne Fengler, Dominik Speck, Marcus Kreutler, Monika Lengauer, Anna-Carina Zappe

While we have called this field “covering migration” to simplify its title, it is important to distinguish between migrants and refugees. As we focus on both aspects of migration, we will rather use the term “covering migration and forced displacement” (for an overview of the different definitions and terminologies, see Lengauer, 2021). [1]

Why covering migration and forced displacement matters

Unprecedented numbers of people are on the move: In 2020, over 280 million people globally were migrants and refugees, an increase of almost 130 million since 1990 (Migration Data Portal, 2021). The number and proportion of these flows already surpasses some projections made for the year 2050, which were in the order of 230 million (IOM, 2019, 2). Journalists can, with the ways they report about matters of migration, shape the perception of migrants and refugees in countries of both origin and destination. But even if media do not, or only hesitantly, cover the topic, this may have an impact on audiences and decision-makers. Citizens may not understand the full consequences of migration matters for their own society, make misleading decisions, do or do not exert pressure on policymakers to take action, or feel betrayed by media. Media scholars even argue that the high visibility of the so-called European ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015 in the media has promoted Euroscepticism among European citizens (Harteveld et al., 2018). A migrant from Kenya, interviewed for one of our research projects, notes that the Kakuma refugee camp, accommodating over 180,000 refugees and asylum seekers, is simply “a forgotten story” in the Kenyan media (Bastian et al., 2018). To enable a more “independent, objective and quality reporting of media outlets” on migrants and refugees, as urged by the United Nations’ Compact (UN, 2018), we need to study the status quo of migration coverage and identify achievements as well as shortcomings in the way media may treat the topic. As a global issue, it is important to not only take a look at the media coverage in those countries that receive the biggest flows of migrants but also take into account the countries of origin and transit countries. In line with the previous research conducted by Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism (EBI), this section will mainly focus on migration from sub-Saharan African countries to Europe as an exemplary field.[2] Research has shown that media in both world regions

[1] Parts of this text have been taken from previous publications of the author: Fengler et al. (2020) & Fengler (2021).
[2] For an overview of aspects of migration coverage in other world regions, see Fengler & Lengauer (2021).

tend to focus on events such as the accidents of refugee boats in the Mediterranean Sea, while neglecting the complex causes leading to migration flows (Fengler et al., 2020).

Covering migration and forced displacement in Europe and Africa: An overview

Various phases of migration have triggered mass communication studies on the coverage of migration, while reporting on minorities (sometimes related to the issue) has been a recurrent subject of analysis at least since the 1980s. The studies provide a base to assess the development and status quo of migration coverage across countries, seeking to understand "the factors that shape media coverage of migrants and minorities, as well as the effect of that coverage on public attitudes, policy outcomes or social relations" (Bleich et al., 2015, 857). It is notable that most of these studies have originated in the Global North. While the causes and consequences of migrants' and refugees' movements have steadily dominated the media agenda in 'Western' societies since 2015 (Krüger & Zapf-Schramm, 2016; Fengler & Kreutler, 2020), few stories and headlines in African media focus on people leaving the continent and heading north, according to Eric Chinje, former president of the African Media Initiative (Chinje, 2016). Research on the coverage of migrants and refugees in African countries is largely restricted to South Africa, which has experienced recurring incidents targeting migrants from other African countries. Authors analysing the South African print media include Danso & McDonald (2001), McDonald & Jacobs (2005), and Fine & Bird (2002), who argue that South African media in recent years provided an "incomplete" and "simplistic" picture of xenophobic incidents (Smith, 2009, 11). Apart from these studies, Assopgoum (2011) looked at the coverage of migration from Senegal to Germany, while White (2015) produced an overview of frameworks and conditions for migration coverage, which also includes a few African countries. In "Moving Stories", White (2015) argues that journalists fail to tell the full story and routinely fall into propaganda traps laid by politicians. In migrants' and refugees' countries of origin, censorship or a lack of resources, or a combination of both, are mainly to blame for poor coverage (see also Al-Mazahara, 2016).

Before reviewing mass communication studies in the Global North, it needs to be noted that countries in Europe vary considerably in their migration history: Long-standing immigration to the UK and France due to the countries' colonial pasts, and the 'Gastarbeiter' movement of Southern European and Turkish migrants into Germany since the 1960s, contrast with the recent history of immigration in the 2010s into Spain, Italy and Greece, which had previously been 'sending countries' to Northern Europe. Some Central and Eastern European Countries, by contrast, have not seen such

substantial immigration in recent times. These differences may have an impact on the way national media cover migration and forced displacement (see also Eberl et al., 2019).

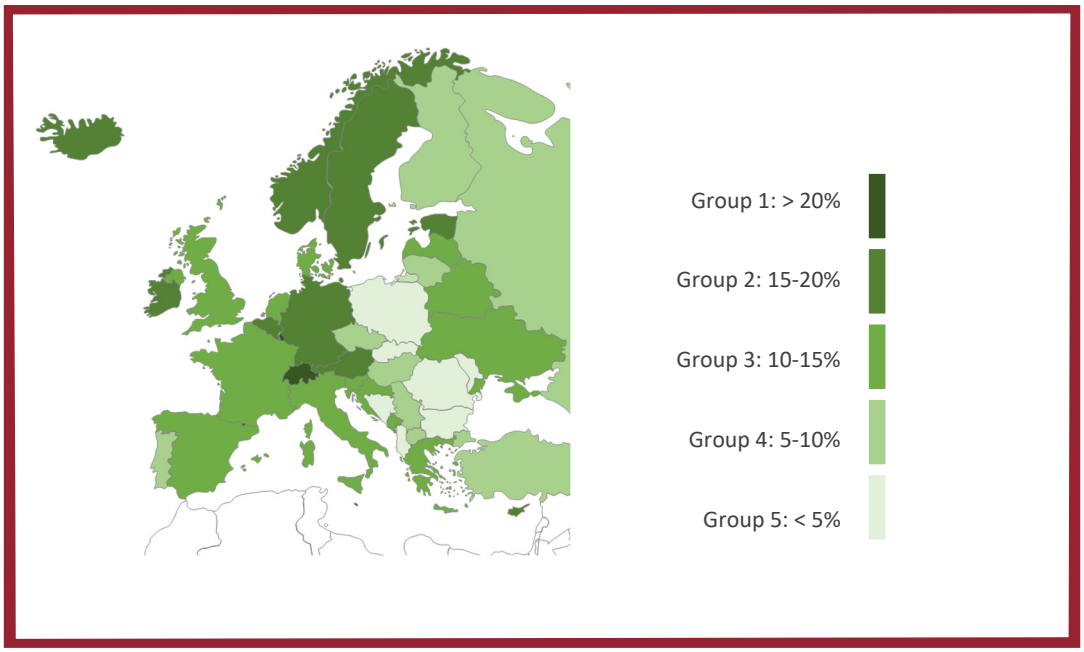

Figure 1: Percentage of migrant population in European countries 2020
Source: Authors based on UN (2020)

Also, most of the studies analyse coverage of migration, (im)migrants and refugees in a single country, although "this policy domain is increasingly shifting to supranational decision making within the EU, which means that analysing immigration-related public debate from a Europeanised perspective becomes increasingly relevant" (Horsti, 2008, 42). Yet, as Meltzser et al. (2018, 1) summarize in a meta-analysis, "there is little comparative research on the salience of immigration-related issues or actors in the media across different European countries". These studies show considerable variation in line with different political positions towards migration within European countries, but also with various journalistic routines, media cultures, and access to sources for migration coverage. Caviedes (2015, 898) has compared migration coverage in France, the UK and Italy, based on the observation that a large proportion of migration coverage is "increasingly linked with crime and security issues". Migration is also associated with "threatening economic prosperity and cultural identity". His analysis finds both the economic and the 'securitisation' frames dominant in migration coverage 2009-2012. "[D]ebates over immigration vary in intensity and issue salience between countries, such that they may each sustain their own particular critical narratives" (Caviedes, 2015, 912). According to Esses et al. (2013, 520), negative frames and conflicts continue to characterize European coverage of migrants and refugees. Intra-EU migrants are more often described by the media as a "threat to the economy and welfare system", while non-EU migrants

are portrayed as a “threat” to host countries’ culture (Meltzer et al., 2018, 6). A recent study in seven EU countries confirms that migration from outside the EU into the EU is framed more negatively and tends to focus on matters of securitization (Eberl et al., 2019).

Horsti (2008) and Fohrn (2009) provide studies examining the media coverage of African migrants into Europe, focussing on people arriving in Spain and Italy respectively. According to Horstis’s study of one Finnish and one Swedish newspaper, most stories did not present Africans as sovereign actors taking rational decisions; also, the event was largely ‘domesticated’ in the papers, by emphasizing Finnish and Swedish actors and perspectives on this distant event in Southern Europe. Another study by Balabanova & Balch (2010) studied labour migration in the UK and Bulgaria after the EU’s enlargement in 2007, and thus compared coverage in the sending countries of migrants and their host countries. The authors expected differences in the types of coverage in the host and the sending countries, due to various stakes in migration. However, the media agenda in Bulgaria largely mirrored the UK’s, because the Bulgarian news media imported UK news due to lack of newsroom resources for original coverage. Focusing on the so-called ‘European refugee crisis’ of 2015, Berry et al. (2015) found that coverage of migrants and refugees differed significantly among European countries. Humanitarian issues were more prevalent in Italian media; Swedish publications had the most positive tenor; those in the UK remained largely negative. According to an analysis by the European Journalism Observatory (EJO), newspapers in Western Europe were generally more compassionate towards the plight of migrants and refugees, compared to Central and Eastern European countries (EJO, 2015). Georgiou & Zaborowski (2017) conducted a research project on media coverage in eight European countries, concluding that the media paid little and scattered attention to the context of the migrants and refugees in Europe, and stories were only rarely connected to war reporting or other international news stories from the countries of origins of migrants and refugees. Fotopoulos & Kaimaklioti (2016) compared how the Greek, German and British press have addressed the initial coverage of the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015; according to them, migrants and refugees were portrayed as helpless and desperate victims of the civil war in Syria, and the newspapers paid a lot of attention to the tragedy. Coverage tends to emphasize the consequences and effects of immigration from the viewpoint of economics and labour markets (Goedeke Tort et al., 2016). Moreover, studies do identify a lack of reporting about migrants’ individual stories (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017). A study by the ICMPD (2017) points towards a lack of knowledge concerning the complex issue of migration among journalists in European and MENA countries and also about migrants’ countries of origin. The same study also highlighted newsrooms’ vulnerability to pressure by populists and via social media, potentially demonstrating a need for further education and training (ICMPD, 2017).

While research has typically focussed on the *content* of migration coverage, much less is known about the *actors* in this field: Journalists covering migration have not attracted a high degree of scholarly attention so far, despite the potential hardships of doing so (see Fronista & Papadopoulou, 2018; Zappe, 2021). Further research could thus focus on migration coverage from a journalist-centred angle, assessing the specific (training) needs of the field.

There are also studies focussing on the impact of migration coverage on the *audience*. Focussing on the connection of media use and voting behaviour in the Czech Republic, research by Štětka et al. (2020) indicates that exposure to news about migration increases the likelihood to vote for populist parties. According to the study, this holds particularly true when people use commercial TV news and online news, while the consumption of public service media news is related with less negative attitudes about migration. Sohlberg et al. (2018) indicate that the picture of the young Alan Shenu (often reported as "Aylan Kurdi") who was found drowned on a beach in Turkey in 2015 made public opinion more welcoming of refugees. A cross-country study showed that in Portugal, the UK, Germany, and Italy positive humanitarian stories about migrants and refugees increased three-fold immediately after the photographs of the child were published (EJO, 2015).

Taking a closer look at the challenges: Two exemplary studies on covering migration and forced displacement

To analyse migration coverage across political systems and journalism cultures, the Erich Brost Institute (EBI) and its international partners have conducted two studies comparing the coverage of migrants and refugees in Africa and Europe (study 1) as well as across Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, and Russia (study 2).

The first study compared newspaper content in six European and five African countries (Fengler et al., 2018; 2020). A consortium of European and African universities analysed articles related to migration and forced displacement published in the online editions of two leading daily newspapers each from Germany, the UK, France, Italy, Greece, and Spain, as well as Kenya, Uganda Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Ghana. The study assessed 1,512 articles within one year (1 June 2015 to 31 May 2016) dealing with migration from Africa to Europe. The findings demonstrate a huge gap regarding the quantity of migration coverage between African and European media. More than 88% of the articles found during the study period came from European media, with African media amounting to only 12% of the articles. This is a striking imbalance, even when taking into account that African

newspapers on average have less space for news compared to European newspapers, and radio is the dominant medium due to financial and technological restrictions as well as a lack of literacy (African Media Barometer, 2018).

Coverage in both Europe and Africa was dominated by day-to-day politics, and severely lacks deeper insights. Less than 9% of the total coverage is devoted to relevant background information, which would help the audience to understand the actual causes and impact of migration and forced displacement. Media audiences in both Europe and Africa received little background information to assess matters of migrants and refugees – or to understand the relevance of the topic. In Europe, coverage of migration from Africa was heavily self-centred and revolved around European security issues. Only a quarter (26%) of the articles by European media focused on African main actors. At the same time, the European media largely ignored the sub-Saharan African countries of origin. Libya as the crucial African transit country to Europe received some attention (5%). Eritrea, with the highest share of migrants to Europe at the time of study, attracted less than 1%. Little was said about who African migrants and refugees are and why they decide to leave. Strikingly, African media paid even less attention to those topics. Instead, accidents and disasters in the Mediterranean Sea dominated the coverage in African media. Migration coverage in African countries neglected the people: Coverage was focused on authorities and lacked a human face. 'Elitist' actors such as political actors, state authorities, and 'elitist' international actors such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) dominated.

The content analysis's findings were triangulated with qualitative panel discussions with African migrants in Germany (Zappe et al., 2020). Participants agreed that matters of migration and forced displacement were hardly treated in the media in their home countries. Specific information in this area had been scarce; the little information they had prior to their migration decision was almost entirely from interpersonal sources. Participants also highlighted a distorted picture of the German reality of life in African media and society, which repeatedly implied the idea that financial success is almost guaranteed. Migration from Africa to Europe, but also pan-African migration, are according to these experiences, only sporadically addressed by the media.

A second multi-country study compared migration coverage in 17 countries in Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, and Russia. The study analysed reporting in six exemplary weeks between August 2015 and March 2018 (Fengler & Kreutler, 2020), retrieving a total of 2,417 articles. Significant differences in the intensity of reporting about migration and forced displacement across countries were evident. Coverage in Germany and Hungary – the two countries with highest

numbers of first-time asylum applicants in 2015 – stood out in terms of volume. In other European media, the topic received much less attention. Also, many European media treated matters of migrants and refugees as a "foreign topic", taking place far away from users' own country. A focus on migration as a domestic topic was only apparent in Italy, Germany, and Greece. French and British media see their country involved on an international scale, as well as the Hungarian media – the latter certainly a consequence of the political focus placed by the country's government on alleged dangers and burdens of migration. In the Italian media, and partly in the French media, immigrants from Africa dominated the media coverage; other countries in Europe focussed on migrants and refugees from the Near and Middle East; potentially reflecting the main flows of migration to these countries.

Strikingly, it often seems to be impossible for the journalists to differentiate between refugees with their respective rights under the Geneva Convention and other migrants. Journalists may also be unfamiliar with the definitions themselves, as most of the articles (60%) mention a mix of various status groups, or the status question remains unclear – underlining the need for more specific training on the topic.

Western European and left-leaning or liberal media focus more on the situation of, and aid for, migrants and refugees, while Central and Eastern European and more right-wing or conservative media focus on problems and protests.[3] Yet, in almost all countries, audiences do have a choice, as the two leading media studied offered contrasting perspectives on the topic. The analysis of the main actors underlines the policy focus in migration reporting: In 37% of the articles the government, or a single actor of the government or ruling party, was the main actor. Migrants represented a total of 26.6% of main actors, but are more often portrayed as large, anonymous groups rather than as individuals or small groups such as families. By a factor of ten, more non-migrants than migrants are quoted directly or indirectly.

Outlook: Migration and transnational news flows

The analysis of migration coverage needs to be embedded in the discussion about news flows and foreign coverage in both the Global South and North, as well as a rather biased portrayal of Africa in international news (see next section). Given the deficits in global news flows, reporting about Africa remains a specific challenge. Serwornoo (2021) demonstrates that Ghanaian media rely on

[3] The media outlets covered in the different countries were ranked as liberal or conservative according to an assessment of country experts involved (Fengler & Kreutler, 2020, 12-14).

sources from the Global North even for the coverage of neighbouring African countries. Due to the lack of original coverage the quality of foreign coverage remains low, and political and economic problems that trigger the causes of migration remain rather invisible in the African media. In this regard, we may argue that covering migration and forced displacement is well-suited for cross-border collaborative journalism (see next section), as "the true story of migration and forced displacement can only be told from more than one place. With a shrinking network of foreign correspondents even in the 'Western' media, and extremely scarce resources in many newsrooms to report even from neighbouring countries, collaborative projects may emerge as one viable solution to contextualize the coverage" (Bettels-Schwabbauer & Leihs, 2021).

Interview Results

To get an additional impression of the field, we interviewed four journalists (one each from the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, and Portugal). We focused predominantly on migration coverage in contexts abroad – i.e., as a part of international reporting. Yet, one of our respondents, Eszter Neuberger (*444.hu*, Hungary) also frequently writes about topics of social inequality, integration, and minorities within her home country. While none of the respondents is stationed abroad permanently, all have experience from various research trips on issues of migration from regions such as the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Sub-Sahara Africa, or the Balkans. The interviews aimed at getting further insights into the challenges journalists covering migration and forced displacement face, and to analyse their expectations towards journalism training and education.

Challenges and limitations in reporting migration and forced displacement

Asked whether they feel the mass media properly present migration and forced displacement issues, the interviewees point towards rather cyclical attention, which comes across mainly in times of perceived crisis, with peaks such as during Europe's 'refugee crisis' of 2015. This correlates with previous findings from academic research that migration and forced displacement is covered mainly within the context of crises.

> In 2015 and 2016, when everybody was paying attention to this subject, we had a lot of good reporting on this subject. (…) But there are no conditions at most of the newsrooms to have a

journalist that is paying attention to this with the frequency that we should have. Because it is a phenomenon that will not stop.

Catarina Santos, Editor, *Observador*

> So, my interest [in the topic] didn't start in 2015, and it didn't end in 2016, that's one thing that is really important to me: To keep a certain continuity in the reporting. See from time to time how the story continues. So, last year I did like a longer reportage from a few places in Germany, that was about five years after [the previous visit]: How is the situation now? How do the people today reflect on what happened during the past five years? How do the refugees reflect on it? How do the people who helped refugees reflect? (….) This is an approach that is important to me personally: Not to focus on the subject only at the moment of crisis, when everybody is focussing on it. But not losing the interest.
>
> Tomáš Lindner, Editor, *Respekt*

As found in the literature, some of our interviewees criticize a rather elite-centred reporting about migration and forced displacement, which often excludes the voices of migrants and refugees or other "ordinary" citizens. According to Eszter Neuberger, this also depends on "whether you have the time and resources to go to talk to people and not just work on the press releases of NGOs that are involved in integration, or advocacy for human rights." Tomáš Lindner says that he is not talking too much with politicians while reporting on this topic:

> I think that one of the major problems of the 2015 media landscape in the Czech Republic was that too much voice was given to politicians. And those politicians, who often didn't understand anything about the topic, and suddenly they had to tell their opinions about the refugees and the EU quota system, and they totally dominated in the debate. And experts, lots of other voices that could be heard were not really audible in most reporting here.
>
> Tomáš Lindner, Editor, *Respekt*

However, such in-depth reporting requires adequate funding, a resource which seems to be comparatively scarce when it comes to the realisation of field trips, making cross-funding from outside the newsroom budgets indispensable. The interviewees mention travel grants from NGOs or foundations, journalism awards funding the next research journey, organized press trips or even the extension of private holidays for research purposes as means to make such reporting possible despite limited budgets. However, research trips sponsored by organisations (be they NGOs or major international intergovernmental organisations) appear as a double-edged sword: Both Tomáš Lindner (*Respekt*, Czech Republic) and Julia Amberger (freelance journalist, Germany) stress that

when participating in such trips, it is advisable to stay longer than the official trip duration, to get a more diverse and in-depth picture.

