
JOURNALISTIC
CRAFT
FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD

# Handbook of European Journalism

## Lessons and challenges

This project is funded
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College of Europe
Collège d'Europe

A project implemented by
Natolin Campus of the College of Europe

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Dominik Cagara, James Breiner, Roxane Farmanfarmaian, Emin Huseynzade,
Adam Lelonek, Blaž Zgaga,

and winning submissions to the JCN journalistic competition:
Karine Asatryan, Fatma Babayeva, Lucy Fulford, Katarina Gulan, Hagar Omran,
Lucia Posteraro, Al Mustapha Sguenfle

Editor
Dominik Cagara



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# The College of Europe in Natolin

The College of Europe was established by a decision of the Hague Congress of 1948. Many regard it as one of the founding events of modern European integration, and the College's creation was seen as an important sign of reunification of the war-torn Continent. The College of Europe, originally seated in Bruges, is thus the oldest institute of European studies.

The post-WWII division of Europe, however, excluded its Eastern, Soviet-dominated countries from having access to the College of Europe education. Thanks to the vision and determination of Jerzy Łukaszewski†, a Pole who devoted 30 years of his life to the College and served as Rector for 18 years (1972-1990), the College of Europe was able to establish a sister campus in the Warsaw suburb of Natolin in 1992, symbolizing a fresh start for a truly reunified continent. The decision was taken together with the Polish government, making the College one of Europe's first institutions to enter a partnership with the new political, economic, and social order emerging in Central and Eastern Europe. The College of Europe in Natolin is a separate legal entity under Polish law with its own sources of financing, but shares with its sister campus in Bruges a strict admissions and accreditation process and high academic standards.

The aim of the College of Europe in Natolin is to provide graduates, young professionals and future leaders with **the wider perspective on Europe.**

The **advanced Master of Arts in European Interdisciplinary Studies** offered at Natolin is designed to respond to the growing need for experts in European integration processes and the EU's external relations, experts who can provide **imaginative responses to today's most complex national, regional and global challenges**.

Our first-class interdisciplinary programme taught by around 100 leading academics and practitioners from Europe and beyond reflects the **increasingly interconnected nature of European integration** and of the surrounding world. It is a truly European, horizontal academic programme and is devoid of a silo discipline approach present elsewhere. Each year, after having gone through a thorough selection process, around 130 students from about 30 different countries are trained to think beyond disciplinary boundaries while gaining in-depth knowledge in **EU public affairs and policies, external relations, security, the EU's neighbourhood and European history and civilization**.

The first semester of the European Interdisciplinary Studies programme at Natolin is thematically geared towards the broad defining of components of EU studies on the one hand, and towards the main elements of context of European history and politics on the other. Students learn about the EU institutions, the web of rules surrounding them, and the economic governance in the EU against the backdrop of history of European civilization, development of national identities, roles of democracy and religion in contemporary societies, and influence of phenomena such as migration, energy and technology on political agendas.

Core courses are complemented by contextual courses, allowing the students to situate the issues addressed within the broader context of relations between the state and the economy, respective political systems, national identities in Europe and history of (geo)political thought.

In the second semester, Natolin students can choose between **four comprehensive specialisations** customisable according to their interests: **EU Public Affairs and Policies, The EU in the World, The EU and its Neighbours, European History and Civilisation**.

The programme fosters excellence in research with **two established Chairs**: one in European history and civilization, another on the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU's neighbours. The Chairs carry out advanced research both on European history and civilisation, and on the most current and topical issues related to the EU's neighbourhoods.

The College of Europe in Natolin is also analysing the **international processes** and phenomena and their effects on European integration and EU's neighbourhood. These phenomena include energy transition and climate change, AI in politics and media, and problems of contemporary journalism.

Furthermore, with **two tailor-made and inspiring study trips** in Europe and its neighbourhood, a real immersion in topical issues on-site with key experts and decision makers, students are provided with exclusive field experience.

In addition to benefitting from a **bilingual (English and French) study programme**, students can take advantage of **language courses on offer** implemented by the Natolin Language Service. The courses, in **eight** languages, are tailored to the individual students' needs, and are also focused on transversal skills required by employers.

The Natolin Careers Service aims to complement the academic programme with **on-site, made-to-measure support and guidance** in helping to shape the students' professional paths.

These goals are achieved primarily through one-to-one **career tutorials** or small group meet-ups, **Professional Skills Workshops** as well as **meetings** with alumni and other representatives of the public and private sectors.

Students, accommodated on a campus within a historic 120-hectare nature reserve, are intensively active beyond academic life, as they **constitute a living community for a full year**. They **shape the cultural and social life of the College**, as well as create and manage student societies with specific roles, agendas and plans for activities. **Extracurricular activities** are offered every year with the aim of integrating the student community and enriching the student experience, such as open lectures, conferences, debates and sports activities.

Moreover, by organizing special events with **VIP guests on the campus throughout the year** and including Natolin students in the vast alumni network of the College of Europe, future graduates build up an **invaluable network of contacts for their prospective careers**.

The College of Europe in Natolin has a considerable track-record in organizing executive education programmes for various beneficiaries (deputy ministers, civil servants, diplomats, journalists, students, NGOs, etc.) and on different themes (EU policies, EU legal system, EU institutions and decision-making, European integration management, etc). The Natolin Executive Education Office is also offering open executive education programme in the framework of the European and **Transnational Governance Network** (ETGN), a partnership with Central European University, College of Europe Bruges Campus, École Nationale d'Administration, School of Transnational Governance (European University Institute), Hertie School, SciencesPo Paris and SDA Bocconi School of Management (https://etgn.coleuropenatolin.eu/).

The College of Europe in Natolin has successfully executed a number of **tailor-made executive education programmes** and summer schools, such as the Warsaw Euro-Atlantic Summer Academy (www.weasa.org) or the blended learning courses using e-learning platforms such as the EU-funded e-Platform for Neighbourhood (ca. 1000 participants on-line) or the Journalistic Craft for Neighbourhood - www.e-jcn.eu ca. 1000 participants on-line).

# Journalistic Craft for Neighbourhood

**Developing knowledge-based European journalism relating to Europe's neighbours, through educational activities delivered by the Natolin Campus of the College of Europe –** the project funded by the European Union and implemented by the College of Europe in Natolin between 1 January 2018 and 29 June 2020.

The project's overall goal was to strengthen knowledge-based journalism and the development of a wide range of professional skills. This included reaching out to journalists, communication and media centres, freelancers, as well as other multipliers (employees and representatives of, inter alia, non-governmental organisations, think-tanks, public institutions or academic and research centres, that deal with the media, journalism, and related topics) located in both EU and countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The project aimed to train all those stakeholders in reliable, professional, and data-driven reporting.

Such reporting also needs to encompass and appreciate the different political realities, and national characteristics of, various EU and ENP countries. The project therefore stressed issues such as regional ethnography, relations between the EU and the ENP.

## The project's specific objectives

- Deepen knowledge on EU-neighbours and the environmental backgrounds of selected ENP regions, as well as EU institutions and EU-ENP mutual relations, including the state of media sector in selected regions,
- Accompany journalists in translating theoretical knowledge into practical stories through stationary workshops (accompanied by study visits and field trainings) and followed up by country-based assignments
- Develop a network of journalists to exchange expert know-how between EU and ENP journalists, experts, gauging and reflecting the 'true' public opinion in ENP states.

In the framework of the JCN project, five knowledge-based e-learning courses were developed:

- **Disinformation in the media**
- **Open-data and investigative journalism**
- **Multimedia journalism**
- **Value-based and conflict-sensitive reporting**
- **Monetisation, EU funding and financial sustainability**

Additional courses were also made available **(elaborated under the project E-Platform for Neighbourhood, developed by the College of Europe, Natolin in 2015 – 2017 and funded by the EU under the ENI instrument)**:

- **Anti-Corruption**
- **Human Rights Protection**
- **Integrated Border Management and Migration Policies**
- **Lobbying and Legislative Procedures**
- **Policy Coordination and Decision-Making for EU Affairs**
- **Fund-Raising Skills**
- **Policy Dialogue**

The courses will continue to be available, free of charge, to interested users. www.e-jcn.eu

E-learning was followed by in person workshops at the College of Europe in Natolin and study visits to Berlin and Tbilisi. These took place in August and November 2019.


Certificate

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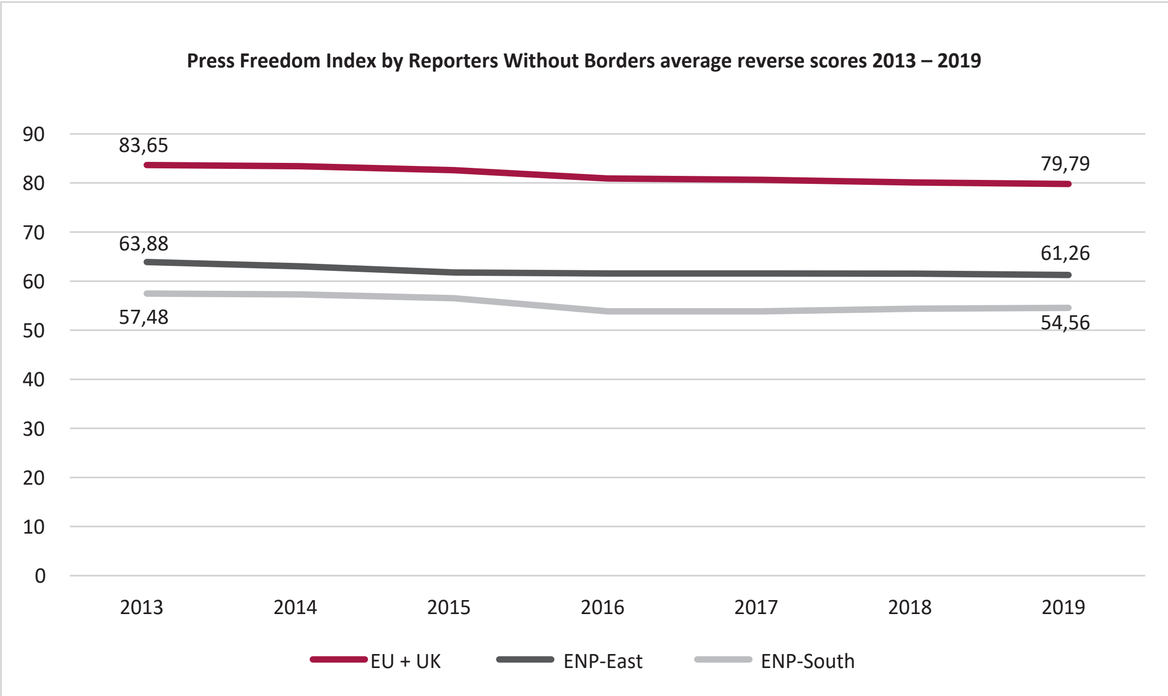
# Introduction

In addition to old problems that have plagued the European media for decades, the radical changes whose onset can be traced back to the advance of the internet brought a new set of global, yet unchartered challenges.

What's visible on the surface does not paint a rosy picture — media freedom is on the retreat in both the EU and the neighbouring countries.

According to the Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders, the whole region experienced a decrease in their scores between 2013 and 2019: the European Union (plus the UK) recorded the decrease of 4.6%, the Eastern Partnership — 4.1%, and European Neighbourhood Policy–South — 5.1%. The decline trend is steady and universal.




What often evades our understanding of media freedom is that it does not only depend on internal regulations, abuses, and authoritarianism. Very often these are both problems and symptoms, parts of a vicious circle that spins around an unprecedently interconnected world. These challenges cannot be attributed to the internal situation in separate countries anymore — these problems go as far as technology, multinational corporations, financial flows, and ideologies that know no borders. Their scope is global — and a global lens is needed to hold it in our gaze.

In 2017, Azerbaijani investigative journalist Afgan Mukhtarli was kidnapped in Georgia and smuggled across the border to stand trial in Azerbaijan on trumped-up charges. During the past two years, journalists were murdered in Syria or Libya and the public opinion was shaken by the death of three investigative reporters in the European Union — Daphne Caruana Galizia, Ján Kuciak, and Viktoria Marinova.

This impunity is both the disease and a symptom.

The mass access to internet put traditional print media on its head. The business model based on selling quality journalism to readers enjoying a very limited choice of information sources fell apart when the content distribution barrier disappeared.

Suddenly, everyone could mass-distribute free news that quickly captured the readers' attention. Advertisers and search engines thrived on their cheap, easily consumable content, creating a self-fuelling vehicle of low-quality, profit-oriented content production.

The traditional media had no choice but to join the competition, offering their quality content for free, entirely undermining their business model. In order to sustain themselves, savings needed to be found through cost cuts, further reducing their quality.

What we are left with is an increased number of vulnerable media that opt to produce lower-quality, sensationalist content to sustain themselves through a business model that thrives on pure visibility.

The resulting domino effect reduced the global trust in media to digits, opened space for profit-oriented politicised reporting, increasing political polarisation that's already tearing many societies apart, and made it vulnerable to propaganda and disinformation.

All of these keep spinning each other and the spiral is downward.

Such media, maimed by the global economy, are unable to fulfil their mission and are unprepared to inform about global developments with due balance and depth. The question of identity has dominated the past three decades, bringing a new sort of intercommunity rather than interstate wars. Human rights, especially for women and LGBT+ people, are being used instrumentally by propagandists and interest groups to galvanise discord and for political gain.

Still, there are multiple examples of media that manage to find solutions to how to navigate in these difficult times.

The following are full transcripts of e-learning courses for aspiring journalists conducted by the College of Europe in Natolin within the framework of the EU-funded project 'Developing knowledge-based European journalism relating to Europe's neighbours'. These courses are an attempt to equip the new generation of journalists with skills for how to face these global challenges and come out unscathed.

The publication is concluded by the winning journalistic works in a media competition held for the participants of the project.

The geographical scope of the College's project comprised the European Union countries (with the United Kingdom) and the European Neighbourhood Policy countries in the East and in the South.

The College of Europe in Natolin hopes that the project will not only serve as a means of professional development from journalists from the three regions, but also bring them closer together, encourage exchange of good practice, and lay foundations for new bridges between the European Union and its neighbourhood — and offer a valuable contribution to addressing the problems of the globalised world.

# Part one

## E-learning courses

# Journalistic Craft for Neighbourhood e-learning courses

The next section consists of abbreviated transcripts of the five on-line media courses prepared within the framework of the EU-funded project "Developing knowledge-based European journalism relating to Europe's neighbours", carried out by College of Europe Natolin Campus.

The five courses presented below are:

1. **The monetisation and sustainability of news in the digital age**

The course looks at some of the positive and negative impacts of digital trends on news quality and credibility. It shows how the funding sources for news are shifting away from advertising and toward users and the implications this has on the way media structure their organisations and measure their impact. And it will show how both digital media start-ups and established media organisations are generating new sources of revenue through new business models.

These innovators are showing that even in a contentious media environment, it is possible to create high-quality journalism that holds the powerful accountable and reinforces democratic values and principles.

2. **Multimedia journalism**

Creating engaging content is not always easy: it could require some coding, data analysis, and maybe even design skills. Fortunately, there are plenty of tools that journalists can use to create great photos, stunning visualisations, and other types of advanced multimedia content. This course will provide an overview of such key tools.

The course also takes a deeper look at reporting on sensitive topics such as harassment, migration and terrorism, and the risks inherent therein.