At any rate, such organizations do play an important role in reporting migration and forced displacement. This may not come as a surprise given their crucial position as actors in the field. They also serve as agenda-setters, sources, and door-openers, help journalists to getting in touch with migrants and refugees or granting access to sites of interest. Again, this is perceived as ambivalent, as Catarina Santos describes based on an experience during a field trip:

> But there was a particular episode, something very symbolic, that speaks a lot about this very tricky relationship on the ground. I had to go to a neighbourhood that was being supported by a major international organization. They provided me with two translators from their own staff. (…) On the ground I had the feeling that not everything was being translated, but I had no way to really check it there. But one thing that I always did when I came back from these trips was to contract my own translator (…) I realized with my translator that a lot of things were being said there that weren't that good for the organization.
>
> Catarina Santos, Editor, *Observador*

While many newsrooms cannot afford to hire own translators for such field trips, these double-checks when returning home are crucial, according to Catarina Santos. Eszter Neuberger (*444.hu*, Hungary), sees NGOs as important partners, but also stresses the ambiguity of the relationship:

> Because many times they are like gatekeepers of information, and gatekeepers to people. Simply because they are working with these people who trust them. And many times, this mediation is needed. Because this, sometimes very reasonable, scepticism towards media can be bridged by an NGO recommending you. (…) Knowing these organizations, and having a contact with them, but also keeping a distance from them; that you are not transmitting their narratives. But they are supposed to help you somehow. So, this kind of balancing between give and take (…) is important to be mastered.
>
> Eszter Neuberger, Editor, *444.hu*

Julia Amberger, a German freelance journalist specialized in, amongst others, migration and forced displacement with a focus on African countries, avoids working with organizations when possible, except for when reporting from war and conflict zones. She did investigate a story on corruption within a resettlement program of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, in East Africa.

> I always try to work completely without them. (…) And always try to get in touch with the people concerned immediately – those who experience what I want to report about. That means I don't

> need to take the detour via the organizations. I have good contacts with other journalists who know immediately whom they can arrange for me to meet, so that I don't have to somehow put any organisation on it, or give them advance warning. You always have to be careful: Which information do you disclose, what you are going to report about.
>
> Julia Amberger, Freelance Journalist

Julia Amberger has cooperated with local journalists on several occasions and considers such collaborations as door-openers. “But I also like to work with the people concerned themselves. Then I have the trust of one of them, and the doors open to all the others”, she says, adding that she prefers accommodations such as AirBnB apartments rather than hotels, for their opportunity to get in touch with locals. Such encounters help her to reflect and understand what she experiences on the ground:

> And then I say to them: Guys, listen to what has happened to me today. And then they can give me much better feedback or help to "decode" a situation, as some course might do. Because clearly, the Congolese again have a different way of reading between the lines than perhaps Ugandans do.
>
> Julia Amberger, Freelance Journalist

Our interviewees mention role conflicts that might arise when reporting about migration and forced displacement, challenging the role of journalists as neutral observers, such as being asked for money from the people you report about. While these situations might be typical of any reporting on people in need, it is crucial to consider these situations during training, as it may break with textbook standards of what a reporter should and should not do.

> I found it impossible for me (…) to take donations to Moria [Greek refugee camp], and to give it to people. I saw the terrible conditions they live in. And there were other colleagues who were doing it, they were buying things in shops, and they were taking it to people. My heart breaks seeing these kids without socks and shoes in the mud and in January. But I simply cannot do it. (…) And our relationship as a journalist and interviewee is corrupted basically, I feel that. And it’s another challenge actually that these people are not always (…) clear about that you are a journalist and then your role is to ask questions and theirs is to answer, if they want to. But they start asking things from you, to help them financially, to help them with your connections. And it is a completely understandable survival strategy from them. But you really have to say no to this in my opinion.
>
> Eszter Neuberger, Editor, *444.hu*

At the same time, Neuberger emphasizes that one might assume that she capitalizes on the people she reports about, getting good stories and winning awards for them. Consequently, there might be

the assumption that she could give her protagonists something in return: “I have been talking about this for a long time with people and reached no good conclusion.” Talking about experiences of a colleague of his on the so-called Balkan Route, Tomáš Lindner describes ethical challenges:

> You see thirsty people, so you just give them some water. Although you should be maybe only in an observer role. But this is simply a certain basic humanity. This type of help. But another thing would be to take the refugees into your car and travel with them to Czech Republic, which I believe is clearly beyond your role as a journalist. You could also discredit yourself and your profession in the eyes of readers.
>
> Tomáš Lindner, Editor, *Respekt*

Catarina Santos recommends journalists to be transparent about their role just from the beginning of an interview with a migrant or refugee, to immediately respond to any hopes and expectations they might have in terms of getting help. Also, Julia Amberger suggests making clear which kind of support she as a journalist could offer, if any at all: “I can draw attention to your case, but I can’t solve it.”

Our interviewees also point towards moments of increased media attention, in which people at certain ‘hotspots’ such as a refugee camp meet many journalists looking for their stories. Talking about the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, Eszter Neuberger says that the “people there were quite used talking to journalists. That also sometimes didn’t help because they were repeating the same lines many times.” Catarina Santos reminds a similar experience during her first field trip on the issue, also pointing towards another professional challenge in such situations:

> There was a specific refugee that I have met in Sicily who taught me a lot of lessons by refusing to give me an interview. I spent a whole afternoon trying to convince him to tell me his story, because it was a very particular story, he was a journalist back in his homeland. (…) He said a lot of journalists had been through there and asked him for the same thing and he always said no, because it had a very personal high cost for him (…) I think I learned something about how you have to respect the people who you are dealing with when you are covering these types of stories. And you have to understand all of these contexts that sometimes you have to admit to yourself that you are not prepared to deal with what you are seeing on the ground, no matter how good your intentions are.
>
> Catarina Santos, Editor, *Observador*

Typical to many other on-the-ground situations in journalism, several interviewees point out the difficulties in verifying what migrants and refugees tell them, as especially the latter often left their

home countries with literally no documents. “Sometimes the story is very powerful, but you just don’t know if it’s true or not. You have no way to double-check it”, Tomáš Lindner says. In such cases he recommends being transparent about this, including the doubt in your story. In general, our interviewees plead for a contextualized reporting on migrants and refugees, moving beyond a merely statistical approach in this highly sensitive area:

> By that time all the world was just paying a lot of attention to migration (…). Numbers, numbers, and numbers of people arriving, the amount of people. And I thought that, okay, what I have to do here now with the material I have is the opposite of what we have every day: I have to focus on the stories. I think we are numbing somehow because we are giving them so much numbers every day.
>
> Catarina Santos, Editor, *Observador*

> n That gives certain perspectives from which you and the readers can learn a lot. (…) I would say lots of journalists writing about the issue would be generally sympathetic to receiving refugees. But I think the more important is to no let these own sentiments and principles affect your articles. (…) I think it’s useful to also look for places where there are problems connected to integration, and then use this so-called solutions-based approach to storytelling. Which means to ask: How do the local government/ civil society/ country etc. try to manage the topic? (…) I think journalists should not deny problems connected to migration. The solution is to describe the problem, but take this further step and check out: Okay, what is being done about it?
>
> Tomáš Lindner, Editor, *Respekt*

Reporting migration and forced displacement: Educating skilful journalists

Asked whether they, at any point in their career, received specific training related to reporting migration and forced displacement, all the interviewees claim not to have, although three of them did study journalism or mass communication. However, Eszter Neuberger and Catarina Santos mention ethics classes during their time at university as a useful preparation for their later work. Yet, all of them say they acquired the necessary skills on the job and point to the difficulties in proper preparation for challenging situations in this specific area of coverage within a classroom.

> As a journalist, I think you have to learn to try to do a very difficult balance between keeping your ability to have empathy, because without empathy, you just cannot do these kinds of stories. But at the same time, remaining focussed on what you are doing there, what is your mission, that you are a journalist, and that you have to keep this in mind all the time. (…) And it’s very difficult to give advice to someone who has no experience on dealing with these things. Because the thing you realize is, you get this as you go. No one can really teach you how to get this.

Catarina Santos, Editor, *Observador*

Related to the characteristics and competences young professionals interested in the field should have, Julia Amberger points to a certain type of openness:

> If you work in the field of migration or on Africa, it's good to be completely open, to throw your own ideas completely overboard. And to get involved in a completely new way with what you see (…) And it also helps a bit to question yourself. If you're such a very convinced person you're maybe better off in domestic politics. But if you're able to question yourself and your own points of view, and you're up for it, and you're up for changing your perspective on the world, then it's definitely a great thing.
>
> Julia Amberger, Freelance Journalist

Tomáš Lindner mentions a "big limitation" when covering the issue abroad: that journalists often are not based in the foreign countries they report about, just visiting them for only one or two weeks or even days. Lindner believes young professional should thus "take all opportunities to travel", even if it is not as a journalist: To live abroad for a while, to take on a job, to study, or to do voluntary work. Such stays and journeys deepen the understanding of the regions you are later writing about as a journalist. Good preparation is another way to tackle the challenge of not being on the ground permanently. He recommends reading a variety of sources about a particular country or topic before a reporting trip, as "going to a country as a blank page" and then writing about it is a "approach I don't believe in too much". Also, Catarina Santos stresses that "you cannot understand a situation if you are just passing by for two or three days", pointing towards the necessity of good preparation and constant follow-ups. While the interviewees suggest that a lot of the skills necessary to report migration and forced displacement come just from working on the ground, they point out a variety of content they deem useful for curricula. Both Eszter Neuberger and Catarina Santos emphasize the importance of correct terminology, such as the distinction between migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Catarina Santos concludes that such training would benefit even those journalists who are not actually experts in the field:

> Even before you go to the ground, you should really understand the specifics of the terminology that you use to describe these situations. Even now in my newsrooms I have to, very frequently (…) go to some of the colleagues. Explaining them that there is no such thing as an illegal person. And this could seem like a stupid thing, I think people really don't come from universities with these kinds of things very clear in their head. (…) Having some manual (…) would be very useful to someone who will cover migration. Actually, for everyone who is writing for newspapers, because you will write something

like this probably one day or another. And this will really have an impact on how people perceive these things.

Catarina Santos, Editor, *Observador*

Julia Amberger believes that taking a closer look at countries and how they are affected by migration and forced displacement would help in understanding the complexity of the issue: “The reasons for which people leave, and how different countries cope with the situation, vary significantly”. Eszter Neuberger also suggests including some information on prejudice and cultural sensitivity, such as culture-oriented notions of relationships between men and women, which reporters might face when working in the field. She says it is also relevant to discuss prejudice a reporter might have herself. Julia Amberger recommends including ethical and legal aspects of covering migration and forced displacement, along with focusing on the traumas migrants and refugees might face:

> What happens to people going through such things, and how does it affect what they say? (…) You simply need a lot of empathy. And I think you cannot really learn that, but if you deal with the psychological situation of these people in a seminar, this will help you to understand situations better.
>
> Julia Amberger, Freelance Journalist

She suggests inviting a psychologist to the classroom for that purpose. Eszter Neuberger recommends including some advice on how to prepare for fieldwork, such as hints on funding opportunities and how to apply for them, but also more ethical aspects such as “helping your interviewees make informed decisions” about what they would like to pass on to a larger audience and what to avoid, and whether they want to have pictures of them published.
Catarina Santos also points to the necessity of an adequate preparation for fieldwork and advice on how to dive deep into the topic:

> Because migration is a very complex theme, and if you aren’t prepared, and if you don’t follow a lot of different themes that are very important from legislation to human rights to the minimum context about the main countries of origin of the migrants, you will just go to the ground and you will hear a lot of things that you will not even understand. And then you will tell a story not even knowing that you are eventually focusing it wrong.
>
> Catarina Santos, Editor, *Observador*

Tomáš Lindner believes it is important to point to the bigger picture of migration and forced displacement – both geographically and in terms of the various reasons and motives behind it:

”

> To show the story from different places. To write about what's happening in a Bavarian village that welcomes refugees, but also to go to Lesbos and see what's going on on that island. And then also to go to Turkey, and write a reportage about Syrians in Istanbul for example. When it comes to the fact that people who come to Europe are not only refugees from war-torn countries, then you could go to Senegal. See a country that is rather democratic in an African context, and relatively wealthy. And at the same time, lots of people are leaving there. Why? How does the Senegalese discussion on migration actually look like. Do they, for example local academics, see this exodus of young people as something helping or rather hurting their country?
>
> Tomáš Lindner, Editor, *Respekt*

Consequently, journalism teachers should handle the terminologies of migration and forced displacement with care. Journalism schools could prepare for the ethical dilemma reporters dealing with the issue often face, alongside informing about the traumatising experience of migrants and refugees. Teaching the political, geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds, along with the cultural and psychological sensitivity needed would help to prepare young professionals to cover the issue responsibly.

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Foreign Coverage

Dominik Speck

While foreign coverage is a rather classic field of journalism, much older than digitization, it has faced several challenges and shortcomings in recent times. Nevertheless, international reporting – a term often used interchangeably – has not experienced less opportunities and innovations. As the world has arguably become more intertwined yet more complex due to globalization effects, the lines between national and international news blur, challenging long-standing assumptions in both journalism research and practice.

Functions and Characteristics of Foreign Reporting

In the context of transnationalism and globalization, news coverage of international developments and events is of utmost importance. This is a journalistic genre, which is typically termed foreign coverage, foreign reporting, or international reporting. Yet,

> places (whether neighborhoods or countries) are not viewed as isolated units that can only be understood through what happens within them. (…) Understanding a place requires analyzing how its uniqueness is produced through a combination of physical, social, economic, and political attributes—and how those attributes are partially a product of connections to other places, near and far.
>
> (Flint, 2006, 2)

Political geographer Colin Flint writes about geopolitics, which seem all the more true regarding journalistic coverage of a foreign country, another continent or cross-border issues. This could serve as a basic principle for a contextualized foreign coverage, or as Wu (2019, 1) puts it, a notion of foreign reporting as a news genre that "can potentially yield deeper and wider impact than any other news categories".

Yet, as the following outlines, there is the frequent accusation that foreign coverage is too ´domesticated´ (i.e. covering each event or development happening abroad through an overly domestic lens) or too conflict-oriented (i.e. over-emphasizing negative developments abroad, and more so as with regard to domestic news).

Foreign coverage started to flourish during the heyday of bipolar geopolitical conflict. Prior to World War II coverage of countries abroad had mainly been characterized by reporting on wars, and by literature-like travel reports (Brinkmann, 2015, 41). But then, at the initial stage of the Cold War in the 1950s, Western European and Northern American news media outlets established larger networks of foreign correspondents. Mass communication researchers have followed these developments by assessing the flows and contents of journalism-mediated information about what happens abroad, developing a "geography of foreign news" (e.g. Kamps, 1998; Wilke et al., 2012). This research typically intends to find out which countries or regions attract foreign media attention and why and why not. Galtung & Ruge (1965) developed their highly influential theory of news factors regarding the coverage of three major international crises in Norwegian newspapers. They claimed that "the more distant an event, the less ambiguous will it have to be" (ibid., 81) when pointing to a significant reduction of complexity in foreign reporting. They selected the degree of negativity in foreign reporting as dependent on a country's rank in international power viewed from a domestic perspective, i.e., claiming that "the lower the rank of the nation, the more negative will the news from that nation have to be" (ibid., 83). Consequently, positive events in those nations likely being "under-reported".

Two large-scale studies investigated the field of foreign coverage during the 1980s and 1990s and remain to date the biggest analyses in terms of countries covered. The *World of the News Study* covering 29 countries and initiated by the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) and UNESCO (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985) and the follow-up *Foreign News Study* covering 38 countries (e.g. Hagen et al., 1998; Wu, 2000). These studies again demonstrated regional and cultural proximity as a key factor of foreign news flows concomitant with a strong focus on metropolitan regions and ultimately a lot of attention paid to Western Europe and the US. Even in the post-Cold War period, "there are dramatically different versions of the same world presented to audiences in different parts of the world" (Wu, 2019, 2, see also Shoemaker & Cohen, 2012). This should not come as a surprise if we conclude, following de Beer (2008, 15), that journalists are tied to their respective societies, their values and political realities.

Alongside such models of geographical, cultural, or political proximity, research has typically used the *news cycles model* to characterize foreign coverage. The model may explain why certain events abroad, such as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, frequently receive a lot of international coverage at some (often initial) points, but this attention dwindles after the initial, or repeated, peak of coverage (Fengler et al., 2020). Research also emphasizes the importance of the interests of the domestic country in foreign reporting (e.g., Heimprecht, 2017).

Yet, proximity or regionalism may not be valuable as the only determinant of whether or not a country receives news coverage. Rather, we may also consider factors such as the degree of economic exchange with a country in the news as a decisive factor of whether or not that country receives coverage (Wu, 2000; Scherer et al., 2006).

According to an analysis of the Oxford Institute on the geographic focus of world media, there were 60 million stories between January 1979 and August 2013, which focused on North America and Europe, followed by 32.6 million stories on Asia and 23.5 for the MENA region (Graham & De Sabbata, 2013). These numbers were in sharp contrast to Sub-Saharan Africa with 13.4 million stories, Latin America and the Caribbean with 6.5 million and Oceania with 3.4 million. These numbers again demonstrate that international news media attention is not equally distributed amongst world regions. Other cross-country comparative studies of foreign coverage have focused on topics beyond questions of proximity, such as the differences between foreign news in commercial and public TV even within the same country (Aalberg et al., 2012).

Kamps (2008) points out newsrooms tend to "domesticate" foreign news, by embedding these in national contexts in an attempt to reduce complexity (see also Alasuutari et al., 2013). Similarly, Sreberny-Mohammadi et al. (1985, 38) have provided a framework of three *types of foreign news coverage* classified alongside their connection to domestic issues: *(i) Foreign news abroad:* News about an event (or developments) in another country (e. g. the military coup in Myanmar)*. (ii) Home news abroad:* News about an event taking place in another country, but which are closely connected to the domestic country (e.g. an intervention of the Nordic ambassadors in Myanmar against the coup) *(iii) Foreign news at home:* News which "play" in the domestic country, but are closely connected to the foreign country (e.g. the Burmese diaspora in the UK protesting against the coup).

While this framework has proven useful to demonstrate that a substantial part of foreign coverage is, one way or another, closely connected to and influenced by domestic issues (see also Kamps, 2008), it may though fall short of capturing the complexities of cross-country flows and backflows of information in the "age of glocalization" (Belamghari, 2020), as well as pertinent increasing importance of supranational, multinational, and transnational actors. Scholars such as Berglez (2008) or Livingston & Asmolov (2010) thus rightly point out the need to move beyond a simple domestic-foreign dichotomy (even if, as in the example above it comes across in a more nuanced form) and call for a "global journalism". News media content has become "more and more deterritorialised, involving complex relations and flows across national borders and continents" (Berglez, 2008, 845) – or, in other words, "one cannot truly separate domestic from foreign news

any more" (Wu, 2019, 4). Indeed Berglez (2008, 847) suggests a "global outlook produces information of the intercontinental kind, potentially including both international relations (between nation-states) and transnational processes, such as ecological and pandemic threats, or unrestricted economic and social flows". While several studies have found evidence of an increasingly "global" journalism, others demonstrate that national provincialism or domestic / foreign categories remain firmly embedded in news reporting (Van Leuven & Berglez, 2016). Research also challenges the importance of (geographical, cultural and political) proximity for foreign reporting and instead highlights the importance of opportunities to 'domesticate' a news story, e.g., because of the involvement of a domestic country in the reported conflict or conflict solution efforts (Fengler et al., 2020; see also Heimprecht, 2017).

Criticisms of Foreign Reporting: Negativity Bias and Stereotypes

The MacBride Report of 1980 investigated the shortcomings of foreign reporting. Following the nonelite nations' call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), UNESCO commissioned the report (Wu, 2019, 3), which criticized the dominance of the Global North in the worldwide flow of information as well as an overemphasis on crises and catastrophes (UNESCO, 1980). Scholars such as Serwornoo (2021) point to the feedback effects between (dominant) foreign coverage about a country or region and coverage about domestic issues by domestic media, claiming that the image of Africa in the Ghanaian press is decisively shaped by the impact of foreign news organizations. This reflects previous findings on a "dominance of Western correspondents and news agencies such as Associated Press, Agence France Presse, and Reuters in this news category in the twentieth century" (Wu, 2019, 2). Still, Wu also highlights the influence of emerging actors such as China's Xinhua news agency or news from social media on international reporting (for the influence of Chinese media in Africa, see also Wasserman, 2016).

Research typically characterizes international reporting, even more than domestic news, as elite-centric and focused on politics as the main dimension (e.g. Hafez, 2002). Nevertheless, recent studies challenge this finding and observe a shift towards including non-elite actors (e.g. Kampf & Liebes, 2013; Roman et al., 2017; Fengler et al., 2020). Likewise, journalists covering international affairs have often been accused of following the foreign policy lines of their respective national governments (Hafez & Grüne, 2015) in a "rally round the flag"-effect.

Furthermore, scholars still often describe foreign reporting as conflict-centric coverage (Herbert, 2001; Hafez, 2002) and characterize it as having a substantial degree of negativity (Hafez & Grüne,

2015), which has also led to repeated claims of "peace journalism" (see e. g. Galtung, 2002; Hanitzsch, 2004). There is a perception of foreign coverage is biased towards war, crime, crisis, natural disasters, or diseases (e. g. Mikich, 2003; Breckl, 2006) or, more bluntly, as a "spectatorship of suffering" (Chouliaraki, 2006). This critique has arguably been raised most prominently regarding Western media coverage of Africa (e. g. Mükke, 2009; see also Nothias, 2015, 2018). Yet, the question whether foreign coverage is actually much more negative in comparison to coverage on domestic issues has rarely been researched empirically. Recent developments in "Western" journalism cultures such as the prominent calls for a "constructive" (e. g., Haagerup, 2014) or "solutions" (e. g., McIntyre & Lough, 2019) journalism may signify a shift in approaching newsworthiness and journalistic values with regard to all fields of reporting.