3. **Disinformation in media**

The course is designed for journalists and people working with information. It deals with the evolution of the role of media and journalists in terms of information security. It discusses contemporary information threats and recipients' vulnerabilities to it.

The course also organises concepts concerning information threats, such as information war, information equipment, information operations, narratives and fake news. Importantly, it includes the concept of disinformation in a broad context, being only one of the elements of information interactions.

4. **Open-data and investigative journalism**

The course addresses investigative journalistic methods, especially those that aim to explore corruption, money-laundering and tax havens through the use of publicly available databases. As these open sources from the US, EU, and other countries are available to anybody, they can also be used by journalists from the ENP-North and ENP-South regions to track the wrongdoings of local persons of interest.

5. **Value-based reporting**

The course addresses key questions journalists encounter when their own cultural values associated with the role and purpose of media face alternative interpretations of information sharing, truth, and power. For journalists covering societies in the southern ENP region, and for journalists from the ENP-East, journalistic values, and the practical act of being a reporter, can vary widely.

# 1. The monetisation and sustainability of news in the digital age

*Prof. James Breiner*

## The digital disruption of old models

The digitalisation of news has disrupted many of the old models of the news industry and the profession of journalism.

In this lesson you will learn the new definitions of who is a journalist, how digital platforms have changed how the news is created, the channels in which news is distributed, how news and information are monetised, and how these changes have undermined public trust in the news media.

Up until about two decades ago, the news media consisted of television, radio, and print organisations. They enjoyed a monopoly because barriers to entry were high: significant capital investments, and sometimes political influence, were required to obtain a broadcast license or a printing plant and distribution network. However, with the advent of the internet, any person or organisation could launch a web page or video channel.

Over time, some people who had not trained as journalists but who had expertise or passion for a particular topic — such as medicine, engineering, aviation, fashion, film and, indeed, every imaginable topic — began to develop their own audiences and compete for attention with the established news media. So, the established media had many new competitors, the vast majority offering their information free. While some of these new media organisations offered high-quality information, many others offered sensationalistic, misleading, or inaccurate content designed to attract attention and advertising revenue.

Thus, began a vicious cycle of digital disruption accelerated by technological and market changes:

- expanded broadband service, free wi-fi, and ever-cheaper mobile devices made it easier for consumers to access digital news anytime, anywhere
- news consumers began to spend more time and attention on free digital news
- advertisers followed users to the technology platforms of search and social media
- the technology platforms offered advertisers a cheaper, more efficient, algorithm-driven way of targeting their messages to specific consumer needs and desires
- traditional print media organisations that depended on subscriptions offered their content free online in order to compete for clicks and digital advertising, undermining their business model
- print and broadcast media cut costs to maintain their profit margins, undermining product quality
- unscrupulous actors harnessed the technology platforms' algorithms to make a business of propaganda and misinformation, undermining public trust of digital news and information

News consumers were overwhelmed with choices, and they found solutions to this problem of choice in technology platforms, such as search engines and social networks, which recommended news based on relevance to a query or the preferences of a user's social circle.


Fast forward to 2019, and Google and Facebook are expected to have just over half of all digital ad revenue globally, according to eMarketer and their share is growing. Digital advertising spending globally exceeded all other media, including television, for the first time in 2017, according to the digital industry site reCode, which means that for traditional media organisations, their revenue base is shrinking. Many print media have closed, and both print and broadcast news outlets have been cutting costs, largely by cutting personnel, further weakening their products.

Amid this disruption, trust in the news media and other democratic institutions has been declining globally for years, as shown in the Edelman Trust Barometer. In the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018, levels of trust in the news media vary by country in Europe and its neighbours. However, distrust tends to be highest in countries where divisive politics and extremist parties have emerged, particularly among countries in central and southern Europe. Among the lowest in trust, are, in descending order of trust, Austria, Croatia, Bulgaria, Turkey, France, Slovakia, (the US), Czech Republic, Hungary, and Greece. The old two-sided business model was based on massive scale: create a product to attract a mass audience and then sell access to that audience to advertisers concerned with delivering their message to as large an audience as possible. But now, traditional print and broadcast media were being cut out of the equation. The revenue of that subsidised news was now going to these technology platforms—search and social media.

This old model of chasing as many eyeballs and clicks as possible has been automated and even, dare we say, militarised by unscrupulous new media actors, such as the Macedonian entrepreneur behind pro-Brexit and pro-Trump misinformation campaigns described in an investigation by media credibility expert Craig Silverman, who has found that outrageous, sensational and frightening information is extremely profitable. The algorithms of social media and search tend to multiply impact, which drives not only revenue but also political polarisation.

This vicious cycle has added to public distrust of media generally. Online media consumers view news and information on their mobile or computer and do not distinguish between reliable news sources, social media and extremist content.

Media organisations in Europe and the developed world have been struggling to respond to these challenges. This leads to two questions we will attempt to answer in subsequent lessons:

- What tactics and strategies should news organisations adopt in order to provide their communities with the trustworthy information citizens need to make informed decisions in a democratic society?
- How can news organisations create a sense of community, solidarity, and inclusion rather than divisiveness and polarisation?

# The pivot toward users and credibility

In Lesson 1 we saw how the digital transformation of the news media industry and the journalism profession had disrupted many of the old models for the creation, production, distribution, and monetisation of content. We saw how that led to a flight of users and advertisers to digital technology platforms that weakened the traditional media financially, leading news media into a vicious cycle of cost-cutting, diminished product quality, the dominance of social media and search engines in content distribution consumption, and, consequently, a loss of public trust in the news media.

In Lesson 2, "*The pivot toward users and credibility*", we will learn about the tactics and strategies that news organisations are using to counter these trends, most of which involve redefining the relationship between media organisations and the public, as your professor has described in an article, 2018: Credibility will be the new currency for journalism.

This is a good time to define some important concepts, starting with journalism and public service journalism. Journalism is simply news and information provided to a community of shared interest. It can include news and information that simply entertains and distracts us.

Public service journalism goes beyond that. It gives a community trustworthy information about the most important issues and problems the community faces, and it helps citizens find solutions. It is a journalism whose trustworthiness stems from its independence of political and business interests, its relentless pursuit of factual information, its verification of information by cross-checking it against other sources, and its insistence on the accountability of the powers that be. It is a counterweight to political and economic power. Public service journalism encourages the participation of all citizens in the democratic process and promotes diversity of viewpoints, inclusion, and community solidarity across all political, cultural, economic, and social divides. All of these values are important to the European Community.

Another important concept is monetisation of news content. This means converting the value that we create for a community into financial currency that can be used to support high-quality public-service journalism. For many journalists, monetisation is almost a dirty word. To them it feels unseemly to seek money for content whose value, in their view, should be self-evident. (See Breiner, *The seven dirty words that journalists have to say without blushing*.) But creating an organisational structure for monetisation, such as hiring experts in digital sales and marketing, is a critical element for sustainability.

Now that we understand those concepts, we are ready to consider two positive counter-trends to the vicious cycle we described earlier. Both of them involve a pivot away from the model of mass media content created for mass audiences to attract mass advertisers.

1. First, people are looking for information they can trust. They are flooded with silly, irrelevant, inaccurate, and misleading information in all media. News media organisations that attempt to establish themselves as islands of credibility amid the flood of misinformation can convert that credibility into an economic asset. In other words, credibility can become the new currency of high-quality journalism.

   This focus on credibility as the means to monetise journalism is part of a global trend in response to the problem of an excess of misinformation and irrelevant information. Credible information is a scarce commodity, and in economics, scarcity creates value.