Furthermore, scholars describe foreign reporting as stereotyped (Nitz, 2008), instigating friend and enemy dichotomies, exoticism, and, ultimately racism (see also Nothias, 2018) instead of facilitating intercultural communication as a "dialogic journalism" (Kleinsteuber, 2003). Yet, as Archetti (2014, 593) claims, "current negative evaluations of the health state of foreign correspondence (...) are the result of the generalized, global while at the same time un-situated criteria we have used to assess it". In line with Archetti, further research on foreign reporting could thus take on a more actor-centred approach unveiling the networks "of humans, technologies and places" (ibid.) in which foreign correspondents work, rather than taking a bird's-eye view of overall structures and outputs. In general, studies on foreign reporting have mostly focused on the perspective of professionals – i.e. journalists – or the content of coverage. As in other fields of journalism research, research rarely focus on the perceptions of this coverage by recipients, for an exception see Lee et al., 2017.

Structures of Foreign Reporting

In general, scholars have well-researched the structures and functioning of foreign coverage in Western Europe and Northern America (e. g. Hahn et al., 2008a; Gross and Kopper, 2011; Terzis, 2015a). The same cannot be said for media in most Central and Eastern European States, arguably due to the limited capability of newsrooms and the lack of training to maintain well-developed networks of foreign reporting in less affluent media markets (Fengler et al., 2020). Although, Terzis (2015a) did find valuable country studies for several Central and Eastern European countries. Here, international news agencies may play a major role, as outlined above. Alongside proximity and domestication factors, these economic differences may also partly explain differences in how media in various countries report on foreign affairs. Studies typically focus on either or both the work routines of foreign correspondents and demographic patterns of this part of the journalistic

workforce (Willnat & Martin, 2012, 499); some also focus on their self-perception (e. g. Levine & Posdzich, 2014). Scholars often describe foreign reporters as having higher education than the average journalist (e.g. Wagner, 2001; Wu, 2019), as well as requiring special training. As Wu explains "[f]or one thing, the fact that international journalists may face far more traumas, obstacles, and adversities on their jobs than their domestic colleagues should justify longer immersion and better preparedness" (2019, 4).

Research has yet pointed to economic shortcomings such as the expenditure of scarce resources for foreign reporting along with the necessity to 'subsidize' the underlying cost structures with revenue from other parts of the company. This leads to a decrease of foreign reporting and the closure of news bureaus abroad in the wake of the newspaper crisis since the 2000s (e.g. Altmeppen, 2010; Willnat & Martin, 2012). This has resulted in increasing ad-hoc foreign journalism through 'special envoys' or 'parachutist' reporters being deployed to the places of interest at a certain point of time, following news cycles (e.g. Erickson & Hamilton, 2006). According to Terzis (2015b, 298), foreign correspondents in Europe increasingly are freelancers working for multiple media platforms and outlets rather than as permanent employees of a single organization. There is also the trend to hire locals rather than expats as correspondents.

While these trends have rightly met criticism (e.g. Otto & Meyer, 2012; Murrell, 2019), as they may lead to a less 'sustainable' or even less informed coverage, it is also fair to say that cheaper travel opportunities as well as mobile and internet communication have facilitated 'new' forms of foreign reporting beyond the (expensive) 'stationing' of foreign correspondents abroad (Willnat & Martin, 2012; see also Hamilton & Jenner, 2004). Permanent foreign correspondents often cover a vast area consisting of rather diverse states and languages, especially in those regions which are rarely in the main focus of news coverage. As a result, they may hardly acquire all relevant language and (inter-)cultural skills necessary to really capture all developments within that region (see also Hafez & Grüne, 2015). This may hold even more true with regard to permanent foreign correspondents of major newsrooms often rotating after a few years – in a move to counter the opposite tendency, the fear of 'going native' and losing the ability to cover the foreign country from a critical perspective (Hahn et al., 2008b, 35).

Both permanent correspondents and 'parachutists' often rely on local colleagues, the 'fixers' and 'stringers', for newsgathering. Recent literature spotlights the importance of these local aides for the systems of foreign reporting, and the inequalities between them and international journalists (e.g. Murrell, 2010; Plaut & Klein, 2019; Mitra & Paterson, 2021). Lastly, research has also stated the

tendency of foreign reporting to become 'virtual', i.e. by in-house reporters covering events abroad facilitated through the internet (Hahn & Lönnendonker, 2005; Willnat & Martin, 2012). These developments demonstrate that the field has diversified. While we may typically think of foreign reporting as being conducted in a news bureau abroad, the field has become much broader – with 'parachutists', highly specialized reporters focussing on 'global' issues such as climate change, as well as local journalists or fixers working for international outlets (see Hamilton & Jenner, 2004). Finally, we can observe the growing importance of information (or footage) provided by citizens (or citizen journalists) through social media or other networked channels (e.g. Heinrich, 2012), which in turn also raises question of verifiability of this content in international coverage (Wu, 2019, 4; see also Murrell, 2018). The work of the international fact-checking platform *Bellingcat* may provide a striking example of this trend.

Cross-Border Collaborative or Transnational Journalism

Throughout the past decade, collaboration has become a leitmotif for innovations in journalism. While these collaborations may include (institutionalized or non-institutionalized) partnerships between newsrooms and users or between newsrooms and civil society organizations, journalistic collaboration across borders has also become increasingly relevant (e.g. Alfter, 2019; Heft, 2021). While the content produced through such collaborations may not inevitably be regarded as 'foreign reporting' in the first place, it may reflect the characteristics of *global journalism* as mentioned above. Such collaborations, e.g. the *Panama Papers* or *Paradise Papers* investigations (Gearing & Berglez, 2019), have undoubtedly "interconnected the local with the global" (Van Leuven & Berglez, 2016, 667). Reporting about the involvement of national politicians or businesspeople in global tax evasion activities across many countries at the same time, such projects have indeed blurred the boundaries between the 'national' and the 'foreign'. In such international collaborative consortiums (of either or both individual journalists and news organizations, of which a prominent example is the *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, ICIJ), journalists rely on the investigations of their colleagues in other countries. While the abovementioned investigations are well-known examples with global effects, "we can observe many other cases where such cross-border research collaborations are practiced on a smaller scale but potentially as a more day-to-day routine" (Heft, 2020, 4). It also needs to be noted that "a large part of this transformation [of journalistic routines] happens beyond established newsrooms" (Heft, 2021, 469).

For example, the digital platform *Hostwriter* facilitates collaboration between individual journalists across borders.[1] Such practices could be termed as 'transnational' as they involve "journalists working collaboratively and simultaneously in two or more countries" (Gearing & Berglez, 2019, 212), thus transcending classic "international" or "foreign news reporting". As collaborative cross-border journalism "calls out media bias" (Grzeszyk, 2019) it may also serve as a starting point for improving intercultural communication and develop a more „dialogic journalism" (Kleinsteuber, 2003). In this regard, *Hostwriters'* recently launched remote cross-border newsroom *Unbias the News* has declared "no parachute journalism" as one of its principles, stating that "We don't send correspondents to remote places, but work with local journalists who are based in the communities they report on" (Unbias the News, n. d.).

A recent survey among members of *Hostwriter* and participants of *Dataharvest - the European Investigative Journalism Conference (Dataharvest - the EIJC)* has demonstrated a lack of specific training opportunities for such collaborative cross-border journalism (Heft, 2020, 6; see also Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018). Further research could thus elaborate on the needs and necessities of such training opportunities; along with investigating the effects of cross-border collaboration on "traditional" foreign news coverage.

Interview results

Our interview sample consisted of six journalists (one each from Germany, Portugal, Hungary, and the Czech Republic and two from Romania). We tried to represent a variety of roles in foreign coverage. However, our sample does not include any active correspondent permanently stationed abroad. Five respondents represent rather "classic" roles in foreign reporting, including a former Washington correspondent who now works as Deputy Head of News, alongside four journalists who rather fulfil the job profiles of "special envoys" sent to areas of interest for short-term assignments. They have been covering a variety of events in many countries and contexts from war and conflict to major elections and international political events. Harald Schumann, an investigative journalist and co-founder of the cross-border network *Investigate Europe*[2] complimented the sample to represent the collaborative branch of international reporting. Our aim was to identify current

[1] Hostwriter is also a project partner in the *NEWSREEL2* consortium.
[2] A team of journalists from 11 European countries. The network had been established in 2016. The network jointly researches investigative stories, which are subsequently published in national media in the respective countries.

challenges and trends in international reporting as well as potential shifts in its structures, together with desiderata for journalism training and education.

Trends and Challenges in Contemporary Foreign Reporting

Asked about major challenges in foreign reporting, our interviewees mention technological developments, but also shrinking budgets for both permanent correspondents and international reporters being sent abroad from time to time. Some also perceive low levels of interest in international issues for both audiences and editors.

> The main challenge is the public's increasing lack of interest for anything perceived as too far away to have a direct impact. This is connected to the editorial tendency to allocate, at least in Romania, less broadcasting time or slots for foreign affairs.
>
> Carmen Gavrilă, Foreign Affairs Correspondent, *Radio România*

Another challenge, according to some respondents, is the lack of in-depth reporting on foreign affairs. András Földes, a video journalist at the news website *Telex.hu*, is critical of Hungarian newsrooms that "usually translate articles from international media" when covering foreign issues. In addition, limited budgets hinder journalists to travel more frequently, rather reporting international developments from their desks.

> Most of the times I am deeply dissatisfied with the way international issues are represented in the Romanian media, since it's mostly about simply translating into Romanian information from press agencies and foreign media. Moreover, international news usually comes without clear background information, in order for the public to really understand the context or the importance of a certain event. In the Romanian media there is also the same set of international affairs experts that give opinions on anything and everything, whether they really know the area in question or not, for example, the same experts on Russia offer analysis on Africa or the Middle East).
>
> Carmen Gavrilă, Foreign Affairs Correspondent, *Radio România*

Ricardo Alexandre, Deputy Director and Foreign Affairs Editor at Portugal's private radio station *TSF*, identifies technological changes, alongside shrinking budgets, as reasons why international reporters may travel less than before, since it is "easier to talk to anyone on the other side of the world" nowadays. Carmen Gavrilă thinks that "international coverage is increasingly biased and lacking the bigger picture and the background necessary to create that bigger picture."

Harald Schumann (co-Founder of *Investigate Europe*) also points to national bias as a key challenge in reporting foreign affairs. This perception of bias was his main motivation to initiate the collaborative network *Investigate Europe*. When shooting a TV documentary about the European countries most affected by the so-called Euro crisis, he "found out that nearly all the information I was looking for, also the very critical, sensitive issues, had already been published. But only in the national media. It has never left the national realm." According to him, editors "usually buy the perspective of the national governments". This leads to a coverage with narrow perspectives even within EU countries, as Schumann explains "even those correspondents who know better have no chance than to confirm those prejudices because their editors really don't want to read anything else."

> I will never forget this situation when I was in Ireland with the TV team, and there was a small village which was in permanent resistance against the bailout of the private Irish banks. (…) I interviewed an old lady, at least 70, maybe even 75. (…) And then I asked her: Why do you do these demonstrations here? The Germans think that we have rescued you from going bust! So, what do you protest against? And then she looked at me as if I were crazy. You saved us? No: It was the other way round. We saved you! If we would not have bailed out our banks, the contagion would have destroyed all the European financial system. (...) And for me, it was the moment it ticked in my head: Wow! This is really a complete failure of the media.
>
> Harald Schumann, Editor, *Der Tagesspiegel*, and Co-Founder of *Investigate Europe*

Schumann sees this way of reporting as something "they [the media] didn't do (…) on purpose, it's no conspiracy." Rather, he suggests that this stems from an "outdated system" of foreign coverage generating "narrow-minded, national perspective journalism." While critical of the role foreign correspondents play within this system, Schumann is "not strictly against" sending such permanent envoys abroad: "But to have the correspondents as the only source you know in these other countries while you decide about a headline and a major message, this is really bad journalism." Rather, he states the importance of working together with local journalists:

> When you report about other countries, collaborate with colleagues from this country. And not only with your correspondent, if you have one at all. (…) Just to check whether your assessment of this situation is correct. And this could be done without any further funding, it would only be an additional duty. Maybe, reading one French paper less, and then doing two more calls, to colleagues on the ground who have much more knowledge than you will ever have.
>
> Harald Schumann, Editor, *Der Tagesspiegel*, and Co-Founder, *Investigate Europe*

Ricardo Alexandre from Portuguese radio station *TSF* predicts that while there might be even fewer permanent employees reporting from abroad in the future, there will still be enough freelance foreign correspondents working for various media outlets. Such freelancers are also much cheaper for media outlets than basing a permanent employee abroad. Alexandre, being responsible for the foreign correspondent network at *TSF*, is also aware of a trend that freelance correspondents are only part-time journalists as they make their living from a different job: "It is a way of keeping his name in the media market in his own country," says Alexandre. Furthermore, he identifies a tendency to build networks of non-journalist contributors, such as researchers working abroad: "So more and more, you will be relying on those sources." All in all, our interviewees do see foreign correspondents as a still crucial element within the structures of international reporting, but point towards limited resources for upholding large networks.

Most of the respondents have worked with fixers during their assignments abroad. András Földes (*Telex.hu*) and Carmen Gavrilă (*Radio România*) argue the importance on working with local aides in war and conflict zones, as they have a better oversight of the situation or know how to deal with local bureaucracy. However, both interviewees suggest that it is crucial to bear in mind that fixers may be biased, or even monitoring the activities of international reporters on behalf of the local authorities.

> "And for example when I worked in Mossul, that was even more difficult, because there was ISIS and there were the powers against ISIS. (…) When I went out with a Sunni fixer to the ground, I got different information about the other participants of the siege. So, what I did is that I changed my fixers every now and then. So, I worked with a Sunni guy, then with a Yazidi, a Kurdish, (...), so I had the possibility to see every side of the conflict. I didn't get only the narrative of a Shia or a Sunni community, and this is a good idea, to get to know that the fixer can be a part of the story as well, so he is not neutral. Especially in those places, neutrality doesn't really exist.
>
> András Földes, Video Journalist, *Telex.hu*

Carmen Gavrilă recommends combining the knowledge of fixers with other sources such as citizens or local activists. Gavrilă suggests the "best scenario is the one in which the journalist doesn't need translation." The interviewees mention technological changes as both a challenge and asset for international reporting: While it is easier to report on developments abroad, the accelerated speed of international news dissemination brings disadvantages. Ramona Avramescu (*TVR*), says that this speed puts pressure on journalists, potentially at the expense of more nuanced reporting:

> So at times you have to skip some classical training journalism that you have learned: Double-checking the info or adding some background, or putting things in context, which is especially important when reporting on foreign politics issues, because these pieces of news are more vulnerable to things like stereotypes or xenophobia, so it's really, really important when you deliver this type of news to add the necessary background and to double-check everything.
>
> Ramona Avramescu, Senior Correspondent at the Romanian Presidency, *TVR*

While stressing the advantages of being able to broadcast from literally everywhere with minimal equipment, Martin Řezníček (Foreign News Editor and former US correspondent, *Česká televize*) thinks that international TV news increasingly focus on live reporting rather than on news packages, i.e. pre-recorded stories with more in-depth information.

From the perspective of our interviewees, a lack of funding is clearly a major obstacle for further innovations in international reporting. This relates to the capability of newsrooms to send journalists abroad, but also to their capacity to collaborate with colleagues abroad. "So, funding is the major reason why there are not much more [cross-border collaborative] teams. Otherwise, I am quite sure, there would be hundreds of them", Harald Schumann says. This is even more important, as many of our interviewees perceive a blurring of boundaries between "foreign" and "domestic" issues. Looking into the future, Martin Řezníček suggests that "you shouldn't have a separate international desk, domestic desk and so on. Because I think you will only have one desk and one world." Talking about the situation in Romania, Carmen Gavrilă mentions a "penury of seasoned and experienced journalists in the field of foreign affairs", thinking that focussing on domestic affairs is "a better medium for advancement in a journalistic career." Thus, anchoring international issues in journalism education is crucial.

International Reporting and Journalism Education

Our interviewees – even those who studied journalism or mass communication – generally say they acquired their international reporting skills mostly on the job and through self-preparation, rather than at university or in specialized further education courses offered by their employers. Even those who frequently cover war and conflict zones report rather few training opportunities preparing them for these potentially dangerous situations.

However, some of the respondents have an educational background which relates to international reporting, such as Martin Řezníček (who majored in International Studies besides Mass

Communication) and Carmen Gavrilă (who majored in Foreign Languages/Farsi and English-American Studies). Overall, the respondents diagnose a tendency to neglect international issues in the respective national curricula of journalism education. "Foreign reporting is tremendously undervalued by the [Portuguese] media university programs", Ricardo Alexandre says. At the same time, the interviewees agree that reporting skills for domestic and international issues are rather interchangeable, as "there is only one kind of journalism", as András Földes puts it: "The only difference that I could name is using a fixer". Consequently, students who want to become foreign reporters do not need, according to our interviewees, fundamentally different practical training than their peers eager to work in other fields. "Finding sources is pretty much no different from the procedures used in covering domestic affairs, including fact-checking", Carmen Gavrilă says. Most respondents though consider an in-depth background knowledge on international issues and language skills as key assets for young professionals pursuing a career in international reporting. According to Harald Schumann, journalists "are not educated to report in a European perspective", lacking basic knowledge on how the European Union and its major institutions work, despite the high degree of European integration.

> (…) journalists covering foreign and international issues should get additional training in international affairs, international organizations (NATO, EU, UN, OPEC etc), the most relevant international legislation and at least the most significant elements of background for various areas with complicated tracks such as the Middle East. And also, journalists covering foreign and international issues should speak as many foreign languages as possible.
>
> Carmen Gavrilă, Foreign Affairs Correspondent, *Radio România*

> I still think those journalists who do concentrate on a particular topic or field more than the journalism itself are better journalists. Just because I do think that you need some expert background, being it in political science, in economy, in sociology, in anything, international relations.
>
> Martin Řezníček, Foreign Affairs Editor, Česká televize

In the context of potential topics to be included in university-level courses on international reporting, Martin Řezníček suggests that theoretical knowledge of international issues should be combined with practical elements: "If you, as a university, for example, can afford to have people sent abroad to do some assignments, then it's great." He proposes an exchange model between universities, collaborating on joint courses on foreign reporting. In the context of the coverage of war and conflict, Carmen Gavrilă recommends specialized survival training. Ricardo Alexandre mentions geopolitics as another important issue to be covered, as well as ethical and psychological aspects of reporting from war and conflict zones:

> When you are there [in a war or conflict zone], you have some better conditions than most of the people you are reporting about. (…) You are in a security compound or in a hotel protected by guards or whatever, or in a residential area that is more protected to this or that, while most of the people are more vulnerable to what may happen to them. And more important than all that, you have a plane ticket to fly back. (…) It's your obligation to treat the people you are reporting about with more dignity. (…) You must be aware that you are running to places where everyone wants to run away from.
>
> Ricardo Alexandre, Deputy Director and Foreign Affairs Editor, *TSF*

According to Harald Schumann, classes aiming to establish a cross-border collaborative mindset should focus on how to tackle national bias, alongside the imperative of giving voice to local sources:

> A basic issue you learn when you go to journalism school is: You have to give the other side a right to comment. You have to talk to all sides in order to get as near as possible to an objective assessment. Applying the same rule for international stories, you have to have good contacts in whatever other country you report about, you have to talk to natives so that you have their perspectives. And better more, two or three, not only one. (…)
>
> Harald Schumann, Editor, *Der Tagesspiegel*, Co-Founder, *Investigate Europe*

Asked about the skills and competences young professionals should have to enter the field, Carmen Gavrilă mentions the willingness to comprehensively update "one's knowledge of international affairs issues that are central to and characteristic for the world regions that the professional is specialized in". Apart from language skills and despite the oft analysed trend of parachute journalism, specialization for a certain country or world region still seems to be an important recruiting reason:

> You need to have people who do focus on a particular country and are able, when something happens, to get a tie on and a shirt and go to the studio and talk about it in ten minutes without blinking.
>
> Martin Řezníček, Foreign Affairs Editor, *Česká televize*

Ricardo Alexandre mentions the capacity to work a lot, since while being abroad, "you are not working only when you are sleeping, and you don't sleep much." All challenges aside, our respondents would still recommend young professionals interested in the field to pursue their career plans:

> There will always be fewer people at the international desk than in the rest [of the newsroom] (…) I think people from international desk can just easily adapt to do something on the domestic desk, vice versa I just don't think it works that much.
>
> Martin Řezníček, Foreign Affairs Editor, *Česká televize*

In summary, journalism training focusing on international reporting should adapt to the current diversity of the field. Considering the increasingly "networked" character of international reporting, journalism teachers need to consider the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate with colleagues from abroad as sources, experts, "fixers", contributors, or just partners in joint journalistic investigations. An in-depth knowledge on bias and stereotypes, international relations and geopolitics is also crucial to prepare journalists for reporting foreign issues from abroad.

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Journalism for Voice-Activated Assistants and Devices

Miguel Crespo, Wanessa Andrade, Ana Pinto-Martinho

Speech was human's first great tool for communication. By developing sounds capable of creating meaning for a group, human beings were able to exchange important information, such as threats to the group. Writing has emerged only very recently in human history: about 5,500 years ago (Harari, 2019). The opposite was true in the history of the internet: writing came first, then sound. IBM created the first voice recognition tool in 1961, the Shoebox, which recognized 16 words and digits[1]. The Shoebox was experimental, and never marketed.