   There are 65 fact-checking services and news organisations around the world that aim to help readers sift through all the conflicting claims and counter-claims. In addition, Google has launched a Fact Check Explorer service that allows users to insert a public statement claim into its database and offer users a sample of sources that can verify, disprove, or explain the controversy. For example, if a user enters the words, 'Russian State TV says NATO countries are doubling their defence budgets', the tool returns a Polygraph.info rating of False. And finally, First Draft offers a series of courses and resources for journalists and citizens to help them learn best practices in fact-checking.

2. The other global trend we are seeing in journalism is a return to a focus on users rather than advertisers, relationship rather than scale. This is a major shift after more than a century in which the major source of revenue for news media — we are excluding state funded or taxpayer funded broadcasters here — was advertising. Many of the successful new business models for high-quality journalism aim to satisfy the needs and wants of users first rather than advertisers.

   Often, the advertising is of a different type, more of a sponsorship of the mission of the media organisation — often called sponsored content or native advertising. The sponsors of this type of content see their investment not in purely economic terms whose return is measured by the cost per thousand users reached or the cost per click or cost per action. These sponsors seek a different kind of return. They want to identify themselves with the mission and social objectives of the news organisation. Often that mission involves providing information on topics that are under-reported in traditional media, such as the quality of many public services — education, health service, public safety, social justice, the courts, traffic control, street repair, racism, gender equality, and many others.

   The benefit to the sponsor is that it can promote itself as having a social conscience. For example, some companies promote themselves as buying only ethically produced coffee or footwear or olive oil from producers who pay a living wage and use no child labour. They are tapping into public distrust of government. As the Edelman Earned Brand Study shows (p. 4), consumers in eight countries around the world (including France, Germany, the UK and the US) want their brands 'to stand for something… To help solve societal and political problems.' Nearly two-thirds of the people surveyed trust business more than government and expect 'CEOs to take the lead on change rather than waiting for government to impose it.'

## This trend represents an opportunity for media organisations that can demonstrate their trustworthiness and commitment to the ethical and social values of the communities they serve.

   In the graphic above Reuters Digital News Report 2018 (p. 21) we can see that for most of the 36 countries in their study, less than half of those surveyed 'trust most of the news most of the time'. Among those least trusting are people in Greece (23%), Slovakia (27%), Czech Republic (32%), on up to Croatia, Rumania, and Italy, all under 40% in trust.

   Citing research from Edelman again, its Trust Barometer (pp. 5, 20, 21) shows that in many countries of Europe, people trust business more than government and the news media. They tend to identify the media with political parties and interest groups. Many media organisations have recognised this trend and have begun to translate it into tactics and strategies that emphasise their independence. They demonstrate independence through transparency about ownership, sponsors, and revenue sources; biographies of founders, executives, journalists, and marketers; a clear statement of mission; and transparency about news gathering processes with swift apologies and explanations for errors.

How can users protect themselves from misinformation? The main thing is to ask some questions about the source.

1. Is the source of this information a news organisation I know and trust? If not, can I detect an ideological or political slant to the content? Does the other content seem credible or sensationalist and extremist?
2. Is the report by a journalist I know and trust? If not, do other reports by this journalist seem trustworthy, or do they seem slanted?
3. Was this information shared in social media by someone I know and trust? If not, is there an obvious political or ideological bias to other information shared by this source?

## How to create value and monetise a community

As we saw in Part 1, under the old model, high-quality journalism was subsidised by advertising. That dependence on advertising insulated journalists from having to worry too much about whether the content they were producing was really relevant to the daily lives of the communities they were serving.

Print media had little idea of what their audiences were actually reading except from annual or biannual surveys of questionable reliability. Even in the digital era, most measurement is crude: publishers can see that someone clicked on a piece of content but not what engaged them.

Media organisations thought about creation of value for advertisers — massive numbers of viewers of their messages — not about value for users. For example, even today, we can see that in many countries all of the major news media — print and broadcast — will cover the same political events every day, devoting extensive space and time to the declarations of members of the political class, the response of their opponents, and analysis of the meaning of the latest activities of these political actors.

So, there is tremendous duplication of this content, and it is freely available in many places. In economic terms, it has little value, yet media organisations continue to produce it, out of habit, and in order to attract attention to it, they emphasise the most extreme and sensational aspects of it.

Meanwhile, the ordinary people in the community — whether it be a nation, a region, or a municipality — find these polarising debates tiresome. Ordinary people are much more worried about their own economic status, public health care, public transportation, public education, public safety, the environment, social justice, income equality, and a host of other issues relevant to their daily lives.

With the loss of advertising revenue, publishers are turning toward users to make up the difference and are establishing paywalls. There are notable examples of international brands that have done this successfully, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. The brand value of the Times and the Post, and their high-quality content, make users willing to pay; and the other publications have business and economics content that brings users obvious value and justifies paying for a subscription. But beyond these international brands, many traditional media that publish general news have set up paywalls under the mistaken assumption that they can get people to pay for content freely available elsewhere. Traditional media in particular are not accustomed to asking their readers what they consider valuable, so they produce content their users do not value. Many of their paywalls will yield disappointing results. (In Lesson 6 we will present many examples of media that ARE successfully creating value worth paying for.)

So how do you create value for users? A good place to start is with the processes described in the highly useful book Business Model Generation, which helps both experienced business people and founders of start-ups to design a business model that is flexible, sustainable, and unique to their individual target consumers. At the centre of the methodology is a tool called the Business Model Canvas.

The author of this course has used the Business Model Canvas to coach media founders and managers as well as university students. Simply by trying to answer the questions posed in the Canvas, a media organisation's team will begin to focus on the best way to acquire and serve customers.

1. The starting point of the Canvas is identifying Customer Segments. One has to start by answering the questions, for whom are we creating value? And, who are our most important customers? For a media organisation, the question might be posed as, who is in the community we wish to serve? How do we define the boundaries of our media community? Is it by geography, by language, by subject matter covered, by political jurisdiction, by ethnic group?

2. As we start to define who are customers are, we move on to the second part of the Canvas, which is identifying our Value Propositions. What are the information needs of our target community? What information can we offer that they cannot get anywhere else? How can we distinguish ourselves from competitors already serving our community?

The Canvas suggests that value can be created in a number of ways by a media organisation: more information, information more relevant to the communities' problems and needs, faster delivery, lower price, more convenient access, information more customised to a user's needs. There are many possibilities for creating value. For example, perhaps we can serve our communities better by tailoring different content just for users of different platforms, such as a Twitter user, a YouTube user, an Instagram user, or a Facebook user.

The nine blocks of the Business Model Canvas can help any media business person — be they content producers, marketing/sales people, content designers, or tech designers. The nine blocks help a media organisation's team identify and develop appropriate key resources (talent, for example), key activities, distribution channels, customer relationships, revenue sources, cost structure, and partners, among other factors.

Especially today, with rapid changes in customer tastes and preferences, as well as changes in technologies, platforms, and consumption devices, the nine blocks of the Business Model Canvas should be revisited systematically. Content producers might be reviewing their impact minute by minute; sales people weekly; managers monthly. The key is to maintain flexibility.

In line with the issue of responding to the changing nature of media markets in the digital era, another useful tool is the methodology of 'build, measure, learn, repeat' outlined in Eric Ries's book, *The Lean Startup*.

Some of the key takeaways for media organisations from Ries's book are:

- For start-ups, your product needs to exist. A PowerPoint or business plan on paper is not enough.
- Start by creating a low-cost version of your product idea — a minimum viable product — to test in the marketplace. This will give you indications of the audience's needs and desires.
- Measure the audience response to the product.
- Use that learning to reshape the product and its characteristics.
- Repeat the process: build, measure, learn.

All of these ideas of how to create value for users require a change of focus on the part of journalists: they have to think NOT about what they want to produce. They have to think about how to make their products relevant and useful to their community. This is what creates value.


## How to monetise social capital

In the first three lessons of the course, we have looked at the challenging media environment, the importance of taking advantage of the public's search for credible news sources, and some new ways to design sustainable media business models in the digital world.

Now we are going to examine an often overlooked and underused source of resources available to media organisations — their social capital. For media organisations that have suffered big declines in financial capital in the form of lost advertising and subscribers, social capital can come to the rescue. The course's author has examined the importance of social capital in a blog post, focusing on examples from France, the Netherlands, and Spain, and also in a longer article for an academic publication.

As described in these publications, social capital is a value that media entrepreneurs possess through their ethnic, social, professional, and business networks. It is also a value that they create through their work's impact on society. [If you want to know more about the sociological and economic theory of social capital, you can start with the work of Pierre Bourdieu.]

For example, *De Correspondent* of the Netherlands launched in the fall of 2013 after raising $1.7 million from 19,000 people in what was then a world record in crowd-funding for a media organisation. The reputation of the founders as credible journalists — their social capital — had value to contributors who invested in a product sight unseen.

In Spain, eldiario.es raised 1.2 million euros in 2018 from its 34,000 'partners' who pay €60 or €70 a year to support the publication's independent investigative journalism, detailed here in Spanish with graphics. But the publication is freely available to everyone. So, the partners are NOT paying for information in a pure economic transaction like a subscription; they are paying to support the publication's mission. *Eldiario.es* has done major investigations that revealed high-level business and political corruption that no other media had reported.

That independence and public-service journalism represent a form of social capital. And they have monetised it.

*Eldiario.es* also is monetising its credibility, a credibility that it enhances through transparency. The founders and directors of this non-profit publication reveal all their financial results every quarter along with how they are investing the revenue surplus in more personnel and equipment, as detailed in the link above.

## Local publications and new metrics of engagement

One of the hardest hit segments of the media industry has been local news. But local news, by definition, has a limited audience. These media have been less able than most to fight the digital metrics of scale. However, they have an abundance of social capital; they just need to figure out ways to activate it, as the author of this course has described in an academic publication in Spanish.

To summarise that article:

1. These local media may not have the massive scale of national and international media, but they have the advantage of a deep relationship with their community based on their knowledge of that community. That relationship is based on the unique nature of their content. Often no other media are providing the information about local people and issues. Not even Facebook and Google have the expertise of local media on local social, political, and business leaders and their social status, or on local customs, cultural events, and language. So, readers and listeners are loyal: they return to the media again and again. Loyal users are more likely to buy a product despite price increases and to buy related products offered by the media organisation.

2. The metrics of scale — total pageviews or clicks, or the number of unique users — do not capture the value of the relationship a local news organisation has with its users. As Tony Haile, founder of the digital measurement service Chartbeat, has pointed out in a landmark piece for Time magazine, of 2 billion web page visits he studied, most lasted less than 15 seconds. Also, the pages that were most popular, as measured by the number of clicks, were not the ones where users were most engaged. The pages that attracted the most time and attention, as measured by the movement of the cursor and time spent, tended to be actual news as opposed to clickbait like 'the top' or 'ten best'. And finally, users who were engaged in the news of a website were twice as likely to return to that site — in other words, they were loyal. And as mentioned above, loyalty has value as social capital.

3. Some other important ways to measure engagement and relationship are how much time a user spends on a site (daily, weekly, monthly), how the user moves the cursor on content, and how many times a user comments on or shares content.

4. Because media are being recognised more and more as a public service rather than as a commercial product, many NGOs and foundations are using new metrics to measure the value of media. In economic terms, media are becoming a public good rather than a market product. The Media Development Investment Fund uses its Impact Dashboard to guide its investment strategies around the world. Those metrics include the sustainability of a media organisation's business model but also its role in increasing voter participation, supporting freedom of expression, providing a counterweight to political and economic power, revealing corruption, promoting human rights, and effecting change that reflects the values of liberal democratic societies, among other social impact factors. The 270 members of the European Venture Philanthropy Association from 30 countries promote similar kinds of investments, including in media.

To sum up what we have learned in this lesson: the commercial marketplace fails to capture all of the value created by a news media organisation. The social capital created by a media organisation's news and information also has value as a public service that is not measured only by its commercial value.

To effectively capture the value of their social capital, news media organisations need new metrics of loyalty and engagement. These new metrics can be useful in creating sustainable financial models for high-quality journalism. And the good news for local media is that they have an abundance of social capital. They just need to identify it and begin taking steps to monetise it.

In the next lesson, we will take a closer look at some of the new tactics that media organisations are using to increase support from users rather than advertisers via subscriptions, memberships, and donations.

# User payments: crowdfunding and subscriptions or memberships

In previous lessons we have looked at trends that have changed the business models for media organisations that aim to produce high-quality journalism and achieve financial sustainability. The trend is away from a profit-driven market model subsidised by advertising and toward a public service model funded by users. In this lesson we are going to look at some examples of the strategies and tactics being used to generate revenue from user payments.

Much has been written about the successful transition of the New York Times, the Washington Post, and The Guardian to user-supported models; however, these cases of international brands in a dominant global language have little relevance to the smaller media markets of Europe and its neighbours. European media markets are much smaller and more fragmented, with a variety of languages, cultures, political regimes, and economic conditions. We will focus on this group.

## Willingness to pay for online news

A useful place for us to start is with an overview study of user payments. In the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 (p. 23), a graphic shows the responses of people in 33 countries when asked if they had paid for online news in the past year. Percentages varied widely by country, but an average of 14% said yes. That should be taken as potentially good news. People are willing to pay for online news despite the abundance of free news content available and the growing use of mobile devices to access content at anytime, anywhere. In fact, in the Reuters Digital News Report of 2017 (p. 35) the No. 1 reason given for paying for news (30% of respondents) was to get access to news from a smartphone or tablet.

It is worth pointing out that some of the countries with the lowest levels of trust in the media also have low levels of payments for online news. In the graphic above, from the 2018 Reuters report (page 17), the countries with the lowest percentages of payments, starting at the right, are Greece, Croatia, the UK, Bulgaria, Germany, Czech Republic, and Austria. Of those, all had trust levels below 42% of respondents in the 2018 Reuters report, except for Germany (50%). Again, media markets are very different in each country, but the correlation between credibility, or lack thereof, and tendency to pay, or not, is notable at the high and low ends of the scale.

The message seems to be that people will pay for content that distinguishes itself for its credibility and trustworthiness. We have already seen this in Lesson 4 with the cases of De Correspondent and eldiario.es.

Media organisations that successfully generate revenue from user payments often describe their supporters as 'partners', 'members', or 'sponsors' rather than mere 'customers' in order to emphasise the importance of the relationship they are trying to build with their community.

That is the case with an innovative example of a digital publication advocating for science, Perspective Daily, founded by two German scientists who believe that the science promoted in headlines only describes problems, not solutions.

They publish 'constructive journalism' that acknowledges problems such as climate change and air and water pollution but provides links and explanations to studies that show how these problems can be mitigated or solved. The publication, in German, has more than 13,000 'members' paying €60 a year (about $66).

A recent article, 'What to do if the rain stops', showed strategies being adopted by South African farmers in an important agricultural region. Perspective Daily is fighting bad news and bad science with good news and good science.

The lessons of Perspective Daily for generating user payments summarized: no advertising, high-quality content, an underserved niche, service to a community, and an affordable price point.

### In authoritarian regimes

Independent news media organisations have almost no chance of being completely self-sustaining in the authoritarian political regimes of central and eastern Europe. In Croatia, a low-trust country, the independent anti-fascist news site lupiga.com managed to exceed its crowdfunding goal and raised 23,000 euros via Indiegogo. This is obviously a very modest sum, but the organisations said the sum is sufficient for a year; the site had 117,000 total visits in March of 2019, according to Similar Web.

By contrast, in Hungary, *Origo*, which formerly was an independent site with investigative journalism, has been completely co-opted by the right-wing government of Viktor Orbán, according to the *New York Times*.