Slowly over the next fifty years other companies made progress in word recognition. But the big leap only arrived in the 21st century, with Apple's launch of Siri in 2011[2]. From then on, these voice tools gained the definition of voice assistants, as they were able to listen to, respond and perform tasks through voice command. Since then, voice assistants have become popular and easily accessible to the global population. Currently five major voice assistants are available in Western markets: Siri by Apple (available for smartphones and Smart Speakers Apple Home), Alexa by Amazon (only for Smart Speaker), Google Assistant by Google (available for smartphones and Smart Speakers Google Home and Google Nest), Bixby by Samsung and Cortana by Microsoft. Cortana is a voice assistant for those who have Windows 10 installed on a PC.

There are almost eight billion people in the world. Around 66% of them have a smartphone, and most use a device with Android or IOS, i.e., have the availability to use voice assistants. According to some of the most recent surveys, considering all the devices, 45% of Internet users worldwide use voice commands and voice search[3].

In almost all age groups, men use voice assistants more than women. The exception is the 45-54 year group in which women and men use such devices equally often. In Germany, the usage figure is at 23.9%, in Romania 23.7% and in Portugal is 21.5%[4]. There is no data available on the use of

[1] https://www.ibm.com/ibm/history/exhibits/specialprod1/specialprod1_7.html
[2] https://voicebot.ai/voice-assistant-history-timeline/
[3] https://wearesocial.com/digital-2021
[4] https://wearesocial.com/digital-2021

voice assistants in Hungary and the Czech Republic.[5] Despite the disparities in devices and brands, the operation of voice assistants is similar. A keyword or question activates the system that turns voice into text, then into data, and then returns the path to answer the user's request in voice (CDEI, 2019). Voice assistants use artificial intelligence, machine learning and algorithms to accurately meet the user's request.

Voice assistants are not available in all languages. Data updated in January 2021 shows that Apple's Siri voice assistant supports 21 languages (Arabic, Cantonese, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Mandarin, Norwegian, Portuguese (Brazil), Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai and Turkish). Siri also supports a variety of dialects for Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.[6]

Google Assistant supports 44 languages on Android's smartphones[7]. But the Google Home smart speaker is available for fewer languages: 13 (Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Portuguese (Brazilian), Spanish and Swedish.). Google Home supports 4 globally dominant languages English, French, Spanish, and German as well as their dialects in 13 national setting - English (6): Australia, Canada, India, Singapore, UK, US; French (2): Canada and France; Spanish (3): Mexico, Spain, US and German (2): Austria, Germany.

Amazon's voice assistant Alexa is available in 8 globally dominant languages (English, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese (Brazilian) and Spanish and supports dialects of 3 of the 8 - English (5): Australia, Canada, India, UK, US; French (2): Canada and France; Spanish (3): Spain, Mexico, US (GlobalMe, 2021).

Voice assistants for news

The usage of voice-activated smart speakers for news remains low. The proportion of users listening to smart speakers for news is declining, despite the devices becoming more mainstream. Less than 40% of owners of voice-activated smart speakers access news via them in the US (35%), UK (39%), Germany (27%) and South Korea (25%) (GlobalMe, 2021).

[5] The reason may be that voice assistants are not available in all languages.
[6] https://wearesocial.com/digital-2020
[7] https://venturebeat.com/2019/12/12/google-assistant-can-now-interpret-44-languages-on-smartphones/

The issue of platform power is likely to become increasingly important for news publishers as Google and Amazon look to provide more aggregated news services via their voice assistants. But many publishers may not be interested in investing in new services, as there is no motivation in building value for other corporations' platforms, which do not offer any paths to news monetisation. It is becoming more common to find research exploring how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help communication professionals find and tell better stories (Prodigioso Vólcan, 2020).

Media outlets know how to safely develop products to be watched on TV, listened on radio, or read on Internet websites. But what is the best news product to be activated by voice assistants? How to ensure your news stories are considered relevant and appear as the first search result of these voice assistants?

These questions need topic specific solutions. First, in the context of newsrooms adopting AI, there is a widely recognized need to train journalists, as well as editors, to give them resources and encourage them to debate the ethics of AI use. Secondly, for the usage of AI to report, produce, and distribute content requires not only the knowledge of AI concepts but also specific technical skills to promote an organizational culture willing to use this advanced technology. Thirdly, for implementing AI-based solutions with success there has to be a strategic vision, sufficient economic investment, interdisciplinary team building and alliances with educational and technological organizations.

One of the first companies to experiment with the use of Artificial Intelligence through voice assistants was *The Evening Standard* in London in 2017. In the same year, the *BBC* launched, in partnership with Amazon, their first full voice skill for Alexa. The following year *The Guardian* launched, together with Google, the Guardian Voice Lab.
Algorithms are fundamental for voice assistants. When a person uses a search engine, a list with several websites appears. The algorithm defines these websites, and the user may choose from all options appearing on the various results pages. But in the case of smart speakers, the voice assistants take a much longer time to present the same results because each time the algorithm defines a single result for the user.

Using voice adds new layers of complexity because we tend to speak in unstructured text. One of the things that makes resolution especially complicated for a large AI system like Alexa is that each of Alexa services uses a distinct name — or slot — for the same data (Webb, 2020). Also, as voice interfaces proliferate in people's lives, news publishers and other organizations face a new strategic consideration: Is our content optimized for voice search? And, looking further into the future, how

should we index our content for future forms of interaction? A new marketing discipline is growing: Voice Search Optimization (VSO) is the new Search Engine Optimization (SEO), as companies – including news media outlets – will need to consider how their content is delivered via conversational interfaces.

Concerns

There is also another issue to be resolved by the companies that create voice assistants: privacy. There are numerous reports of cases, in which voice assistants have self-activated (Incrível, n.d.) . Researchers in Germany have also discovered more than a thousand other words and phrases that can unintentionally trigger Google Assistant, Alexa, Siri, and other assistants, in addition to their traditional activation words (NewVoice, 2020).

A survey of the Smart Speaker Consumer Adoption Report (CDEI, 2019) points out that, in the US, 1-in-3 consumers cite concerns about privacy as the main reason to avoid smart speakers, and in a report from Voicebot.ai (2020), more than 50% of US adults claim to be moderately or very concerned with privacy, and with those statistics rising from 2019 to 2020 (Figure 1).

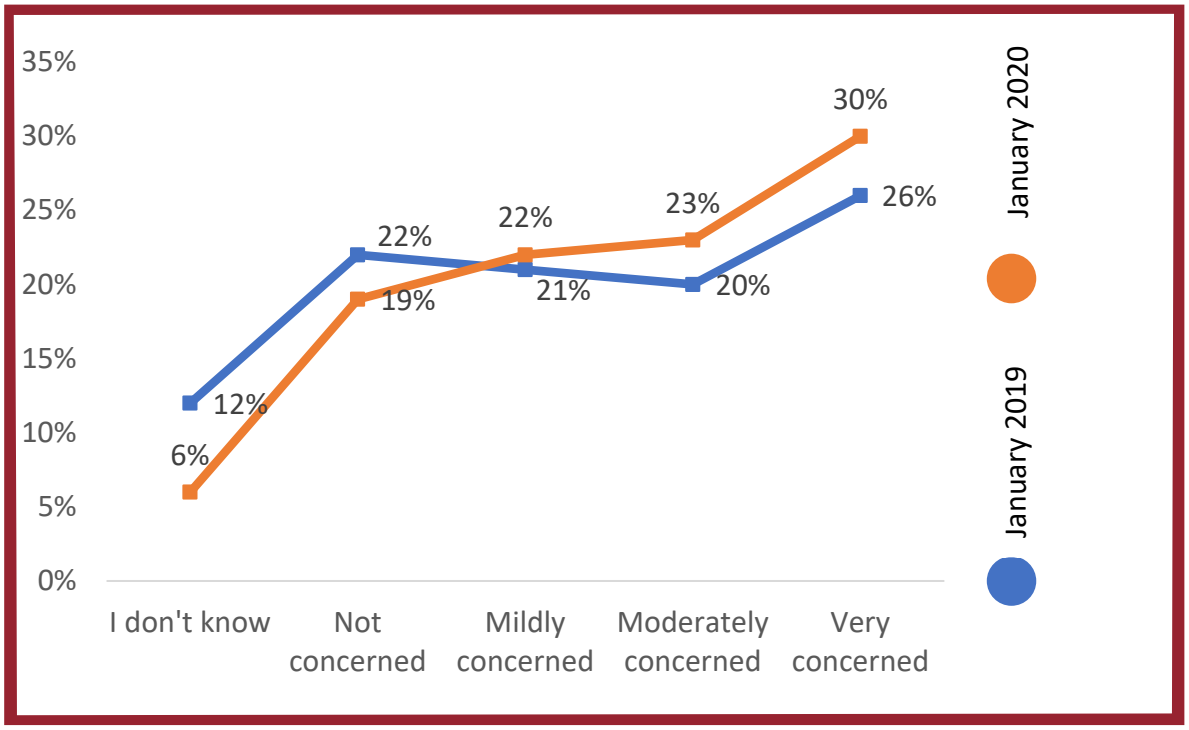

Figure 1: Concern about smart speakers privacy risk in U.S. adults
Source: VoiceBot.ai (2020)

Thus, trying to understand the reasons why news consumers do not (yet) use smart speakers is highly relevant (Figure 2). Even if in 2020 one third say they are simply uninterested for no reason, for another 33% the main reason not to have a smart device is that they are "concerned the device will record what I'm saying". A quarter are happy with their smartphone functionality, 11% considers prices too expensive, and 7% hope to get one, with most of them hoping to do so in the next 12 months.

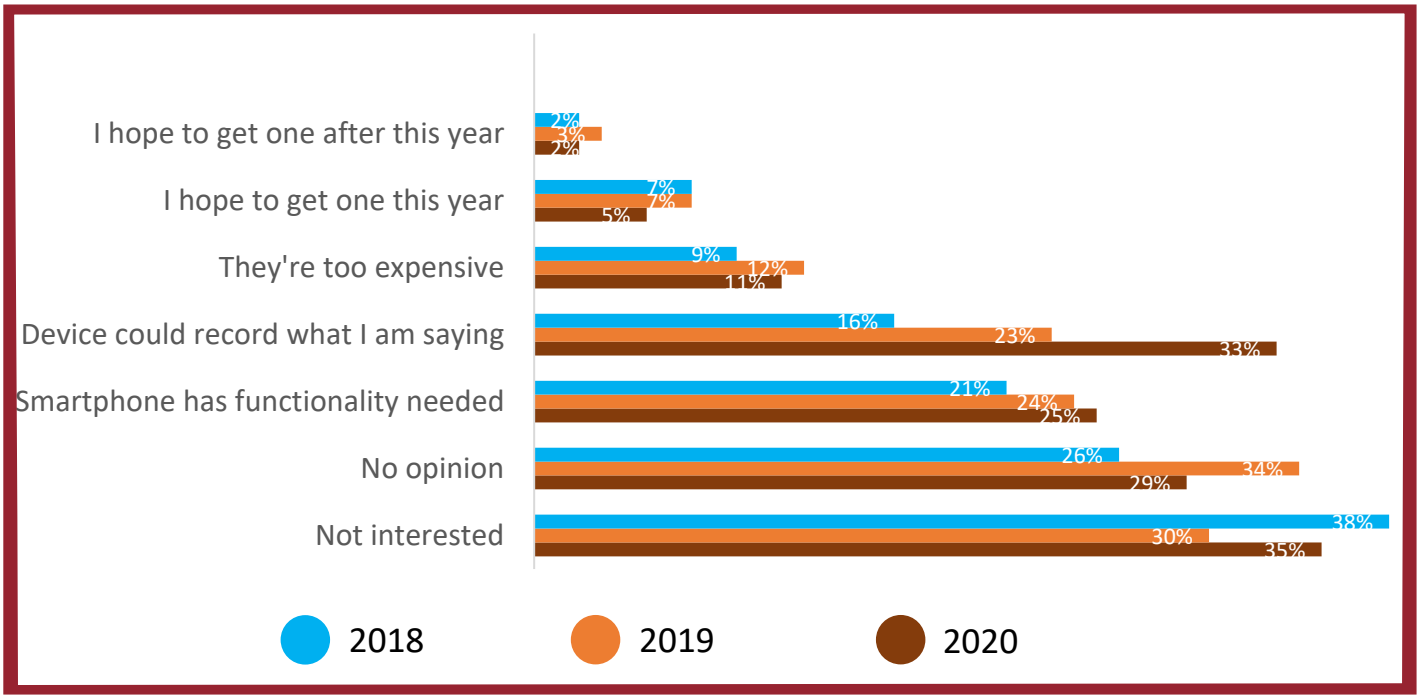

Figure 2: Reason consumers do not yet have a smart speaker
Source: Authors based on VoiceBot.ai (2020)

The impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have caused an increase in the use of voice assistants. An international survey by We Are Social and Hootsuite (Kemp, 2020) published in July, shows that, during the initial stage of the pandemic, the time spent using smart speakers grew by 14%. In general, 45% of internet users aged 16 to 64 use voice interfaces each month (Figure 3). High usage countries are those with large populations in Asia like India (60%), Indonesia (56%) and China (55%). The Portuguese speaking countries have a lower than the worldwide average usage (45%), with Brazil (40%) and Portugal (22%).

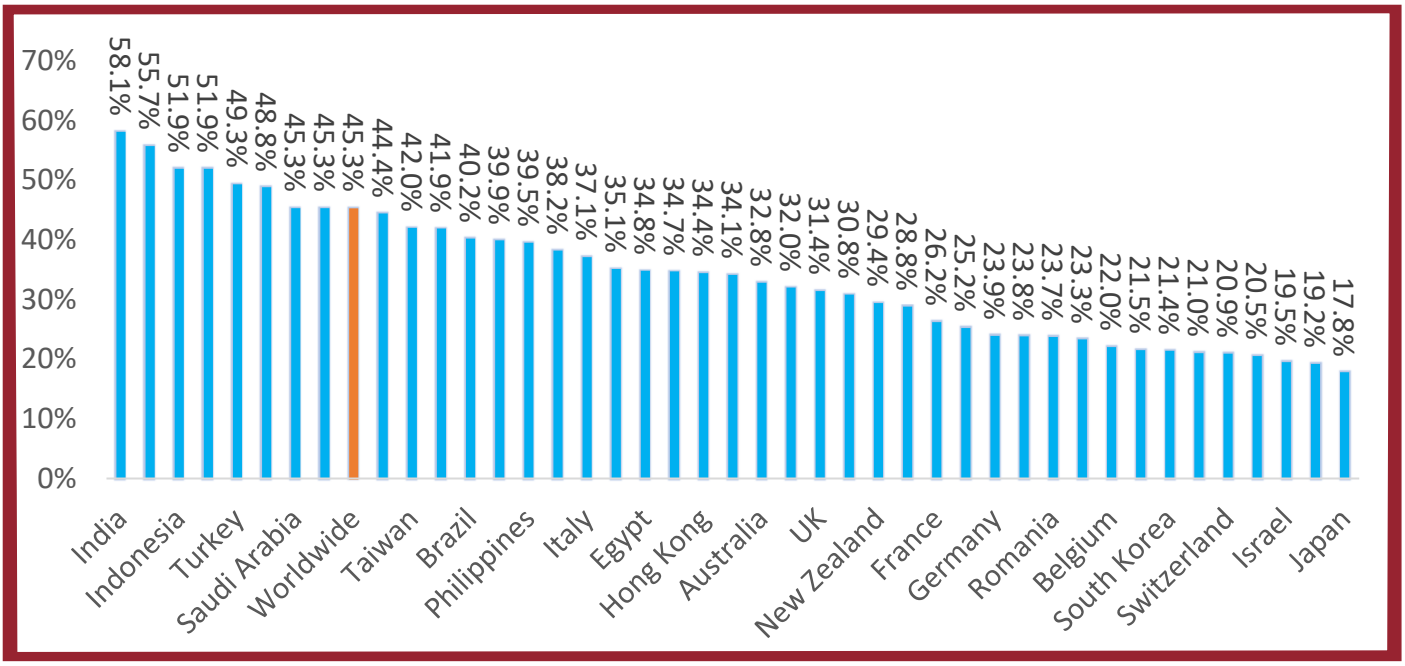

Figure 3: Use of voice search and voice interfaces by internet users aged 16 to 64, January 2021. Source: Authors based on Kemp (2021)

Research statistics forecast an increase in the consumption of voice-activated content, especially, by smart speakers. These devices should also consolidate their position as another platform for news distribution. But, a platform that poses new challenges for the media, where algorithms and business models of third parties influence what content will be presented to the consumer (see Newman, 2018; and Turow, 2020, for analyses of how a further rise of voice-activated devices may reshape journalism).

It will be necessary to train journalists to understand the logic of this platform so they can prepare content that can easily get to people. It is also necessary to discuss a code of ethics surrounding the Internet of Things. The popularization of voice assistants and smart speakers also depends on the deployment of the 5G network across all countries, on the expansion of languages recognized by mainstream voice assistants and on better training of the existent natural language processing systems (NLPs) to recognize accents and ways of speaking that are different from the cultured norm or from the ways a language is spoken at large commercial centres.

Interview results

As voice-activated assistants and devices are a new technology and unavailable in many languages, our interviewees have more doubts than certainties about the current and future role of this technology in journalism. But our interviewees do say journalists should appreciate three key aspects of the technology. First, to understand the operating mechanisms of production and the challenges for consumers. Secondly, to be prepared to develop specific content, because data from other countries that already use smart speakers on a larger scale show that it is a platform with high growth in penetration and use, and so very promising in terms of content production. Thirdly, to understand the challenges each language poses to interaction between users and the devices' Artificial Intelligence.

We talked to journalists and professionals involved in the production of content to be activated by voice commands. Adam Javůrek is an analyst at *Český rozhlas* (Czech Radio), Zsuzsanna Dömös is a technology journalist working for independent news website *24.hu* in Hungary, Vlad Andriescu is editor-in-chief at a *start-up.ro* website specialising in news about digital start-ups in Romania and Miguel Lajes is business owner and digital innovator at Euroconsumers, an NGO defending consumer rights in five countries, four EU nations, one of which is Portugal, and Brazil. In the field of journalism, only *Český rozhlas* offers a skill for smart-speakers. Euroconsumers is developing skills in Portuguese, but is still in the testing phase. The aspect all interviewees report is that the main challenge in producing and distributing content through smart speakers is language (of the countries under study in this report, only German and Portuguese (from Brazil) are available.)

> Smart speakers are not readily available in Romanian, you have to think of names that can be pronounced easily by the user to set up the program and not create frustration (…) For example Amazon Alexa is used in Romania, but it does not support Romanian and also you have to set up a fake US address in order to use its features, such as the integration with Spotify or other streaming platforms.
>
> Vlad Andriescu, editor-in-chief, *start-up.ro*

> Currently no smart speaker can speak Czech. But even controlling in English is not easy because the phrase "Czech Radio" is heard as "check radio" and therefore the query is not understood at all. The developers suggest that we should rename our skill, but of course it does not make any sense to have a different name than what the users will use (i.e. the name of our institution).
>
> Adam Javůrek, analyst, *Český rozhlas*

> There's still a big gap between English and the languages that we are currently targeting: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French. The latter ones are not so developed or aren't even supported yet. However, it's quite noticeable the improvements and at least in Italian and Spanish we were able to launch apps in Google and Amazon.
>
> Miguel Lage, Business Owner and Digital Innovator, Euroconsumers

Other difficulties pointed out by the interviewees relate to the platforms' business model, as Miguel Lage describes: "It's not very clear [about] the ROI [Return on Investment] of these apps. Direct monetization is difficult and traffic volumes are still very low." Other specialists reinforce this idea:

> I think that as a business model this area is not still there yet and cannot be monetized properly, with a proper ROI. In terms of algorithms I don't believe it to be so challenging. But for this to work you have to have an audio department to record all the content.
>
> Vlad Andriescu, Editor-in-Chief, *start-up.ro*

Regardless of the business model of the platforms, the interviewees point out that the production of content should be thought of in a different way than it is done nowadays. "If multimodal is not available (e.g. no screen) then content needs to be carefully designed just for the aural channel", Miguel Lage suggests. The specificities of interaction through conversation are at the top of the priorities, for developers:

> On the one hand there is the possibility of interactivity, on the other hand users don't want to make complicated choices and ideally don't want to choose too often either - it's about finding the right combination of simple and clear open-ended questions and long-term personalisation.
>
> Adam Javůrek, analyst, *Český rozhlas*

> You have to have in mind the attention span of people and how they use their smart speaker content. As smart speakers are still small devices, with an audio quality which is not extraordinary, you have to think of small snippets of information that can be delivered quickly and understood independently. Consequently, you have to think of snippets of 5 minutes which are delivered in an understandable way and stopped at any given point by the user. If podcasts, for example, have very good listening numbers and people spend more than 30 minutes listening to a podcast on headphones, on a smart speaker you have to shorten that radically.
>
> Vlad Andriescu, editor-in-chief, *start-up.ro*

One of the clues that interviewees have looking at markets where smart speakers work in the local language is that podcasts are suitable content to be produced and consumed through these platforms.

> The best content for smart speakers would be news snippets for a morning digest or a late evening round up, also short podcasts of ten to fifteen minutes. Recipes would also be an appropriate type of product if the smart speaker is close to the kitchen, for example. But with limited language availability in Romanian, this content type is still a very small niche.
>
> Vlad Andriescu, editor-in-chief, *start-up.ro*

Content producers experience the dilemma of starting to develop products to get ahead of or waiting for the popularisation of the platform in their respective countries before it looks like to become a profitable business. Everything requires investment: time, knowledge and money. “That’s the million-dollar question: Up until now we are just expecting to grow the traffic and drive that traffic to other touch points where we apply our conversion funnel”, Miguel Lage concludes. Adam Javůrek (analyst, *Český rozhlas*) agrees: “We're not at the stage where we're thinking about monetization yet. Redistribution itself is not costly and we would only consider the return on investment if original content was being created.” Vlad Andriescu (editor-in-chief, *start-up.ro*) anticipates other ways to support development costs: “The only way I can see it as feasible is through branded content projects and ad inserts for these snippets, which could be supported by a long term commercial partner.”

Education and Training for Smart Speaker Journalism

Our interviewees acquired their qualifications through daily experience and exchange of information with professionals in the field of technology, rather than through formal education. They understand that preparing journalists for this reality while still in college is fundamental.

> I think that universities should look into the modern ways of creating content and adapting their curricula. We need to prepare students for a real multimedia environment, where a journalist is also a social media specialist, with basic understanding of delivering content on different kind of social media, but also knowing how to shoot video adapted for the internet. Short snippets, three-to-five-to-ten minutes). (…) We really need video editing skills, audio recording and audio editing.
>
> Vlad Andriescu, editor-in-chief, *start-up.ro*

The interviewees suggest combining youth with academic studies as the best solution for the development of products and content for these devices.

> I think students who are digital natives have it easy today in understanding how to deliver content. Because they know how to deliver their personal content and just have to adapt it a bit to the rules of journalism. So being a digital native helps them understand how to write and deliver content, maybe differently than if a school was preparing them for doing so. A student could know how to deliver great Tik Tok content, which can be journalistically relevant. So I would say that they should leverage the digital experience they have and adapt it to journalism.
>
> Vlad Andriescu, editor-in-chief, *start-up.ro*

Our respondents predict that this technology will become popular in all regions of the globe:

> Companies will embrace voice apps more and more. Assistants from the big platforms will remain the best traffic builders and will grow even more in importance. More companies will launch their own customer voice assistants providing more customized experience for their businesses. Consumers in Europe will understand the relevance of these assistants, especially in "new" contexts such as the automobile. Different use cases for consumers will pop-up.
>
> Miguel Lage, Business Owner and Digital Innovator, Euroconsumers

> I think that people will still consume written information, but they feel the need of curated content and audio and smart speakers can give them that feeling that they are receiving basically a news bulletin for the day, with all the relevant issues.
>
> Vlad Andriescu, editor-in-chief, *start-up.ro*

The new technology also brings some concerns to our respondents, which need to be discussed by companies and universities alike.

> According to reports, smart speakers are a growing market, but there are a number of barriers to adoption, for example privacy concerns, I think companies have to work on that. Experts advise publishers to make existing content accessible and findable through voice. I think the next step is to offer differentiated audio content that works across multiple platforms. Early adopter companies will move in that direction.
>
> Zsuzsanna Dömös, technology journalist*, 24.hu*

> Amazon and Google will have to introduce even stricter standards for the creation of voice-controlled apps, or strengthen the role of preset features where the media will only be in the role of content provider and not directly the creators of the skill/action. However, this is a disadvantageous position

> for the media as they lose the direct link with users. From our point of view, the availability of the Czech language and the quality of implementation will be crucial. We have had reactions from the Scandinavian countries that their language versions of Google Home there were quite sloppy and users were dissatisfied.
>
> Adam Javůrek, analyst, *Český rozhlas*

So, at this moment, content development for smart speakers and voice assistants, in the countries of origin of our interviewees, still raises concerns on what and how to do it and how to solve major language barriers and problems. Difficulties in identifying the best kind of content, how to interact with users and how to monetize the content are obvious. But the differences in consumption through voice interfaces, compared with written interaction on other media channels, is also a major challenge for producers to master. In terms of knowledge and skills needed to work in this field, the specialist interviewees point to a solid background in communication, but with applied skills in multimedia production, some technological expertise and intense digital media use.

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AI and Journalism, Robot Journalism and Algorithms

Miguel Crespo, Ana Pinto-Martinho

Automated journalism is also known as algorithmic journalism or robot journalism (Dörr, 2016; Montal & Reich, 2016; Graefe, 2016) and consists of news articles generated by computer programs. Through artificial intelligence (AI) software, stories are produced automatically by computers rather than human reporters. These programs interpret, organize, and present data in human-readable ways. The process involves an algorithm that scans large amounts of data, selects from an assortment of pre-programmed article structures, orders key points, and inserts details such as names, places, amounts, rankings, statistics, and other figures. The output can also be customized to fit a certain voice, tone, or style (Dörr, 2016; Montal & Reich, 2016).

Until now, despite it being a growing trend, not that many media outlets worldwide have used automated journalism on a large scale[1]. Pioneer adopters include *The Associated Press*, *Forbes*, *ProPublica*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. Early implementations were mainly used for stories based on statistics and numerical figures. Common topics include sports recaps[2], weather, financial reports, real estate analysis, and earnings reviews (Montal & Reich, 2016). *StatSheet*, an online platform covering college basketball, ran entirely on an automated program (Cohen, 2015). The *Associated Press* began using automation to cover 10,000 minor baseball leagues games annually.[3] Other than sports, the *Associated Press* uses automation to produce stories on corporate earnings. In 2006, *Reuters* announced their switch to automation to generate financial news stories on its online news platform (van Dalen, 2012). More famously, an algorithm called Quakebot published a story about a 2014 California earthquake on *The Los Angeles Times* website within three minutes after the shaking had stopped (Carlson, 2015; Cohen, 2015).

Automated journalism is sometimes seen as an opportunity to free journalists from routine reporting, providing them with more time for complex tasks. It also might allow efficiency and cost-cutting, alleviating the financial burden that many news organizations face. However, automated journalism is also perceived as a threat to the authorship and quality of news and a threat to the livelihoods of human journalists. Graefe & Bohlken (2020) try to give some insights on the perception

[1] See a range of case studies: https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/polis/JournalismAI/Case-studies
[2] See an example from The New York Times at https://www.techslang.com/how-is-automated-journalism-impacting-the-media/
[3] https://www.poynter.org/tech-tools/2016/the-associated-press-will-use-automated-writing-to-cover-the-minor-leagues/

of automated news in the eyes of users in terms of credibility, quality, and readability in comparison to human-written news. In general, their study showed no difference in readers' perceptions of credibility, a small advantage for human-written news in terms of quality, and a huge advantage for human-written news with respect to readability (see also Jung et al., 2017).

Robot reporters are built to produce large quantities of information at quicker speeds. For the *Associated Press*, their use of automation has increased the volume of earnings reports from customers by more than ten times. With software from Automated Insights and data from other companies, they can produce 150 to 300-word articles in the same time it takes journalists to crunch numbers and prepare information (Cohen, 2015). By automating routine stories and tasks, journalists are promised more time for complex jobs such as investigative reporting and in-depth analysis of events (Dörr, 2016; Montal & Reich, 2016). *The Associated Press* stated[4] that, through automation, the news agency freed up 20 percent of reporters' time to focus on higher-impact projects. Automated journalism is also cheaper because more content can be produced within less time.

The main criticisms are related to authorship (who should be credited as the author?), credibility (are algorithms "fair and accurate, free from subjectivity, error, or attempted influence", Gillespie, 2014), quality (can machines replace human capabilities such as creativity, humour, and critical thinking?) and, looking to other activities where humans were replaced by real or virtual machines, the topic of employment. But the introduction of AI in journalism is growing, and projects such as *JournalismAI*[5] intend to contribute to a wider and better use of it, allowing media organisations to explore how they could use AI technologies to approach a series of challenges, and support a growing network of almost 3,000 journalists across the world (Beckett, 2021).

Artificial intelligence

Trying to achieve a definition of Artificial Intelligence, Mueller & Massaron's (2018) approach is a good starting point:

> when thinking about AI, notice an interplay between goal seeking, data processing used to achieve that goal, and data acquisition used to better understand the goal. AI relies on algorithms to achieve

[4] https://www.adexchanger.com/publishers/associated-press-uses-ai-boost-contentvideo/volume/021/02/11/powering-ahead-journalismais-mission-in-2021/

> a result that may or may not have anything to do with human goals or methods of achieving those goals.
>
> (Mueller & Massaron, 2018, 12)

Skiena explains algorithms as "a procedure that takes any of the possible input instances and transforms it to the desired output" (Skiena, 2008, 3). Algorithms are a sequence of steps used to solve a problem and they are also as Mueller & Massaron (2017) argue finite, well-defined, and effective. Behind the ability to learn and interpret speech is Machine Learning technology (Mueller & Massaron, 2016). Machine learning "addresses the question of how to build computers that improve automatically through experience" (Jordan & Mitchell 2015, 255). Artificial Intelligence includes machine learning, but machine learning does not fully define AI.

Artificial Intelligence is built on the hypothesis that mechanizing thought is possible. During the first millennium, Greek, Indian, and Chinese philosophers all worked on ways to perform this task. Then, Gottfried Leibniz, Thomas Hobbes, and René Descartes discussed the potential for rationalizing all thought simply as math symbols. Of course, the complexity of the problem eluded them. The point is that the vision for AI has been around for an incredibly long time, but the implementation of AI is relatively new in general, and much more recent in journalism.

The true birth of AI as we know it today began with Alan Turing's (1950) publication of *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, which explored the idea of how to determine whether machines can think. This paper pointed to the Imitation Game involving three players. Player A is a computer and Player B is a human. Each must convince Player C (a human who cannot see either Player A or Player B) that they are human. If Player C cannot determine who is, and who is not, human on a consistent basis, the computer wins. The same problem can be applied to using AI in journalism. For readers, listeners, and viewers AI must be able to develop a news story that cannot be identified as created by a non-human. But, in ethical terms, the discussion on whether media outlets should identify news stories created by AI is on-going, and there is no clear direction on the path to follow. Van Drunen, Helberger, & Bastian (2019) provide a framework of transparency instruments in the context of the news personalization algorithms.

A continuing problem with AI is too much optimism (Matteson, 2015). The problem that scientists are trying to solve with AI is incredibly complex, even if machines were doing all sorts of amazing things, and AI has its greatest success in areas such as logistics, data mining, and medical diagnosis[6].

The adoption of artificial intelligence in newsrooms[7], either in reporting, production, or distribution of content, requires training, resources, and ethical debate. Training journalists and editors in general concepts related to artificial intelligence and subsequently in specific technical skills is crucial to promote an organizational culture open to the use of this technology. Implementing AI-based solutions also requires the development of a strategic vision, economic investment, interdisciplinary team building and the search for alliances with educational and technological organizations. The processes developed with AI should be auditable, adjustable, transparent, and traceable, and respond to ethical standards of journalism; the latter is perhaps the most critical aspect of intelligence implementation in the media industry (see also Dörr & Hollnbuchner, 2017).

Ethics are a serious issue on the agenda of automated journalism. Monti (2019) explores the field of media outputs, in which automated journalism could be implemented, to understand how it could be framed from a legal point of view. To do so, he analyses the legal and ethical problems of automated journalism by looking at the problems of liability and data use, pointing to some solutions and guidelines. Broussard et al. (2019) focus on the implications of AI for journalism in the larger context of the digitization of media and public life — a transition to apps, algorithms, social media, etc. In that sense, journalists can begin to learn what AI actually is (and is not), and explain such technologies to the public. The same path is designed by Diakopoulos (2019), as he argues that AI is a new medium through which journalists can express and exercise their ethical and normative values through the code they implement.

According to Mueller & Massaron (2016), a true AI will eventually occur when computers can finally emulate the clever combination used by nature: 1) genetics: slow learning from one generation to the next; 2) teaching: rapid learning from organized sources, and 3) exploration: spontaneous learning through media and interactions with others.

[6] See also these examples: Why a Leading AI Expert Is So Optimistic About Humanity's Future: https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/why-leading-ai-expert-so-optimistic-about-humanitys-future, Ma vs Musk on AI: The Optimistic Versus the Dystopian Viewpoint: https://www.aitrends.com/ethics-and-social-issues/ma-vs-musk-on-ai-the-optimistic-versus-the-dystopian-viewpoint/

[7] 4 Examples of AI's Rise in Journalism (And What it Means for Journalists): http://mediashift.org/2016/09/4-examples-ais-rise-journalism-means-journalists/

Algorithms

All algorithms find solutions, the speedier and easier, the better. Using computers to solve problems by employing the appropriate algorithm speeds up the task significantly, which is the reason that the development of new algorithms has progressed so fast since the appearance of powerful computer systems. Algorithms determine how to interpret big data: process input data and create predictable outputs based on the data patterns. The data itself is not predictable. The reason you need AI and machine learning is to be able to see the patterns in the data and make sense of them (Mueller & Massaron, 2016). Since the widespread adoption of the Internet, encounters with algorithmic procedures for 'information retrieval' – the activity of getting some piece of information out of a collection or repository of some kind – have become everyday experiences for most people in a large proportion of the world (Rieder, 2020).

A simple definition of an algorithm is a systematic set of operations to perform on a given data set — essentially a procedure. The four basic data operations are Create, Read, Update, and Delete (CRUD). This set of operations may be the basis of everything you do with a computer. As the dataset becomes larger, the computer can use the algorithms found in an application to perform more work. The use of immense datasets, known as big data, enables a computer to perform work based on pattern recognition in a nondeterministic manner. In short, to create a computer setup that can learn, you need a dataset large enough for the algorithms to manage in a manner that allows for pattern recognition (Mueller & Massaron, 2017, 23).

By combining big data with statistics, you can create a machine learning environment in which the machine considers the probability of any given event (but statistics is not the only machine learning method). One aspect that defined big data as 'big' is the notion that while a human can learn something from 'big data', the magnitude of the dataset makes human recognition of the patterns impossible (or would take a long time to accomplish). Machine learning helps humans make sense and use of big data. Everything in machine learning revolves around algorithms. An algorithm is a procedure or formula used to solve a problem, and a kind of container. It provides a box for storing a method to solve a particular kind of a problem. The goal is to create an output that solves a problem.

So, according to Mueller & Massaron (2017), it is a sequence of steps used to solve a problem. The sequence presents a unique method of addressing an issue by providing a particular solution. An algorithm does not need to represent mathematical or logical concepts, but people most commonly use algorithms in this manner. Some special formulas are also algorithms, such as the quadratic

formula. For a process to represent an algorithm, it must be: 1) Finite: The algorithm must eventually solve the problem; 2) Well-defined: The series of steps must be both precise and understandable; 3) Effective: An algorithm must solve all cases of the problem, for which someone defined it. An algorithm should always solve the problem it has to solve.

Robot journalism

Robot journalism depends on AI and algorithms and partly, in machine learning, although this is only part of what a system requires to become an AI. [8] The machine learning portion of the system enables an AI to perform the following kinds of tasks: 1) adapt to new circumstances that the original developer did not envision; 2) detect patterns in all sorts of data sources; and 3) create new behaviours based on the recognized patterns, in other words, make decisions based on the success or failure of these behaviours.

In journalism, the robot is not some physical object or device, but a piece of software able to gather data, analyse it, identify the relevant events to build a news story[9] (the more unusual or unexpected, so it becomes news with interest for the audience), organize a sequence and then build a narrative using journalism "rules" and best practices. The result must be as good as a story written by a human, and for the consumer, it should not be identifiable as created by a robot. But, for now, fully automated journalism, (e.g. texts or visuals produced by AI alone) is still rather rare, while journalists increasingly rely on AI to facilitate their work (e.g. tools for data journalism).

Interview results

Automation processes are increasingly present in our everyday lives. These processes are now transversal to professions and practices, and journalism is not any different. However, there are substantial differences with regard to its use and evolution in journalism in the countries of the study, as outlined by the interviewees we conducted.

We interviewed journalists from five countries about AI and journalism, robot journalism and consequently algorithms: The Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, and Romania. Some

[8] See examples from *The New York Times*, *Reuters*, and other media at https://emerj.com/ai-sector-overviews/automated-journalism-applications/

[9] The Rise of the Robot Reporter, *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/business/media/artificial-intelligence-journalism-robots.html

work for legacy media, like the broadcaster *Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR)* from Germany and the *Česká tisková kancelář* (the Czech News Agency – ČTK). The other two newsrooms, *24.hu* in Hungary and *start-up.ro* in Romania, are online media and *Público,* from Portugal has both paper and online editions.

Despite the differences in each country's evolution of AI and journalism, most of our interviewees agree that the entrance of such techniques into newsrooms will be inevitable, so skills and literacy in these areas are crucial.

AI in newsrooms and media companies

Of the five interviewees, those from the Czech Republic, Germany and Portugal report that AI was being used in their newsrooms. This is not the case in the newsrooms our interviewees work in Hungary and Romania. Only one of the interviewees is dedicated more specifically to work with automation, Steffen Kühne. His media outlet, German regional public broadcaster BR, has a specific unit for developing and working with AI produced content:

> The AI + Automation Lab at Bayerischer Rundfunk was founded in March 2020. Our goal is to develop products to improve the news reporting, production, and distribution at our organization. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of AI-based approaches to automation and publishing.
>
> Steffen Kühne, Tech lead for the AI + Automation Lab at *Bayerischer Rundfunk*

Kühne also highlight that there are other teams at *Bayerischer Rundfunk* working with AI, especially in the areas of audience development, media production, archives, and platform development: "We are working together with those teams, for instance when it comes to metadata specifications, storage, and access. These are common topics that are crucial for the future development of automated products."

Radka Matesová Marková from the Czech Republic and Rui Barros from Portugal mention that AI is important in their newsrooms, and there is work being done within the AI scope, although neither of their organisations have a specific unit for this purpose. The news stories produced by AI come from cooperation between the newsroom and the IT department.

> The development is carried out by the IT development team, in cooperation with editorial staff as needed. Strategic coordination is between the IT development director and the Editor-in-Chief. The

> specific algorithms are prepared by the IT development team together with some experienced news editors.
>
> Radka Matesová Marková, Editor-in-Chief, *Česká tisková kancelář*

Zsuzsanna Dömös points out that the use of AI in journalism and robot journalism is still not a common practice in Hungarian newsrooms:

> This is not typical in Hungary. Here AI is not yet integrated into newsrooms. Even large media companies do not have adequate resources and access for this kind of solution. Journalism in Hungary is not keeping pace with the evolution of new technologies:
>
> Zsuzsanna Dömös, Technology journalist, *24.hu*

According to our interviewees, automated reporting, in the broader sense, can be used to cover a lot of stories that happen regularly and where results can be quantified (be transformed into structured data). The most common examples quoted were reporting about sports, economy, health, weather, and traffic information. The interviewees are unanimous about the potential in using automated reporting but some of them point out that some stories would largely benefit from human editing and context work.

> Often, this type of reporting can still benefit from the work of reporters and editors, providing additional context on why unemployment has dropped or why a basketball game was lost.
>
> Steffen Kühne, Tech lead for the AI + Automation Lab at *Bayerischer Rundfunk*

The potential of AI and algorithms was mentioned as something that could benefit all kinds of journalistic products. Steffen Kühne says that investigative reports can use AI to make sense of huge document leaks or satellite data, mentioning that video editors can use specialized software to help organize hours of video footage or streamline colour grading. He also points out that there is a large chance for assistive technologies to reduce the number of tedious tasks for media workers.

In the three newsrooms that reported to have been working with AI, automation has been used. One example is the Czech case where the coverage of local and senate election results in 2018 and regional elections in 2020 was made using automation tools. As Marková reports, this will be again deployed for the parliamentary elections in autumn 2021. “Since 2020 we are also using automation tools for regular news reports on petrol prices in the Czech Republic and monthly traffic accident statistics”, Radka Matesová Marková explains. In the Portuguese case, Rui Barros says that in the

last year there was a lot of work being done regarding the reporting of the pandemic situation, and he suggests that automation has been very important:

> I dare say that the COVID-19 pandemic is the world's first major data driven event. Numbers, but also their constant updating, have never been so important to people. And here, the use of these techniques proved to be advantageous because they allowed the automation of processes.
>
> Rui Barros, Data journalist*, Público*

While stressing the advantages, our interviewees also reported some challenges linked to AI. Some mentioned that AI depends heavily on data quality, which is often problematic along with data availability. The integration of new software into the existing legacy systems can also be an issue, as Steffen Kühne points out:

> Incompatible interfaces or data models are oftentimes responsible for large development and management overhead. Training and deploying AI models in a cloud infrastructure can also be quite expensive and requires in-depth knowledge on how to optimize algorithms for speed, efficiency, and stability.
>
> Steffen Kühne, Tech lead for the AI + Automation Lab at *Bayerischer Rundfunk*

Another issue noted were problems raised by linguistic complexity since most models are developed for English:

> The worst thing that can happen to a reader is to feel that the text was produced by an algorithm due to some grammatical inconsistency or some edge case that was not thought of when the product was developed. In this aspect, the Portuguese language offers a lot of resistance - and many of the text generation models are designed for an Anglo-Saxon tradition, which does not facilitate the process.
>
> Rui Barros, Data journalist, *Público*

Radka Matesová Marková supports Rui Barros and sums up the main challenges faced by newsrooms using AI. There is a general difficulty with algorithms and AI in other languages besides English, namely a "lack of available data, quality of algorithms processing the Czech language, business opportunities (e.g. for automatically generated hyperlocal content)". Labour cost is also an issue, because hiring machine learning experts with hands-on experience is no easy task due to high demand and labour costs, highlights Kühne. A solution for this problem, in his experience, at least partially, is networking, for example by participating in meetups or hackathons, or by establishing

collaborations with universities. This brings us to a very important point that is forcing media companies and universities to collaborate and push for interdisciplinary partnerships.