User payments work better in the more prosperous economies of western Europe, where the political regimes are also more open and democracies more established. But free expression is under attack everywhere. In a later lesson, we will look at the importance of, and the problems of, foreign investment and sponsorship in independent news organisations.

## Relationship revenues

In previous lessons we have looked at some examples of how news media organisations are generating revenue from online users. In some cases, they have launched one-time crowdfunding campaigns. In other cases, they have sold subscriptions or recruited support of their mission in the form of ongoing payments that are sometimes called 'memberships' or 'partnerships' or 'sponsorships'.

In all of these cases, the financial support depends heavily on producing content that focuses first on serving the needs and solving the problems of users rather than creating a market for advertisers. All of the media examples we have used so far emphasise their public service, and they attempt to build loyalty — a form of value creation — by deepening their relationship with their communities. Again, the size of the community — the scale — is not as important as the relationship of the news organisation with its community.

### Other relationship revenues

When a news organisation has a strong relationship based on credibility, it can develop other products to generate revenue. Here are a few:

1. **A career platform for employers to advertise jobs and potential employees to post their CVs and portfolios.** *The Business of Fashion*, which began as a blog by a fashion business consultant, Imran Amed, developed enough of an audience among manufacturers, creative people, and retailers over time that he decided to create a global online career marketplace, as described in an interview with *Digiday UK*. In 2013, that Business of Fashion launched their first commercial product, a careers platform in which brands could advertise themselves and their open positions to the publication's audience. This platform was financed with $2.1 million from various investors.

   Amed described it as 'a global platform to look for talent', and what was new about it was that it was truly international. In 2018 they had 300 brands advertising, with more than 1,500 jobs listed, and they have handled 300,000 applications through the platform.

   *Business of Fashion* now has a team of 75 journalists and other employees working in New York, London, and Shanghai. The site has a freemium subscription — a limited number of free visits a month, then you must subscribe for €216 a year.

   It should be noted that journalism.co.uk has its own career site for the industry and charges employers from £200 to £385 for a listing. Not every digital media news organisation would have a community large enough to make a career site feasible, but some other form of marketplace could make sense — books, computers, video and audio production equipment, or other products. More on that in a moment.

2. **Online and in-person training courses related to the industry.** Continuing with *Business of Fashion*, the site has launched a school with paid online courses with videos of leading figures in the fashion industry on topics such as ‘The art and science of buying and merchandising.’

   But offering training has been a revenue source for start-ups as well, according to a 2015 study by the Columbia University School of International and Political Affairs — ‘Publishing for Peanuts: Innovation and the Journalism Start-up’ (p. 40). The study looked at more than 30 start-ups in 19 countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, Australia, and Africa. The study found: ‘Independent media outlets can attract skilled editorial staff who may be willing to conduct training workshops and other consultancies on behalf of a third party [often a foundation, NGO, or government grant] as a way to generate an income. This can be an excellent way to assemble a network of contacts in the donor community, but must be balanced against the temporary loss of a staff member from normal editorial duties’.

3. **Sponsorship of e-mail newsletters.** Every news organisation needs to be collecting the e-mail addresses of its users so that it can develop a relationship based on providing timely, relevant information. A key reason for this is that the publisher can own this relationship and communicate directly with its community without relying on intermediaries such as Facebook, Google search, or any other third parties. The newsletter should be a service, not an intrusion. It should be used to share the publisher’s best information. Some best practices are described by Campaign Monitor.

   Revenue can be generated by obtaining a sponsor for the newsletter. Or it can be used to promote premium content available only to subscribers or members.

4. **Public events.** Let’s be realistic. Staging public events well requires a great deal of organisational and marketing skill. However, even if they do not generate revenue or profit, events can be worth it for the engagement and trust they generate by allowing readers and users to engage in dialogue with journalists and publishers, a process described by Hearken’s Jennifer Brandel.

   The author of this course, while publisher of the *Baltimore Business Journal* in the US, used to stage events where the public was invited to hear reporters and editors describe how they do their jobs or how they cover a particular beat, such as real estate, the health care industry, banking, or politics. Even if these events are free, they can generate valuable marketing exposure for a media organisation. Journalists are celebrities to many people, and their work is mysterious to them. Do not underestimate the value of these types of sessions. Often a restaurant or café or other public venue will offer to host an event and offer refreshments free to attendees.

   Think relationship first, and revenue opportunities will come. *The Texas Tribune*, a public-service journalism web site in the US, has used its events to attract more than $1 million in sponsorship for its political, debates, onstage interviews, and cultural festival, as Jake Batsell has described.

5. **Providing editorial services for third parties.** Some media organisations have created a subsidiary with writers, editors, and designers devoted solely to creating content, websites, or social media campaigns for third parties, including native advertising or branded content. *El Confidencial* of Spain does many of these things for its advertising clients, as described on its website (in Spanish). It is one of Spain’s oldest (founded in 2001) and most successful independent digital news organisations, with 118 employees, €13.4 million = in revenues and nearly €3 million in profit in 2016, as reported in *El Español*. *El Confidencial’s* EC Brands is the subsidiary that produces the content for third parties.

6. **Selling data.** The online data visualisation service *Porcentual.es* of Spain, profiled in *News Entrepreneurs*, has developed software that pulls data from public databases and produces graphics in minutes for media organisations to embed in their web pages. The organisation has three employees and 60 clients, which include some of the largest news media organisations in Spain. *Porcentual* can customise data geographically so that a newspaper in the city of Seville, for example, can get the latest unemployment figures for each municipality in its community.

7. **Offering products for sale, such as books, music, clothing, souvenir mugs, and other merchandise.** *Jot Down*, ‘a contemporary culture magazine’ in Spain, has an extensive online store of this type. These sales do not often generate a significant portion of revenue, but every little bit helps.

8. **Fact-checking services.** As of April 2019, there were 65 news media organisations that had signed on to the Code of Principles of the International Fact-Checking Network. For some of them, fact-checking is their only activity, which they fund with grants and contributions, such as *Demagog.cz* in the Czech Republic, and *Istinomjer* in Croatia.

The variety of potential revenue sources is limited only by the imagination. A group of Dutch researchers identified 52 potential revenue sources for quality journalism; truthfully, some of the 52 are duplicative, but their point was there are many, possibly as many as one per week.

Summing up, traditional advertising alone is not enough. And digital advertising in its basic for — banner ads — has become a low-price commodity business dominated by technology platforms. News media organisations have to turn toward users for their funding, and that depends on offering highly differentiated content whose credibility distinguishes itself from the junk and misinformation flooding the media market. That credibility creates an opportunity for media brands to offer other products, as we have shown above.

# Revenues from foundations, billionaires, EU funding

As we have seen in previous lessons of this course, the commercial market is failing to provide news media organisations with the resources, especially financial resources that they need to produce high-quality products. As a result, the quantity of news organisations and journalists providing this type of content has been declining at an accelerating pace.

Community-minded leaders at all levels in many countries have begun to recognise this market failure and develop solutions. For this reason, we have seen the emergence of many initiatives to support quality journalism from non-commercial sources such as foundations, wealthy individuals, NGOs, and various forms of government subsidies. The Centre for International Media Assistance has done an in-depth study of the trend in official government sources to fund independent media around the world, and Nieman Lab did a comprehensive report on the trend in the US.

## Tapping the new sources

It is worth pointing out that the College of Europe's own Course 12 has highly relevant information on 'Effective Application for EU Funding'.

But here are some other practical guidelines that journalists need to take into account when applying for grants, loans, or consulting contracts.