Education and training in the AI fields

In a field that is still in an embryonic stage in a lot of countries and newsrooms, it is important to try to understand if the training and teaching offered in universities and other training institutions do exist and whether they are adequate. Steffen Kühne, from Germany, and Radka Matesová Marková, from the Czech Republic, report that, to their knowledge, some universities recently started programs that include automation in their curricula, where Rui Barros from Portugal, says that it may be in certain curricula, but not in a practical perspective (hands-on). Both Barros and Kühne emphasize that it is very important to work on awareness.

> Some colleges, universities and journalism schools have started to include news automation in their curricula. But it would be presumptuous to say that AI and automation have an overly high priority, especially when considering that traditional journalism training, with an emphasis on basic education, ethics and craftsmanship, is still very relevant today.
>
> Steffen Kühne, Tech lead for the AI + Automation Lab at *Bayerischer Rundfunk*

Nevertheless, some interviewees say that although it is a benefit for journalists to get more programming and AI related skills, they do not have to be experts in this area. Rather, collaboration between experts in the field of journalism, machine learning, software development, product and design is the secret to success, as Steffen Kühne clearly points out.

At present, as there is a lack of specific courses in this field, most of the journalists working in this area are self-taught, relying on their hands-on experience, with some of them going further in their education by taking some courses on programming, for example. Radka Matesová Marková states that she has no formal education in the field and gained her experience through self-study, participation in international conferences and participation in the development of automated journalism tools. Besides, she is a member of a team involving three Czech universities (Charles University, University of West Bohemia, Czech Technical University) working on a three-year project exploring the ethical aspects of robotic journalism. Steffen Kühne also emphasizes that most skills required to solve automation problems come from experience.

> I hold a degree in journalism and did a couple of semesters in computer science. Yet, I would argue that the hands-on experience as a software developer in web development and e-commerce help

> me the most. I participated in some online courses with a focus on AI, machine-learning and data science, which help to conceptualize the problems associated with automation, but solving those problems is usually more craft than science.
>
> Steffen Kühne, Tech lead for the AI + Automation Lab at *Bayerischer Rundfunk*

Rui Barros' interest in this area came from his work as a data journalist. As he points out, his interest grew as he learned the potential for this kind of content. Inspired by what he saw in other international news outlets, Barros searched for information on how it was being done and started to 'experiment', a key word for all our interviewees. Vlad Andriescu also states that he had no formal training, but that he is "trying to read about AI as much as I can, and I write a lot about it in my articles".

So, in general, the importance and inevitability of AI in the newsrooms is recognized by all our interviewees, whether they use such techniques in their own work or not. Also, the interviewees mention the importance of not only being clear about how the automated work is done but also being transparent about the algorithms in use. Most of our interviewees are self-taught about these issues, sometimes reading and looking for information that helps them experiment, so it is clear that this an area where there is a need for training. Yet, training programs should consist of several levels – from basic to more advanced – also because the implementation of AI into newsroom routines differs considerably between the countries under study.

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Verifying and Analysing Fake News

Antonia Matei, Mihaela Păun, Marian Popovici

Definitions

While contemporary discussions on false information in online and social media seem ubiquitous, the phenomenon of fakery has much older roots. Thus, there are many definitions in the literature. Winston & Winston (2021, 17) suggest "the 'fake news' phenomenon is not a new problem. It is not just older than Facebook et al, it is older than the newspaper itself, or the presses used to print it.". Moreover, the same authors argue, "the term fake news can acceptably describe, on a common-sense basis, pure fiction masquerading as fact" (ibid., 11), and that

> Fake news flourishes not so much because of pure lying as because seeking to provide unassailable accounts capturing reality in its entirety, the impossible ideal of the news (as supposedly produced by objective journalism), proves indeed to be exactly that – impossible – and so every visible failure can seem like further evidence that the news is not to be trusted.
>
> (ibid., 13)

Starting with a generic definition, Allcott & Gentzkow (2017, 213) describe fake news as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers". Cao et al. (2020) describe various types of content manipulation, defined as:

> a news post that shares multimedia content that does not faithfully represent the event that it refers to. In real-world scenarios, the visual content in fake news can be broadly classified into three categories:
>
> (1) visual content that is deliberately manipulated (also known as tampering, doctoring or photoshopping) or automatically generated by deep generative networks, which equals to fake images/videos in our common sense,
> (2) visual content from an irrelevant event, such as a past event, a staged work or an artwork, that is reposted as being captured in the context of an emerging event, or
> (3) visual content that is real (not edited) but is published together with a false claim about the depicted event.
>
> (ibid., 143).

Shu et al. (2020) defined fake news also as disinformation, misinformation or even malinformation. Thus, disinformation is fake or inaccurate information intentionally spread to either or both mislead

and deceive, while misinformation is false content shared by a person who does not realize it is false or misleading. In the case of malinformation, the information is genuine and shared with an intent to cause harm (Shu et al., 2020, 2-3).

Moreover, Shu et al. mention rumour, urban legend and spam as some other types of information disorder that could increase attention and lead to misinformation (ibid.). They define rumour as a story circulating from person to person, of which the truth is unverified or doubtful, usually arising in the presence of ambiguous or threatening events. If the statement is false, any rumour will as a consequence be a type of misinformation. An urban legend is presented as an unusual, humorous, or horrible event, while spam consists of unsolicited and unwanted messages sent to a large number of recipients, containing irrelevant or inappropriate information.

Another term used to identify information disorder or fake is disinformation. Wardle (2017) compares it with misinformation, concluding that we cannot struggle only with the concepts of news and fake, and it is rather about the entire information ecosystem:

> - while misinformation refers to "the inadvertent sharing of false information," disinformation implies "the deliberate creation and sharing of information known to be false";
>
> "To understand the current information ecosystem, we need to break down three elements:
>
> - The different types of content that are being created and shared
> - The motivations of those who create this content
> - The ways this content is being disseminated" (ibid.)

Zimdars & McLeod (2020) argue fake news means also "a made-up story with an intention to deceive, often geared toward getting clicks" (ibid., 295-296). In this context, the same authors suggest that the technology permitted the flourishing of the concept because of the way that it regards facts, with a cynical disdain, into a political culture defined as "post-truth" and of the way it arises within a specific media regime "that promotes the splintering of audiences into narrower and narrower information streams" (ibid.).

But how can we identify what is fake and what is real? According to Barclay (2018), there are nine essential questions everyone should ask to find out whether or not information is fake:

> 1) Who created the information? 2) Who published the information? 3) What comes after the headline? 4) What sources are cited? 5) How old is the information? 6) What do others think of

the information? 7) Is the information a primary or a secondary source? 8) Is the information a joke? 9) Is the information different from anything you have ever seen?

(ibid., 115).

Typologies

As can be easily noticed, the concept "fake news" has many meanings (see Table 1 below). Wardle (2017) identifies seven types of mis- and disinformation:

1) Satire or parody - no intention to cause harm but has potential to fool
2) Misleading content - misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual
3) Imposter content - when genuine sources are impersonated
4) Fabricated content - new content is 100% false, designed to deceive or to harm
5) False connection - when headlines, visual or captions do not support the content
6) False context - when genuine content is shared with false contextual information
7) Manipulated content - when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive.

Allcott & Gentzkow (2017) also analysed the perspective of fake news as news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers but in contrast to Wardle's multiple categories, propose just two types of fake news: 1) Intentionally fabricated news articles, and 2) Satirical articles that can be misinterpreted as non-satirical (ibid.). They exclude from their definition several "close cousins of fake news" (ibid., 214):

- Unintentional reporting mistakes
- Rumours that are not the product of a specific fake news article
- Conspiracy theories
- Satirical articles that are unlikely to be seen as non-satirical
- Lies told by politicians
- Information that is slanted or misleading but not completely false"

(Allcott & Gentzkow cited in Barclay, 2018, 30-31).

Barclay (2018, 55-56) present a three-category classification of fake news: 1) Mercenary fake news: created for profit with no concern about the content of the message, 2) fake news with an agenda: propaganda, or 3) satirical fake news: created for humorous purposes but may also function as political or social commentary and criticism. In a review of previous studies that have used the term fake news, Tandoc et al. (2017, 11) suggest there are six categories: (1) news satire, (2) news parody, (3) fabrication, (4) manipulation, (5) advertising, and (6) propaganda.

Wardle (2017)	Allcott & Gentzkow (2017)	Barclay (2018)	Tandoc at al. (2017)
Satire or parody - no intention to cause harm but has potential to fool	Satirical articles that can be misinterpreted as non-satirical	Satirical fake news	News satire
	-	-	News parody
Imposter content - when genuine sources are impersonated	-	-	-
Fabricated content - news content is 100% false, designed to deceive or to harm	Intentionally fabricated news articles	-	Fabrication
Manipulated content - when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive	-	-	Manipulation
	-	-	Advertising
False connection - when headlines, visual or captions do not support the content	-	-	-
Misleading content - misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual	-	Fake news with an agenda: propaganda	Propaganda
False context – when genuine content is shared with false contextual information	-	Mercenary fake news	-

Table 1: Comparative typology of fake news
Source: Authors

Journalism and fake news

Traditionally, journalism implies the gathering of accurate and factual information obtained from reliable and double-checked sources before publication. However, the media landscape is undergoing a major change due to technological disruptions and the information-sharing logic of the social media era, arguably amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. We may conclude that classical journalism, as we know it, is under siege. Simply because anyone can post anything anytime without the slightest verification puts enormous pressure on journalists who, as professional ethics requires, are obliged to check the information before publication. The continuous flow of news and the rush for shares, likes and clicks sometimes makes journalists pick up and publish unauthentic information from unreliable sources with misquotes, fake attributions or misrepresentations (Winston & Winston, 2021). The public loses faith in mainstream media and its content and makes room for fake news. That is why journalists need to follow professional rules and strive to ensure that their reports are correct and rigorous. Thus, we may conclude that

> we face a crisis of knowledge (an epistemic crisis). This crisis makes it difficult to determine who to trust and what is true. (…) Truth isn't the only victim of fake news. Real people are. (…) Fake news is bad for democracy.
>
> (McBrayer, 2021, X)

The COVID-19 crisis has proved that fake news has an extremely harmful effect on all people, even on their physical health. Acting on the wrong information can kill, the World Health Organisation warns. Citing recent studies, WHO (2021) states that in the first three months of 2020, nearly 6,000 people around the globe were hospitalized because of coronavirus misinformation.
Although fake news is different to poor quality journalism, the latter is also a peril for the information environment:

> Poor quality journalism sometimes allows disinformation and misinformation to originate in or leak into the real news system. But the causes and remedies for weak journalism are different to the case of disinformation and misinformation. At the same time, it is evident that strong ethical journalism is needed as an alternative, and antidote, to the contamination of the information environment and the spill-over effect of tarnishing of news more broadly.
>
> (Berger, 2018, 9 - 10)

Alan Rusbridger (2018, 178), former editor-in-chief at *The Guardian*, considers that in a sense, journalism is a public service, just like the police or fire department. Editors and reporters provide valuable and accurate information that the public needs to make informed decisions. But a new danger arises: "'fake news' (…) is usually free - meaning that people who cannot afford to pay for quality journalism, or who lack access to independent public service news media, are especially vulnerable to both disinformation and misinformation" (Berger, 2018, 8). Unfortunately, nowadays, both ”information (and misinformation) are cheap and easy to produce, manipulate, and spread. That has lowered the barriers to entry to the information market and vastly increased the volume and speed of information flow ” (McBrayer, 2021, 19).

In this context, quality journalism holds the key to tackle fake news. Thinking critically about information and its origin, using trusted sources, seeking primary evidence, verifying the information that journalists receive and last, but not least, fact-checking. Indeed, “fact-checking is not rocket science”, as Mantzarlis (2018, 84) explains:

> It is scrupulous analysis driven by one basic question: "How do we know that?" At the same time, fact-checking is not spell-checking. There is not a dictionary-style guidebook with all the facts, nor a simple software that will examine documents and flag anytime something has been misstated as fact.
>
> (ibid.)

Mantzarlis identifies three phases of the process of fact-checking: (1) finding fact-checkable claims; (2) finding the facts and (3) correcting the record (ibid.).

Social media and the spread of fake news

Social media is a popular way of consuming news. There are 3.7 billion people around the world using social media in 2021[1]. Thus, it is a very good environment for information seeking and news consumption. Yet, social media is also a fertile ground for disinformation and fake news:

> Because it has low barriers to provide and disseminate news online faster and easier through social media, large amounts of disinformation such as fake news, those news articles with intentionally false information, are produced online for a variety of purposes, ranging from financial to political gains.
>
> (Shu et al., 2020, 2)

Tandoc (2021) believes that the increasing number of people who get their news from social media instead of local news websites leads to various consequences:

> Individuals judge a news story's credibility not only on who shared it on social media, but also on the number of likes, comments and shares. Fake news producers therefore often produce clickbait content to get more people to like, share, or comment on their fake stories, often playing into readers' biases or interests. Although the majority of disinformation research has focused on Facebook and Twitter, fake news now increasingly moves through closed social media applications, such as the messaging app WhatsApp.
>
> (Tandoc, 2021, 10-11)

The spread of fake news on social media can take various forms and disinformation can become misinformation, as misleading information has a dynamic nature, causing different types of information disorder, as Shu et al. (2020) explain:

[1] https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/

> "For example, a disinformation creator can intentionally distribute the false information on social media platforms. People who see the information may be unaware that it is false and share it in their communities, using their own framing. On the other hand, misinformation can also be transformed into disinformation. For example, a piece of satire news may be intentionally distributed out of the context to mislead consumers.
>
> (Shu et al., 2020, 3)

Fake news is not a new phenomenon and Greifeneder et. al. (2021) suggest there are several reasons for why this trend of disinformation is growing in the digital age. Primarily, the barriers of entry in news media have dropped significantly because websites can be easily created and monetized. Secondly, the cost of getting on social media is low to non-existent, which reduces incentives for the long-term presence associated with quality journalism: "The format of social media is such that information tends to be distributed in short snippets of text, which makes it harder for users to assess veracity" (Greifeneder et. al. 2021, 29). The third reason explained by the authors is a decline in public trust and confidence in mainstream media.

How social networks reacted to the fake news phenomenon

When the fake news phenomenon came to public scrutiny in 2016, social media was the main network to spread false information. Initially, Facebook did not put sufficient measures in place to hinder the spread of fake news during the 2016 US presidential election campaign. False quotes of the candidates, fake news, and misinformation were circulating through the network without any barriers: "The truth of a piece of content is less important than whether it is shared, liked and monetized.

These "engagement" metrics distort the media landscape, allowing clickbait, hyperbole and misinformation to proliferate", Solon (2016) claims about the Facebook failure throughout the election campaign.

According to Statista, Facebook is the most popular social media network, with nearly 3 billion users in 2021, which is 1 billion more than in 2016[2]. In recent years, Facebook promised to tackle "fake news" in order to make the network a safer place and fight this plague:

[2] https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/

> At Facebook, we're working to fight the spread of false news in three key areas: disrupting economic incentives because most false news is financially motivated; building new products to curb the spread of false news; and helping people make more informed decisions when they encounter false news.
>
> (Facebook, n.d., para 1)

Regarding the disruption of economic incentives, Facebook has taken some steps towards stopping spammers from making money: better identifying false news through the user community and third-party fact-checking organizations, making it as difficult as possible for people posting false news to buy ads, applying machine learning to assist the response teams in detecting fraud and updating detection of fake news accounts on Facebook. Facebook is also building new products to limit the spread of fake news: Ranking improvements which includes feedback from the community, easier reporting and working with independent third-party fact-checking organizations. Despite these efforts, social media still remain a fertile ground for sharing false information, especially in a health crisis that leads to many controversies about the coronavirus:

> Much of the misinformation is circulating on social media platforms that use encryption to place messages beyond the control of corporate fact checkers thereby exposing up to two billion people to a torrent of false information about the virus and its cures. Fake news hurts us when we rely on misinformation to guide our health, our relationships, or our financial decisions.
>
> (McBrayer, 2021, IX)

Interview results

Fake news has become a constant since the pandemic started. To further examine the journalistic struggle against fake news, we conducted four interviews with journalists from the Czech Republic, Germany, Portugal, and Romania. Kathrin Wesolowski is the only one who is a specialized fact checker, while Jan Tvrdon, Paulo Pena and Adriana Turea are journalists who on a daily basis deal with fake news and disinformation.

The phenomenon is not new, but has experienced a boom in the last year, according to all our interviewees. Adriana Turea, reporter at public service station *Radio România*, suggests that the right of freedom of expression is nowadays used by certain media outlets as a pretext to give voice to unreliable sources and to produce more fake news.

Given the multifaceted aspect of the issue, we also asked our interviewees how they themselves define the term. From the point of view of Kathrin Wesolowski, a freelance journalist who, amongst other outlets, works for the fact-checking team of Germanys' international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*, fake news comprises

> false claims and false information being spread via media as well as via speech. Some people spread them due to political aims or also to make money (via click baiting for example). In the worst case, fake news can even cause medical risks or push you to a political direction.
>
> Kathrin Wesolowski, freelance journalist, Germany

On the other hand, Adriana Turea believes that fake news is built on a well-established pattern: it is based on a small part of the truth and the rest are lies mingled with facts. It starts with real information, then something concocted follows, then there are some real details and finally, again, something fake. Jan Tvrdoň says that fake news could be spread on purpose, but it is not a rule. "Fake news is not basically news, it's information, which is false, fabricated or misleading. It could be spread on purpose but it's not necessary", he claims. Paulo Pena opines

> fake news is the intentional creation of a lie with the purpose to manipulate the public debate, and it depends on the process to use that lie in online campaigns that spread it with fake profiles, [and] bots, until it reaches and convinces large groups of real people.
>
> Paulo Pena, Freelance Journalist, Portugal

Kathrin Wesolowski believes that the concept of "fake news" recently became more familiar, especially since the pandemic and that this "is a chance for the media to get more professional and, in the same way, to show why media is important compared to blogs or influencers on the internet."

All the interviewees stressed the connection between fake news and politics. Kathrin Wesolowski says that fake news in Germany pushes people into political directions such as the far right and, thus, is a threat to democracy. Recently, in Germany, thousands of people have demonstrated on the streets against restrictions due to the Coronavirus and often they based their participation in the protests on information gained from fake news. Thus, fake news became a problem of "real life", not just a problem within the internet. Jan Tvrdoň says that fabricated lies affected political campaigns and nowadays the main focus of the fake news producers is the COVID-19 crisis:

> Fake news in the Czech Republic is a serious problem. It has the potential to divide society or even change the election results. Some political campaigns of recent era were significantly affected with

> fabricated lies and we can expect more of that in coming elections. What is particularly sad to look at in Czech Republic is that some fake news is/was spread by the highest politicians in the lead with the President. Now the fake news producers focus on COVID-19 pandemic.
>
> Jan Tvrdoň, Editor, *Deník N*

Paulo Pena says fake news in Portugal represents an important business that generates advertisement income for the sites that publish them, but it is also an "alternative" source of information for political spheres that consider traditional media to be "biased" about topics such as migration or religion.

While Kathrin Wesolowski talks about both negative and positive effects of the pandemic in terms of fake news, her Romanian colleague only brings negative aspects into discussion. Adriana Turea assumes that, in Romania, in the last year fake news has had a greater impact on people, because it has affected their health: "Before, fake news was more about celebrities, while now they talk about medical issues and they are built on people's fear. Many have panicked and ended up not trusting any information even if it came from reliable sources."

Jan Tvrdoň believes that the main typology of fake news to be found in Czech media is the false context, but says that most of the media in the country do not spread fake news on purpose, but on the other hand the media are under serious pressure to publish fast.

> It's related to the social media ecosystem. Media are pushed to publish fast and often not complex news [i.e., to keep the coverage simple] to reach more viewers more quickly. Their business model is to sell ads on their pages. This system often leads to publishing rubbish news and fake news as well.
>
> Jan Tvrdoň, Editor, *Deník N*

Adriana Turea (*Radio România*) feels the same pressure to broadcast information as soon as possible, which makes it very difficult to verify all the details correctly.

The COVID-19 crisis changed the disinformation ecosystem in all five countries under study. Adriana Turea believes that during the pandemic, fake news also spread because the authorities were not transparent enough, so people stopped believing in them. According to Jan Tvrdoň says, most fake news in the Czech Republic is now COVID-related. While in his opinion, seniors are most affected, nobody is immune to fake news:

> Before the pandemic, fake news information was focused on the cleavage of elite vs. common people, international affairs (mostly pro-Russian news) and on attacks on EU or western civilization. By March 2020 it focused on basic communication - COVID was artificially fabricated/it's not dangerous/it has nothing to do with China/it's the next try to control people. [This fabrication] lasts to this day.
>
> Jan Tvrdoň, Editor, *Deník N*

In Germany, before the pandemic, fake news was popular among people who were likely to follow right-wing parties or right-wing ideals, but since the pandemic it seems as if everybody is exposed to it, according to Kathrin Wesolowski. The negative aspect is that everyone is able to believe in fake news but people who do not inform themselves about certain topics (e.g. by reading articles of high quality about medical issues related to the pandemic or certain political topics) are more likely to believe in disinformation. Thus, "it can be a matter of education but it's also a matter of what you want to believe or don't want to believe", as Kathrin Wesolowski explains. She states that since the pandemic many people learn more about understanding what sources you can trust or inform themselves generally more about a topic.

In Portugal, before the pandemic, Paulo Pena perceived fake news as mostly focusing on corruption, state organization, and nepotism. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a rush of organized disinformation about health, public policies related to the emergency and vaccines.

Social media and the spread of fake news

In the Czech Republic, Germany, Portugal and Romania, our interviewees consider that false information is mainly spread via social media and blogs. Social media fuels the spread of fake news because people are oftentimes connected with other people they know. Therefore, they tend to believe people they know if they share something that is fake.

While in Romania disinformation and misinformation are spread via Facebook and WhatsApp, in Germany the platform Telegram seems more popular, because there are no regulations. In the Czech Republic, fake news is spread mostly on Facebook, while in Portugal social media is such fertile ground for fake news dissemination. This is because the online platform business model can sell a much bigger number of users to companies that buy commercial ads. This is the logic of algorithms that favour engagement over information, and try to profit with both media content and disinformation.

> First of all, the absence of online identity rules that prevent that one person can create thousands of fake profiles; then, the logic of algorithms that favour engagement over information, and try to profit with both media content and disinformation; but also, the recent media culture of repetition, clickbait, quantity and immediacy that turn audiences into anxiety driven consumers. And, of course, all that happened in the world, and left citizens scattered, like the economic crisis, the climate change, the precariousness of labour relations, the unemployment, the pandemic, etc. All of this creates an ideal world for conspiracy theorists and organized disinformation campaigners to thrive.
>
> Paulo Pena, freelance journalist, Portugal

In German social media all types of disinformation outlined above are spread. The process begins with photoshopped images or pictures with false contextual information. Some spreaders use satire to hide their intention of spreading fake news – but many people do not recognize such content as satire or parody. The dangerous aspect, in the opinion of Kathrin Wesolowski, is that even highly educated people (such as doctors and professors) spread false information, so people believe in it even more. More than that, celebrities also share false information, irrespective of whether it is satire, fabricated content or false context. Jan Tvrdoň considers that it is essential to understand that Facebook is not a platform suitable for spreading high quality information because it is a business, and the interest is to maximize profits:

> Social media is a great platform to spread anything gaining a big amount of emotions in exchange. This is a perfect place to grow disinformation. Its interest is to maximize the interactions between the site and the users, keeping them engaged for the longest time possible. This can be done through stirring emotions. Which on the other hand is destructive for processing of information.
>
> Jan Tvrdoň, Editor, *Deník N*

The Czech journalist adds that, besides from Facebook, the recklessness of readers is also an important element that contributes to the spread of fake news in the Czech Republic. In this context, Kathrin Wesolowski believes that it is difficult to say if a regulation on social media helps – in the worst-case people will just look for other platforms, which are not being regulated (yet) and will spread fake-news and look for alternative information there. Jan Tvrdoň and Adriana Turea say they do not see any effects of the Facebook anti-fake news strategy. The Romanian journalist states that it is very easy for fake news to spread via social media platforms because people are always checking their phones and once they see a story they do not take the time to read it all and just share it.

In Portugal, fake news spreads because there are no rules regarding personal online identity which would prevent people from creating thousands of fake profiles; then, the logic of algorithms favours engagement over information. Moreover, the recent media culture of repetition, clickbait, quantity and immediacy turn audiences into anxiety driven consumers. All of these aspects create an ideal world for conspiracy theorists, according to Paulo Pena.

The consequences are that an increasing number of people who use social media to get their news are in danger to getting in touch with disinformation, says Kathrin Wesolowski. However, the fake news situation is a chance for media outlets to be more present in social media as well and to professionalize journalism on social media platforms.

Since millions of people can publish something at the same moment, an effective regulation for social media is very hard to manage, according to Kathrin Wesolowski.

> Though Facebook, for example, works with fact-checkers worldwide and Twitter, for example, also tries to implement a kind of fact-checking service, it will never be possible to detect all fake news, also because there's a fine line between regulation and censorship. Also, it's not always easy to define whether something is a claim or just an opinion.
>
> Kathrin Wesolowski, freelance journalist, Germany

In social media from Portugal, both fabricated content (manipulated images, false quotes) and false context (namely republished old news as current, decontextualization) are the most frequent methods used in disinformation campaigns in the larger social networks (Facebook, the largest, with 6 million users; Twitter; YouTube; Instagram and WhatsApp, are the most used for pandemic related disinformation in the first half of 2020, according to Paulo Pena).

> Also, the algorithm of social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram contributes to the spread of fake news because if you like several fake news sites or right-winged fake news spreading platforms, the social media platforms will likely show you more of such content.
>
> Kathrin Wesolowski, freelance journalist, Germany

So, according to the interviewees the most common vector for spreading fake news is a mixture of algorithmic designs, and the education and inner will of individuals to believe in fake news.

Fake news & journalism

German, Romanian, Portuguese and Czech journalism are affected by fake news because of the perception that more and more people stop believing any traditional media and do not trust leading politicians. But there is also a good perspective about that, as the Czech and Romanian interviewees point out in that journalists are forced to provide their sources and to work even better regarding good sources and professional interview partners. Adriana Turea believes that quality journalism in Romania suffers because disinformation increasingly spreads:

> Our profession has changed lately and not for the better. Many journalists are no longer looking for information that will help people. They are only searching for breaking news and scandals. It really saddens me, because I want to bring useful information to people.
>
> Adriana Turea, Journalist, *Radio România*

The quality of information in Portugal was debatable before the surge of disinformation but media outlets did not use the chance to improve their debate with citizens, according to Paulo Pena. The Portuguese state does support media literacy campaigns, but the trust in traditional media will erode if this debate does not start soon.

To prevent disseminating fake news, *Deutsche Welle* created a fact-checking department whose goal is to uncover disinformation or to provide good background articles to understand difficult topics – but there is no special policy in place on how to deal with fake news according to Kathrin Wesolowski. She tries to use mostly scientific studies from journals with a high impact factor (when working on scientific topics) and information from governmental websites (when working on either or both scientific and political topics). The *Radio România* newsroom does not apply a special editorial policy regarding fake news, too, but Adriana Turea says that she always verifies information from reliable sources. Jan Tvrdoň also says that his newsroom does not have any extraordinary policies regarding fake news, but the standard rules are followed:

> There needs to be a clear distinction between the genres (opinions and news.) No article is issued without reliable sources. These are no extraordinary rules. [But] thanks to [the rules we do have] we possess credibility, but they also lead to a constant delay [fact checking] the fake news producers who are not that bothered about sources.
>
> Jan Tvrdoň, Editor, *Deník N*

Fake news and journalism education

Kathrin Wesolowski did not learn fact-checking during her journalism studies but on a research trip in Georgia where she met fact-checkers from local media outlets. Then, she did her own research about fact-checking tools and in May 2020 the German independent media *Correctiv* employed her as a fact-checker. She learnt fact-checking through "learning by doing".

Paulo Pena studied communication sciences, while neither Jan Tvrdoň nor Adriana Turea have a formal degree in journalism and have therefore acquired their knowledge through every day assignments. Jan has worked for 6 years in the factchecking project *Demagog.cz* (a member of the *International Fact-Checking Network*, *ICFN*) and Adriana has over 15 years of journalistic experience. Kathrin Wesolowski believes that not many journalism students or journalists consider working as fact-checkers because it is not represented in journalism programs. She believes the programs should have more courses on fact-checking because not only would students get to know the workflow of a fact-checker but also fact-checking skills are important across all types of journalistic positions. Kathrin Wesolowski opines fact-checking will become increasingly important, and evermore newsrooms will educate fact-checkers and establish fact-checking departments.

The Romanian reporter Adriana Turea considers that one solution to combat fake news is to improve the education of both the population and the journalists. Moreover, she claims that the Romanian education system needs a drastic change. Pupils should learn, as early as possible, not only about the media system, but also about health and medical issues. She also believes that journalists need to take more specialized courses in the fields in which they work (whether medical, financial, social, cultural or any other) because media faculties offer their students only the basic information, rather than an in-depth insight into all relevant fields. Paulo Pena says young Portuguese graduates and novice journalists face a dramatic crisis in both economic and editorial media models. Jobs are scarce and underpaid. He believes that online privacy, identity and freedom of choice of algorithms are subjects that should be introduced in schools.

The fake news phenomenon will get worse if no action is taken, says Adriana Turea. In her view, politicians should make better laws and journalists should present only reliable sources to counteract fake news. To sum it up, all the interviewees agreed on the importance of educating students in this field and point towards the scarcity of specialized offers. Journalism curricula should thus include courses on the backgrounds of and how to deal with what many perceive as a deluge of disinformation.

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Debunking Disinformation

Raluca Radu, Emilia Șercan, Manuela Preoteasa

The Cambridge dictionary defines *debunk* as ”to show that something is less important, less good, or less true than it has been made to appear”[1], and provides the example on how the verb can be used when talking about debunking a myth. In professional media discourse, debunking in the contexts of fake news and viral hoaxes covers both verification and fact-checking.

Debunking, verifying and fact-checking

The *International Fact-Checking Network* at Poynter Institute distinguishes between verification and fact-checking, indicating that verification is done before publication, mainly for user generated content found online, while fact-checking is done after the publication of ”claims of public relevance”, using expert sources (Mantzarlis, 2018, 87-88). As a result, debunking is a type of fact-checking that targets incorrect and misleading claims and widely held opinions, relevant to a community, that uses tools developed for verification purposes: ”Debunking is a subset of fact-checking and requires a specific set of skills that are in common with verification” (ibid., 87).

Scholars use debunking as a synonym for negating (Betsch & Sachse, 2013), contradicting (Heng, 2018) or correcting (Chan et al., 2017), as well as correcting and debiasing (Lewandowsky et al., 2012) in connection with stereotypes, conspiracy theories or with widely held incorrect views. As misinformation interferes in the process of decision making in all aspects of life, from disease prevention to voting, scholars consider debunking is an important scientific as well as democratic process, that should be supported by public policy (Berry & Sobieraj, 2013; Gorman & Gorman, 2016; Chan et al., 2017).

Debunking fake news or misinformation is an operation of deconstructing an untruth or a myth and implies fact-checking instruments. The growth of fact-checking practices around the world rose along with the global dissemination of “fake news”, which Mantzarlis describes as “fabricated sensationalist stories that reach enormous audiences by using social media algorithms to their advantage” (2018, 87).

[1] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/debunking

However, fact-checkers conduct the debunking procedure, which Graves & Cherubini (2016), contend is represented by two models in Europe: the "newsroom model" and the "NGO model". The former describes fact-checkers affiliated to an established media company, while the latter refers to specialized fact-checking outlets that operate independently of traditional media.

Alexios Mantzarlis (2018) distinguishes between fact-checkers employed in newsroom for proofreading and verifying facts *before* an article is published and fact-checkers – attached to a newsroom or not - that work for confirming an information or a claim *after* it is made public. By extension, some differences between verification and fact-checking have been made with the former being an "ex-ante" process of seeking or confirming primary evidence that can be published in a story, while fact-checking is an "ex-post" process of claims analysis (ibid.; see also previous chapter).

Fact-checking for professional journalists, Graves (2016) argues, "refers to a certain set of reporting practices and to the stories these yield. It increasingly denotes a genre, like 'news analysis' or 'Q&A', involving a more-or-less standard set of conventions for research and presentation" (ibid., 24). The geographically wider use of 'fact-checking' practice (any analysis that publicly challenges a competing account), which brings criticism and tends to associate the fact-checking to an opinion genre, is an assertion rejected by the professionals (ibid., 27). However, "fact-checking as a whole belongs to the 'space of opinion' in this broader sense of a sphere of elite contestation over politics and policy" (ibid., 27).

Usually, fact-checkers focus their attention and resources on politicians, journalists, experts, and public figures (Graves & Cherubini, 2016; Humprecht, 2020). Debunking, in the context of viral hoaxes, explores more deeply than any attempt to verify what would be rated as user generated content online. Lewandowsky et al. (2020, 12-13) explain that a debunking, as a presentation of correct facts, involves four components, with four separate foci:

(1) fact - state what is true
(2) warn about myth – mention the misinformation only once at this stage
(3) explain fallacy – show why misinformation is wrong
(4) fact – state the truth again.

The aim of the debunking process is to provide corrections for misleading information, erroneous claims, false rumours or modified photos or videos.

Debunking alone does not work properly

Effective debunking is difficult, as newsrooms' experiences and academic research has proved time and again. False news stories spread further, faster, and deeper than the truth, as the authors of an 11-years study on almost 3 million Twitter users discovered (Vosoughi, Roy & Aral, 2018). For assessing the impact of fact-checking, Bounegru et al. (2018) use a two-step method to measure how fact-checking initiatives reach the publics of fake news:

1) first, by identifying the URLs of the debunking web pages;
2) by measuring the engagement of the audience with fake news and debunking stories, comparatively.

Vosoughi et al. (2018) invalidate two widely held hypotheses, on who exactly is spreading false information. Contrary to what we would expect, robots spread rumours and verified information at the same rate, leaving the burden of spreading false news wider and faster than the truth on real people. Again, contrary to what was expected, data analysis clearly indicates that people who spread false news are less connected and less active on Twitter.

More recently, after analysing the type, sources and claims of misinformation about the COVID-19 crisis, Brennen et al. (2020) also point to the disproportionate relation between the wide exposure of the distorted content and the field of coverage of the eventual debunking. They conclude that “it is imperative that trusted fact-checking and media organisations continue to hold prominent figures to account for claims they make across all channels and find new ways to distribute and publicise their work” (Brennen et al., 2020, 8).

Zollo et al. (2017) in a study on the behaviour of 54 million Facebook users over a period of five years indicate that both conspiracy prone people and followers of scientific pages responded negatively to debunking posts. Both types of Facebook users interacted mostly with users sharing similar interests, confirming the hypothesis of echo chambers. This hypothesis has been discussed in the last two decades and maintains that the abundancy of news and opinion, online and offline, allows people to choose sources that echo (and consolidate) their political, social or economic views (Flaxman et al., 2016). Zollo et al. (2017) add that users who interacted mostly with unsubstantiated information showed limited interest for corrections: about 67 percent of users polarized towards science liked debunking posts, as compared to about 7 percent of users who polarized towards conspiracy theories.

Thus, the main influences of effective debunking are processes not only linked to seeking and understanding information but also linked to decision making. Simon (1947[1976]) launched the hypothesis of "bounded rationality" in his book entitled *Administrative Behavior*. Decision making in organizations is negatively influenced by access to information, value system, skills, habits, and reflexes (ibid.). *Administrative Behavior* represented a turning point in science. Subsequent research in communications, social psychology and behavioural economics shed more light on how information is accessed and used and why we make decisions that do not always maximize results with limited resources or effort.

People tend to look for information that supports their previously held views of the world – a behaviour called "confirmation bias" (Kahneman, 2011). Joining a group of peers, such as an echo chamber, supports this bias, as "much of the discussion we seek with others in moments of elevated emotion is not necessarily focused on new factual information sharing as much as is focused on reassurance, coping with stress and ritualistic bonding" (Southwell, 2013, cited in Gorman & Gorman, 2016). Any individual may join a polarized group while seeking information and emotions will keep the individual active inside the group.

Decision making is difficult, so individuals tend to reduce complexity by resorting to cognitive fallacies (Kahneman, 2011), such as incorrect links among data, based on plausibility (conjunction fallacy) or flawed stories that seem stronger than actual statistical data (narrative fallacies). Even scientifically trained individuals base their decision making on reference points and on possible outcomes, but also on how the possible outcomes are presented, as winning / saving lives or losing / people will die, as Kahneman (2011) points out.

Seeking, understanding, critically evaluating and using information is further hindered by media literacy (Livingstone, 2004) and by functional literacy (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Rumour and false news become viral because they seem new (ibid.). The surprise of their novelty is stronger for people who do not understand how social media functions, and who are the sources of a false information (ibid.) Consequently, social media users need to know what the reasons are for creating and sharing unsubstantiated information and how they may find and identify correct information.

Even if confronted with correct information that contradicts previous rumours, false news or conspiracy theories, people may resist changing their opinions. Resistance to attitude change is explained by the inoculation theory, which indicates how persuasion works, by using a metaphor from the medical field. A person who is advised that future counterarguments are a threat to an

existing belief and is presented with weaker arguments that contradict a desired attitude, develops over time, a resistance to stronger counterarguments (Compton & Pfau, 2005).

If we add the process of increased polarization in society, the social background of debunking becomes even more problematic. Kavanagh & Rich (2018, 152) argue: "Polarization drives increasing disagreement about facts and interpretations of those facts and the blurring of the line between opinion and fact by creating two or more opposing sides, each with its own perspectives and beliefs". Political polarization can be measured as the ideological distance between party members or party supporters on different issues on the public agenda. Polarization evolves over time: In times of extreme crises (such as wars or even COVID-19), politicians from either side of the political spectrum may find themselves thinking in the same way, and this allows the mobilization of the resources in one community that on its turn allows people to overcome the very difficult times. Strategical political communication increases polarization, so that parties gain more votes from radicalized supporters. In the case of minority party voters, trust in social and political institutions controlled by other parties is eroded, and mainstream discourses are replaced by conspiracy theories.

For the society at large, strategically driven polarization means communities would have a difficult time in agreeing on a plan in crisis situations, as they do not share the same definitions for the crisis. As Kavanagh & Rich remark "polarization […] leads to the political inaction and dysfunction at all levels of government" (ibid., 153).

Discussion of possible threats by others and exposure to counter arguments could, in fact, coagulate more polarized groups, both online or offline, making them immune to debunking. Recent research, based on Reuters Institute *Digital News Report* data (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018; Fletcher, 2020) indicate that the usage of social networks and search engines expose people to diverse news sources that they would not access and use otherwise. This research contradicts the filter bubble hypothesis (see Flaxman et al., 2016), that people maintain an erroneous view of the world because they are not exposed to different opinions.

The invalidation of the filter bubble hypothesis represents yet another argument that effective debunking is difficult, and we have to use other techniques or strategies to effectively counteract viral false news and hoaxes, apart from merely telling people what the correct information is. It is important to act and debunk false information, when it seems to gain momentum and reach wider and wider audiences. Still, preventive measures, such as media literacy projects for different socio-

demographic groups or inoculation strategies against very sensitive disinformation campaigns, on subjects related to health, for example, are as important as debunking.

Interview results

The five interviews we conducted include prominent journalists in their field of expertise and aim to map their views on the debunking activities in their countries, on the risk associated with the process, on the training and education programmes related to the field.

Debunking – European organizational models

To evaluate the state of debunking as a journalistic process, we conducted interviews with five journalists from the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, and Romania. These journalists work in newsrooms that represent different models of organising the debunking process in Europe.

Nikita Poljakov is the editor-in-chief of *E15*, an online Czech business daily. He won a Journalism Award (Open Society Foundation) for online journalism with the project "Russian propaganda and disinformation campaigns in the Czech Republic" released on the online daily *Aktualne.cz*. He lectures on how to combat fake news at Charles University in Prague. Marie Richter is Managing Editor of NewsGuard Germany. NewsGuard is an international company that analyses and rates news websites on journalistic criteria. The sites get a rating based on a traffic light system (red and green), depending on how transparent and credible they are. Analyses of red marked websites include examples of false information, alongside debunking related to that information. Marie Richter heads the Germany team that analyses and fact-checks German language websites. Katalin Erdélyi, our Hungarian interviewee, started writing about politics and corruption as a hobby in 2008 on the political commentary blog *Vastagbőr* ("Thick Skin"). Since 2012, she has been working as an investigative journalist for *Átlátszó* ("Transparent"), Hungary's first and biggest investigative news portal and an NGO, and since December 2018 she has run the news portal as deputy editor-in-chief. *Átlátszó* has a debunking column.

Fernando Esteves, Founder and Director of *Polígrafo*, answered our questions in Portugal. *Polígrafo* is the only Portuguese fact-checking website and also uses a traffic light system to rate news and public declarations as true or false and to debunk widely spread information. In Romania, we interviewed Codruța Simina, reporter at *PressOne*, an independent online media outlet. She is the

Founder of *Misreport*, a weekly online newsletter about disinformation. Just like the other interviewees, her specialty is fake news, fact checking and online propaganda.