1. Make sure your proposal fits with the mission, objectives, goals, and limitations of the grant-making organisation. For example, some programmes are limited to particular countries or a geographic region — Latin America, Asia, the Western Balkan States — or a topic — human rights, economic development, domestic violence, climate change. Your proposal has to fit or it has almost no chance of being approved. If you are proposing to create a text-based news service, for example, while the grant-maker's objective is to support organisations developing video reports, you might be knocking on the wrong door. You will be wasting everyone's time. Study that organisation's publications carefully. Review previous grantees. See if your proposal fits the pattern of previous winning proposals.

2. Grant-making organisations receive far more proposals for far more funding than they would ever be able to supply. Your proposal will have to be special to attract attention. What is different, special, innovative, or impactful about your proposal? You need to answer that.

3. Organisations prefer to deal with people they know. If you and your team do not know anyone at a grant-making organisation, your proposal will go into a secondary pile. You need to find ways to meet people from that organisation at industry events, in social networks, or by seeking introductions from someone, who does have relationships there. Study the biographies and LinkedIn profiles of key board members and staff. Do you know any of them? Can someone you know introduce you to a key person? Have they written articles that inspired or motivated you and that you can comment on?

4. If you have a proposal for a new media product or start-up, it is far better that it already exists at even a basic level, as a minimum viable product, as we referred to in Lesson 3.A real product that grant-makers can see, touch, and use will have far more possibility of attracting financial support than a mere idea laid out in a business plan or PowerPoint.

5. You have to market your proposal. The hardest thing for many journalists is to promote themselves. They feel that the marketing and sales aspect of the news business is somehow unsavoury, disreputable. They associate money and business with corruption. They need to move past that obstacle. Under the old media monopoly, they never had to market themselves. In some cases, they feel the quality of the work should speak for itself and sell itself. This is arrogant. Nothing could be more wrong, especially in today's intense competition for users' time, attention, and resources.

6. Do not brag, but do not beg. Do not think of a proposal as asking for a favour. Think of it as though you are offering an opportunity to someone to be part of a great initiative. Promote the vision, the benefits you will bring to the grant-maker, its mission, and society as a whole. See advice for salespeople in News Entrepreneurs.

## The battle for hearts and minds

When the market fails to provide the financial resources for high-quality journalism, news organisations have to look elsewhere.

Among the major funders for Eastern and Central Europe are foundations from Western European countries, the EU, the US's USAID, the US-based National Endowment for Democracy, and George Soros's Open Society Foundations. While those of us in the West might view these organisations as champions of freedom of expression, they are sometimes viewed with suspicion as tools of political and economic manipulation. Indeed, Viktor Orbán, the right-wing leader of Hungary, has referred to these organisations as 'Brussels and the Soros mafia', according to the 'Reuters Digital News Report 2018' (p. 84). On the other hand, the National Endowment for Democracy has warned that Russia, Turkey, China, and 'several Persian Gulf states' are pushing an anti-Western agenda in the Western Balkan states.

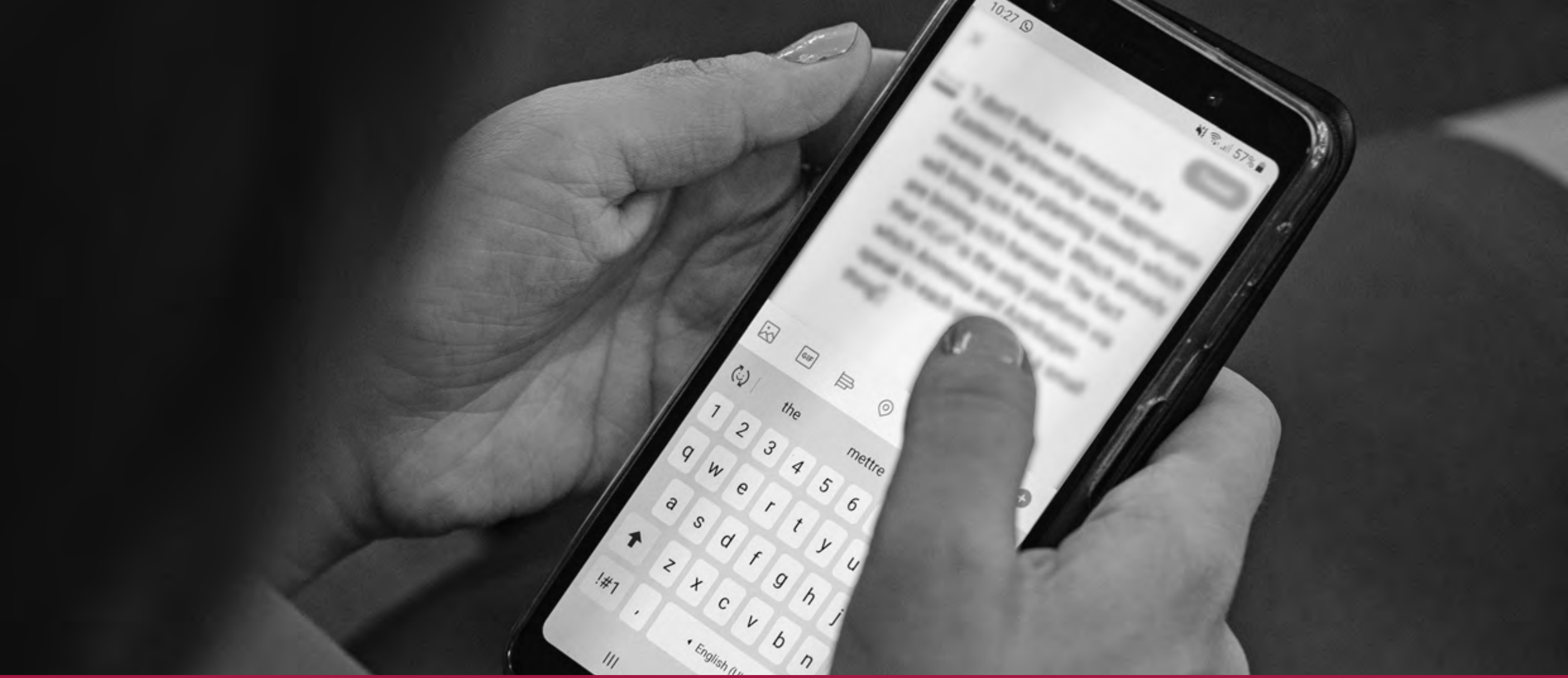
So, both the media organisations themselves and their funders need to do everything possible — transparency of funding, transparency of objectives, even-handed coverage, avoidance of personal attacks — to maintain their credibility in this battle of hearts and minds.

Although the funding from non-commercial sources in the West is in the millions of euros, the total amount of this media subsidy is a tiny fraction of the industry as a whole. However, new actors are coming onstage all the time as the media crisis deepens. Even the villains in the decline of media, namely Google and Facebook, have media assistance programmes under way to help publishers. Opportunities abound for organisations that can find ways to tap into this new type of funding.

## Uncomfortable truths

High-quality journalism often reveals uncomfortable truths that people in power — politicians, business people, social leaders — would rather not see come to light. In can be dangerous to journalists, many of whom have lost their lives in the pursuit of public service. But a network makes it much harder for the powerful to suppress a story by silencing one voice; the network reduces the risk to an individual. And the network provides resources for public-service reporting.


The journalism network, which is a collaboration based on journalism values rather than commercial objectives, is a new type of business model that can help provide high-quality public service journalism at a time when we need it the most.



# 2. Multimedia journalism

*Emin Huseynzade*

## Multimedia journalism

People worldwide are never in the centre of an event until it happens in their relatively close surroundings. This can be credited to journalists who went to the event, covered it and presented it to the user whenever they decided it is was the appropriate time.

Evening news programmes, some live events on main channels, radio shows or broadcasts from football all concern 'timely' coverage. Newspapers always take backstage having only the opportunity to print additional 'morning' or 'evening' papers.