The amount of debunking efforts in the countries we compared seems to be closely connected to the development level of the media system. In Portugal, for example, there is little debunking done by newsrooms, and *Polígrafo* is the only native fact-checking site. The other more noticeable fact-checking effort is a column at *Observador*, a digital newspaper. Yet, debunking "is crucial", believes Fernando Esteves, because "democracy in general is in danger". Whereas in Germany or in Portugal, journalists doing fact-checking and debunking are not in danger, in authoritarian regimes, or in countries in crisis situations, like Brazil or Ukraine, journalists face dangers while debunking viral false stories, considers Fernando Esteves.

In Germany, debunking efforts are more widely spread. There is *Correctiv*, a non-for-profit organization, maintaining a specialized team. NewsGuard Germany uses a business-to-business model to fund its activities. There are fact-checking departments in some major public service media newsrooms, and also at *dpa*, Germany's largest news agency, and other commercial newsrooms.

> Newsrooms are quite involved in fact-checking and with every crisis that happens I think the media in Germany are becoming more and more aware of its importance: the refugee crisis showed that, [and] the ongoing climate crisis is another topic, where [in] general, regular journalists are required to do fact-checking more often. And COVID, of course, showed that every newsroom needs to do fact-checking.
>
> Marie Richter, Managing Editor, NewsGuard Germany

In other countries, the need for debunking is no less crucial, but the answer in addressing this need has remained weak. Very few newsrooms in Romania publish debunking materials, and when they do, they prefer to address political statements. "The need for stable and reliable debunking initiatives is very high [in Romania]", considers Codruța Simina. Moreover, the projects that deal with debunking in Romania are of three types: media, NGOs, and academic, such as *LARICS*, a project of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of the Romanian Academy that analyses pro-Kremlin disinformation. *LARICS* also does debunking, but less oriented towards the form of journalistic content. Pro-Kremlin disinformation propagated through various channels is analysed, as well, by *Veridica.ro*, a media initiative that focuses on the entire Eastern European area.

In Hungary there is even an increasing need, says Katalin Erdélyi, an investigative journalist for *Átlátszó.hu*, due to the lack of criticism towards the government in mainstream television (*MTVA*,

Hír TV, *TV2*), or print and online media. Close associates of the government also control the online media. As a result, the Hungarian news-portal *Átlátszó* has initiated a disinformation series: it collects and debunks weekly in Hungarian, the most popular fake news, and in English on a monthly basis.

> It is very important because most people believe without criticism everything and anything that the politicians or TV channels say, and our public service media (*MTVA*) is not public service, but just the mouthpiece of the ruling party, and the big TV channels like *Hír TV* and *TV2*, and every country newspaper and many other media (print and online) are owned by close associates of the government. They use a lot of disinformation lines coming from Russia, and many [use their] own ideas to lie about the opposition, the NGOs, the EU, the COVID-19 vaccines and everything that the government wants.
>
> Katalin Erdélyi, deputy editor-in-chief, *Átlátszó*

The propaganda or disinformation, which, according to the interviewees, is often sponsored by Russian money, has flooded the market through pro-government media, dominating the audiences in some countries. In the context of generalized disinformation, "the independent media outlets have to debunk, it is a part of informing people", adds Katalin Erdélyi.

Media should be in charge of debunking, as both Fernando Esteves and Marie Richter suggest. "Journalism must be made by journalists", adds Fernando Esteves. Credible debunking is done by a third party, this is by someone that is neither the source nor the subject of false information. Thus, credible debunking can be done by journalists investigating facts independently. They have no interest in a story and can quote different sources, explains Marie Richter. Indeed, when asked to share a bad example of debunking, she remembered a case when a few journalists talked about a false story regarding Bill Gates and his involvement in the COVID-19 crisis, and the only debunking argument was that Bill Gates says the story was not true. "People that are reading it would be like: of course Bill Gates wouldn't admit to it. There are other sources that you could cite or the government has investigated it".

Yet, in some markets newsrooms simply lack the resources to effectively carry out fact-checking and debunking. Media professionals are simply too busy to take a supplementary task as a constant of their activity. For example, in the Czech Republic, there are reasons for the journalists' reticence in debunking: the lack of time and the scarcity of resources, time pressure on usually small teams of reporters, and conflicting professional goals, as reporters aim often to get either a good readership or fame, or both.

Dedicated web projects, NGOs and journalists or mainstream newsrooms do get involved in debunking, but the interviewees suggest that the government and the educational system should cooperate more for better results.

> If the media do the debunking, they won't be able to do what they are made for. They are made for informing people. How can private media fight Russian government money put into disinformation or propaganda campaigns? The state has to get involved [in debunking] by cooperating with other actors and, all hands together, educational programmes shall be made so that the people don't fall into traps of being disinformed.
>
> Nikita Poljakov, editor-in-chief, *E15*

Also, social media platforms should do more to fight misinformation and disinformation, according to the interviewees. Algorithms that feed certain social circles of information increase the chances for people to get trapped in disinformation. Political content should be checked and confirmed. "People simply can't follow so many lies. When it concerns your ability to vote, to make democratic decision, I think that is serious enough to regulate it a little bit", Nikita Poljakov says. The interviewed journalists agree that it is hard to reach the same audience with the debunked information than with the original hoax. Disinformation has specific features that support fast and wide spreading: the pieces are short and emotionally narrated. Katalin Erdélyi describes what makes disinformation attractive to users: "I believe, see, and know that fake news can be more interesting than the truth. They have clickbait titles, and people like the conspiracy theories, scandalous and attention-grabbing titles, and love to share them."

Consequently, the debunking process needs attention from inside the media industry, as certain members of the audience otherwise remain trapped in either or both bubbles of disinformation and propaganda. The debunked content cannot reach the same audiences as the pieces of disinformation, but newsrooms should keep on debunking and should try to distribute the correct information as far as it is possible.

> The experience and a series of scientific studies show that debunking does not work for those who are followers of conspiracy theories or fakes, but rather are useful for creating communities resilient to fakes that learn information verification techniques and responsible/healthy consumption.
>
> Codruța Simina, Reporter, *PressOne* and Co-Founder, *Misreport*

Simina considers the most influential aspects that affect the debunking process are poor journalistic training and text writing. She also suggests that no matter who takes care of the debunking

procedure, “it should be done following all the sets of criteria of ethics and journalistic deontology, as well as the editorial ones”. The debunking process should be coordinated by experienced journalists and editors and journalistic criteria should be applied in any form for combating false content, “i.e. following the evidence of demonstrable facts and contextualizing the information and their sources”, as Simina explains. Nikita Poljakov, like the other journalists interviewed, supports this view:

> Disinformation ran fast but I don’t think it goes deeper. I know how good stories, good journalism can have huge potential and reachability. It’s about quality and content. There is a part of people who like fake news, they are fascinated by it. There is a huge group of people that like quality journalism and quality info.
>
> Nikita Poljakov, editor-in-chief, *E15*

Vital to democracy, effective fact-checking and debunking are, in the views of our five interviewees, a result of excellent journalism, paired with media literacy related public policies, implemented for people of all ages, and supported by tech companies and platform initiatives.

Education in the field of debunking

While some of our interviewees received specific training in combating disinformation, like Marie Richter and Codruța Simina, all agreed that learning by doing is essential. Self-taught, curiosity and scepticism are important.

The situation Codruța Simina describes for Romania seems to be similar in all five countries. The debunking courses organized in Romania are, in general, few in number, and those who deliver them do not have practical experience, only their theoretical training. Simina says that according to her experience, journalism faculties generally offer theoretical training and, with few exceptions, very little practice relevant to the field. This is one of the reasons why journalism students have a very theoretical image during college about media fields, which is far removed from the reality in the field. Simina explains that debunking is a marginal topic on the public agenda “except when politicians accuse each other of telling fake news about each other's work, which in fact ridicules the work of journalists and debunking specialists”. Simina also considers that there is a great need for journalists with very good professional skills, but also a good mastery of ethics and deontology. Nikita Poljakov lectures about fake news at Charles University in Prague. In his view, the need for training is definitely greater. He considers that disinformation and debunking courses, at university

level, should be paired with media literacy courses for children. Children should be taught about fake news from primary school onwards. “There should be some debate about media health – as they are basically empowered to protect democracy. [Media literacy is] as important as knowing where you live and who is your neighbour”, Nikita Poljakov adds.

Talking about special training for fact-checking and debunking, all the interviewees mentioned a general training for journalistic activities, paired with a special training to identify facts that can be verified (Marie Richter), a “need to understand the world they live in” for students (Fernando Esteves) and an on-the-job development of skills. They suggest that, in the future, technology and artificial intelligence (AI) would help journalists in the process of debunking, as AI runs faster and technology is now used to create false news (for example, in deep fake videos). Getting a job related to fact-checking and debunking, after faculty graduation, is dependent on the size and the development of the market. While in Germany it might be easier to find a job in a fact-checking department due to the quantity of such specialized teams, in Portugal finding such work is very difficult, no matter how important this journalistic process is. Considering the development of the field in the future, Codruța Simina explains that in Romania there is already a market for funding and grants for fact-checking and debunking projects.

Nevertheless, for now, many of these projects have theoretical approaches to the phenomenon and fail to demonstrate to citizens how they are affected by disinformation and misinformation in real time and with palpable effects. Projects that have the chance to impose themselves and become a reference, both in terms of audience trust and audience reached, are those projects that will implement the fight against misinformation and false content “with established techniques of journalism and valuable writing and with an increased periodicity, which will provide consistency to the project”, concluded Codruța Simina. Consequently, journalism education should embrace an approach to debunking which considers its close linkages to interaction with the audience and media literacy.

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Lessons learned – Insights gained

As diverse as the fields of journalism covered in our research might be, the interview results point to similar shortcomings in journalism education across both the fields and countries covered. Many of the journalists we talked to claimed to have acquired a great part of the skills and knowledge necessary for their respective specialization on-the-job and by self-education rather than through any formalized training, whether at universities or as further education. This holds true even for those fields, which are more firmly rooted in journalism practice, and those interviewees holding a degree in journalism or mass communication.

While it is important to note that our research is not representative of journalism education in the countries covered, the results may still help us to further outline our recommendations to improve training opportunities and adapt curricula. However, many interviewees point to a well-known difficulty for those who teach journalism: It is not easy to properly prepare for journalism practice in the classroom. Thus, we plead for practice-oriented and applied academic teaching of the fields covered, including courses with and by practitioners, field trips, internships, and practical projects.

At the same time, our findings suggest that theoretical knowledge – such as the awareness about the relevant developments in politics, economics and society underlying a given field – is still considered necessary for young professionals to become respected specialists in a certain field. This underlines the importance of there being a proper balance between theory and practice in journalism training and education, which is an enduring challenge for teachers and trainers.

Another challenge that remains is the speed at which innovation is happening in contemporary journalism, which one of our interviewees, Ioana Avădani from the Centre for Independent Journalism in Romania encapsulated: “Teachers at the university are frustrated that journalism is changing so rapidly that by the time students graduate, their knowledge will be irrelevant” (p. 47 in this report). Thus, journalism curricula arguably need to be more flexible than ever before.

Our research also marks the necessity for journalists to acquire more than just genuine reporting skills. Depending on the field, these may include data, software, and marketing skills, pointing towards the “hybridization” of journalism (see Splendore & Brambilla, 2021). Arguably, these interdisciplinary skills are quite hard to implement in the institutional settings of university-based journalism education, which may often struggle to provide the facilities and expertise necessary for such an interdisciplinary framework, and need to hire, potentially expensive, external lecturers.

Thus, innovation and thinking out-of-the-box is needed to adapt university-based journalism education to the constantly changing needs. Moreover, this report demonstrates a variety of ethical challenges related to innovations in journalism (see also Luengo & Herrero-Damas, 2021). The interview results emphasize that ethical considerations should have their firm place in education, as many interviewees across fields stress.

In general, the development of the fields studied varies significantly between the countries covered, with technological and content innovations in newsrooms more widespread in some countries than in others. Most strikingly, this refers to the implementation of AI solutions and journalism through voice-assisted devices in newsrooms. In the latter field, the trend clearly follows the availability of voice solutions in national languages. Moreover, the institutionalization of debunking disinformation and fact-checking through specialized units seems to be much more widespread in Germany than in the other four countries.

These findings mirror the results of our first research report (Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018), pointing towards a "multi-speed Europe" in terms of innovative technologies, business models, or content reporting. While funding is a major cause for variations in speed, it is also important to stress the various political constraints which may limit innovation in countries such as Hungary, where media outlets independent of the government and its allies increasingly struggle to stay afloat – a trend reflected in some other Central and Eastern European countries, too (e.g. Selva, 2020; Schimpfössl et al., 2020). Thus, market opportunities for (young) professionals specialized in one of the fields may differ considerably not only depending on the field, but also from country to country. This needs to be considered when further assessing training needs and defining a reasonable scope of projected alterations in teaching journalism.

However, as already found in the first research report of our consortium (Bettels-Schwabbauer et al., 2018), financial constraints do seem to limit the implementation of innovations in journalism education. Our interviewees also emphasize the difficulties in funding innovative ways of reporting in journalism practice ranging from a lack of money for implementing AI-driven solutions to scarce resources for field trips to cover migration and forced displacement or to realize cross-border reporting projects. Thus, alternative funding sources – such as grants from NGOs or foundations, crowdfunding and user donations, or media outlets being transformed into not-for-profit-organizations – seem a promising, yet ambivalent road towards more innovative reporting (see chapter on Improving Democratic Aensibility in this report; see also Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019; Scott,

Bunce, & Wright, 2019). Consequently, a constant, yet reasonable update of journalism education will also depend on the overall financial situation of the media market and journalism schools alike.

Collaboration may also be the chance to implement innovations despite scarce budgets. These may include cross-border collaboration between institutions of journalism education. Cooperating with those who practice journalism, on the other hand, will help to make academia more “important in the lifetime training of journalists”, as our interviewee Paulo Agostinho (p. 47 in this report) demands. With the collaborative work of our project consortium, we aim to provide resources for journalism training in Europe and beyond, supporting institutions involved in educating skilful reporters to keep pace with crucial innovations. Finally, but not least, we hope to set a benchmark in cross-border collaboration for journalism curricula.

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List of interviewees

Name Country	Workplace (*media outlets in italics*) Ownership and Type	Roles	Type of Interview
STORYTELLING IN SOCIAL MEDIA			
BARBONIE, Oana Romania	*Decât o Revistă* Independent online magazine	Journalist and Visual Editor	Text based questionnaire sent by email
CSENGEL, Karina Hungary	*Mérce* Independent news portal	Head of Social Media Team	Questionnaire by video call
OLIVEIRA, Paula Portugal	*Televisão Independente (TVI)* Independent free-to-air and cable news TV channel	Journalist	Text based questionnaire sent by email plus Questionnaire by video call
ŠIMEČEK, Ondřej Czech Republic	*Česká televize* (Czech TV) Brno regional office of PSM	News Editor	Text based questionnaire sent by email
WEINHOLD, Patrick Germany	*ARD Tagesschau* PSM	Journalist and Leading Editor and Head of Social Media	Questionnaire by video call
GRAPHIC JOURNALISM			
BARBONIE, Oana Romania	*Decât o Revistă* Independent online magazine	Journalist and Visual Editor	Text based questionnaire sent by email
BOČEK, Jan Czech Republic	*Český rozhlas* (Czech Radio) PSM	Data Journalist	Text based questionnaire sent by email
HALLING, Axel Germany	German Comics Association Independent	Program Manager, Co-Founder and Board Member	Text based questionnaire sent by email
SOUSA, Gabriel Portugal	*Público* Independent print press	Web Designer/Illustrator	Text based questionnaire sent by email
VINCZE, Ferenc Hungary	*Szépirodalmi Figyelő* Independent literary magazine	Editor-in-Chief, Scriptwriter	Text based questionnaire sent by email
IMPROVING DEMOCRATIC SENSIBILITY			
AGOSTINHO, Paulo Portugal	*Lusa news agency* Funding partly state and partly private	Editor for Foreign and Portuguese Speaking Countries Desk	Questionnaire by video call
AVĂDANI, Ioana Romania	Centre for Independent Journalism in Bucharest Independent training and advocacy institution	Executive Director	Questionnaire by video call

HOLCOVÁ, Pavla Czech Republic	*Investigative reporting centre* (IRC) *investigace.cz* Independent Platform	Investigative journalist and founder of IRC	Questionnaire by video call
PETHŐ, András Hungary	*Direkt36*, investigative reporting centre Independent	Co-Founder and Editor of *Direkt36*	Questionnaire by video call
SACHSE, Jonathan Germany	*Correctiv.Lokal* Independent not-for-profit newsroom	Co-Founder of non-profit investigative newsroom *Correctiv* and manager of *Correctiv.Lokal*	Questionnaire by video call
COVERING MIGRATION			
AMBERGER, Julia Germany		Freelance journalist reporting on e.g. Africa and migration issues	Questionnaire by video call
LINDNER, Tomáš Czech Republic	*Respekt* Independent weekly news magazine	Editor, Foreign Issues	Questionnaire by video call
NEUBERGER, Eszter Hungary	*444.hu* Independent news portal	Editor	Questionnaire by video call
SANTOS, Catarina Portugal	*Observador* Independent online newspaper	Editor	Questionnaire by video call
FOREIGN COVERAGE			
ALEXANDRE, Ricardo Portugal	*TSF* Independent News Radio Broadcaster	Deputy Director & Foreign Affairs Editor	Questionnaire by video call
AVRAMESCU, Ramona Romania	*TVR* PSM	Senior Correspondent at the Romanian Presidency, Special Correspondent to the US during the 2020 Presidential elections	Questionnaire by video call
FÖLDES, András Hungary	*Telex.hu* Independent news site	Video Journalist covering mostly international issues	Questionnaire by video call
GAVRILĂ, Carmen Romania	*Radio România* PSM	Foreign Affairs Correspondent	Text based questionnaire sent by email
ŘEZNÍČEK, Martin Czech Republic	*Česká televize* (Czech TV) PSM	Deputy Editor-in-Chief of News, former US Correspondent and Chief International Correspondent	Questionnaire by video call

SCHUMANN, Harald Germany	*Der Tagesspiegel* Independent print press *Investigate Europe* Independent cross-border collaborative network	Investigative journalist, Editor, *Der Tagesspiegel* Co-Founder, *Investigate Europe*	Questionnaire by video call
JOURNALISM FOR VOICE-ACTIVATED ASSISTANTS AND DEVICES			
ANDRIESCU, Vlad Romania	*start-up.ro* Independent online journal about digital start-ups in Romania	Editor-in-Chief	Text based questionnaire sent by email
DÖMÖS, Zsuzsanna Hungary	*24.hu* Independent news site	Technology journalist	Text based questionnaire sent by email
JAVŮREK, Adam Czech Republic	*Český rozhlas* (Czech Radio) PSM	Analyst	Text based questionnaire sent by email
LAGE, Miguel Portugal	Euroconsumers Consumer Rights NGO	Owner and Digital Innovator	Text based questionnaire sent by email
AI AND JOURNALISM, ROBOT JOURNALISM AND ALGORITHMS			
ANDRIESCU, Vlad Romania	*Start-up.ro* Independent online journal about digital start-ups in Romania	Editor-in-Chief	Text based questionnaire sent by email
BARROS, Rui Portugal	*Público* Independent print-press newspaper	Data journalist	Text based questionnaire sent by email
DÖMÖS, Zsuzsanna Hungary	*24.hu* Independent news site	Technology journalist	Text based questionnaire sent by email
KÜHNE, Steffen Germany	*Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR)* PSM	Tech lead for BR's AI + Automation Lab	Text based questionnaire sent by email
MATESOVÁ MARKOVÁ, Radka Czech Republic	*Česká tisková kancelář, ČTK (*Czech News Agency) Public Service Agency	Editor-in-Chief	Text based questionnaire sent by email
ANALYSING AND VERIFYING FAKE NEWS			
PENA, Paulo Portugal		Freelance journalist Amongst others working for *Investigate Europe* Independent cross-border network	Text based questionnaire sent by email
TUREA, Adriana Romania	*Radio România* PSM	Journalist, specialized in medical journalism	Questionnaire by video call
TVRDOŇ, Jan Czech Republic	*Deník N* Independent journal	Editor	Text based questionnaire sent by email
WESOLOWSKI, Kathrin Germany		Freelance journalist Working for fact-checking department at *Deutsche Welle* PSM	Text based questionnaire sent by email

DEBUNKING DISINFORMATION			
ERDÉLYI, Katalin Hungary	*Átlátszó* Independent NGO-driven investigative news portal	Deputy Editor-in-Chief Investigative Journalist	Text based questionnaire sent by email
ESTEVES, Fernando Portugal	*Polígrafo* Independent fact-checking website	Founder and Director	Text based questionnaire sent by email
POLJAKOV, Nikita Czech Republic	*E15.cz* Independent business news daily	Editor-in-Chief	Questionnaire by video call
RICHTER, Marie Germany	NewsGuard International company analysing and rating news websites on journalistic criteria	Managing Editor (Germany)	Questionnaire by video call
SIMINA, Codruţa Romania	*PressOne* Independent online media outlet & *Misreport* Weekly online newsletter about disinformation	Reporter (*PressOne*) Co-Founder (*Misreport)*	Text based questionnaire sent by email