This all changed with the advent of the Internet, which changed life for all media — for both producers and the consumers, and in fact many consumers became producers as well. First of all, with digitisation, all types of media — TV, radio, and newspapers were transformed to have the same starting points.

In this new situation, newspaper workers produce video, TV journalists write stories or make podcasts. Social media, which never existed before, started to become a place where users look for news, post information, criticise professional media coverage and make choices.

New devices also brought changes to the market. Just 5 years ago media consumption from the Internet was based on desktop reading which then shifted towards mobile devices. As Pew Research Centre shows, in October 2017 already 58% (an increase from 20% from 2013) of people uses mobile phones for news consumption, while those using desktop has not changed for 4 years and makes up 39%.

While the data regards the US, it also relates to the news consumption in other countries as well. The younger generation uses mobile phones even more — 71% of young people from 18-29 years old get their news via a mobile device.

Instant news has become highly popular and at the same time, a problematic issue for the media. Today, timing is more important than ever. This causes other media standards to be suppressed, such as verification of news and balanced information.

Oftentimes today, news is no longer consumed in a form presented only by the main news programme, but based on the personal interest of each user, which may change from time to time. Each person may find news presented in various platforms at the same time — on Facebook, the website of a newspaper, TV, YouTube channels, Instagram pages, etc.

This causes news producers to push their work to be placed on all platforms. Now news producers follow users' interests is also costly. Changes in the way news is consumed brings new challenges to all parties.

Viral news sometimes becomes seemingly more important than so-called 'serious' news. Buzz creators also become popular with their '7 places you must-visit before you die' headlines.

In this chaos of determining what is important and what is not, consumers suffer as well. There are few if any who can say what is really important to them and what should be followed and what is not.

The news cycle now runs 24/7 meaning that much more information flows into devices from all kind of platforms. And users now select media based on their priorities and preferences.

They do not select their choices in order to obtain all news from one place. In such a situation media work becomes important in order to select and present that 'tiny, but very important' information from the ocean of news. And this is an opportunity, which makes professional journalism important.

While social media brings thousands of 'truths' and overwhelm news consumers with live broadcasts, videos and photos, they also bring a large amount of fake news. Fake news is a large problem which is often used by countries or their propaganda machines to attack each other.

In such a distrustful situation people are not sure whom they can believe if a situation is true, or even if an event even happened or not. During emergencies, social media is a place where thousands of fake news stories may appear, and since the pressure of 'real-time' coverage is high, research and verification is not work the ordinary user normally does on their own.

Social media platform owners try to correlate by producing various tools, such as showing that the user is 'safe in the emergency situation' or by banning pages and users who produce fake information in a constant way.

In most cases, the owners of social media platforms do nothing, since the number of languages used in social networks is much higher than it is possible to cover. Imagine, that 100 billion searches are made via Google every month. Although people search for much information and content creators are not always able to fully satisfy their needs.

As mentioned previously, in such a situation traditional reporting has an opportunity to adapt and become a winner.

Traditional reporting has something that has never been nor will ever be in social media buzz — it contains a professional approach, standards, and mechanisms to clear the huge amount of information coming from various sources, find main issues which could be interesting for each audience and present them in the format that is not available on other platforms.

Television, newspapers and radio stations still have audiences who believe that if a news item appears on this platform, that means it is 'verified'. The most important is to keep this belief and do all that is possible in order to present such verified news.

Usage of new technologies, such as new channels or getting feedback from users, makes them an integral part of broadcasting. A proactive consumer is a good priority for this new era of journalism. Some TV channels employ a new vision by following the main topics and take one topic daily to discuss, and offer a platform where users/watchers cab be involved in the discussion.

For example, Czech Television CT24 had a daily programme, where guest speakers are invited to the evening show and speak about the latest viral topic. Users may call to the studio as has always been done in traditional TV, but also send their voice messages, write via messengers and call via Skype to the live show.

The presenter and producers select interesting questions to ask their guests. Additionally, during a talk show, various visuals, such as data sets, live connections and short videos are shown. This all makes traditional media to act more in the interest of consumers since it not only presents the product but formulates it all together along with other media forms.

As a result, discussions about topics started on TV often lead to social media websites and other platforms by formatting media involvement in daily life. It also gives people the opportunity to understand what is important as well as the opportunity to be part of a huge media literacy system.

Since media literacy did not exist in the pre-Internet period and few have an education in the EU and ENP region on this issue, problems with media are constantly growing. Traditional media could be a place not only to discuss and learn about it, but also practice case by case.

This is also important for parents, who know how to give information about the surrounding world to their kids but are unsure about the media landscape since no one provides them with an education on this subject. Traditional media is a place where such literacy projects can be implemented; however, this should not be done in a classical format.

The new generation of users want their media (even educational content) presented in a playful format. Game theories are implemented widely in media as well. How to react and what to choose as well as what to present is based on various skills which are taken not only from media education but from other disciplines, such as those involving psychology.

Multimedia content, which allows the user to continue reading content is very important. Multimedia gives a variety of forms of presenting information. Content presented in only one format would take too long to prepare and ultimately is not stimulating or interesting enough for the new generation of users.

Sometimes it is hard to produce such stories as journalists need to squeeze a large amount of data into one article. In such situations, multimedia and various tools give the opportunity to 'lighten up' the story and make it easier to consume.

People are interested in variety — media content can be made differently with added video, photo slides, timelines, etc., but also, most importantly, by presenting the main ingredient — the truth to people.

Some issues never become old due to societies' sociological processes. This is especially seen in ENP countries since many of them are in the developmental stage and political challenges do not come alone, but bring changes to the society and to its conservative nature.

Among these subjects are those such as gender equality, sustainable development, protection of the environment, domineering institutions, fighting corruption and human rights, participatory processes and many others. All of these subjects should be in the focus of traditional media, which together with the new digital media tries to keep their place as well as develop and increase their number of users.

Stories, such as those on gender equality could be raised based on reports of NGOs and international organisations, local events and vox-pops and each one brings a different approach, which would be a part of special trending issues, which appear from time to time on the Internet. Media should be prepared not only to follow such trends but be a creator of the same.

It is understandable, that it is not possible to pioneer using hashtags, trends and other forms of buzzing information. Still, cross-cutting issues should be identified beforehand and content prepared for various platforms and presented when such need appears.

Feature stories, or 'stories that never die' could be done in such a format that they can draw the media in the middle of the discussion around the cross-cutting issue. In the next parts of this course, we will discuss gender equality more deeply and look into which aspects the media may focus on in their future stories.

Keeping in mind the time when one type media could exclusively produce most content has been left behind in the 20th century and a deeper and more professional approach is where journalism will have future.

## Marketing view to journalism

Whenever a newsworthy event happens, journalists look not only for verification of information and uphold other media standards, but also look for ways the event could be covered and especially presented, so people will follow a story over a longer time period. It is one of the main challenges of our time: hook the audience with the name of the story, keep the story alive for a longer period and cause users to want to regularly and frequently check for updates.

This concerns enriching media content, which introduces a marketing view to journalism. Since media needs to follow user's interests which change constantly, some rules exist here too. Finding ways to enrich content drives publishers to create new expe-riences for its readers/watchers/ users.

Publishers find ways to make users become engaged, participate in creating stories or to be a part of it. For example, if there is content on new laws regarding transportation, enrichment of media gives an opportunity for learning from the media more effectively, than from the so-called 'linear' media, which like a book only shows names of changes, but does not help users to navigate, understand more deeply and help implement what is presented.

Today, people may seek help, information and news not based on their preferred media outlet, but simply via a search engine. For media production, this means, that their content should be in whatever place it might be searched for. For this purpose, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is an important tool, which is used to enrich content and brings it to the attention of potential users.

SEO may sound technical and in part it is. At the same time, the editorial part of SEO is just as important as the technology. Keywords are used to find stories, videos, and other content. So, which is more important, keywords or a good story? How should editors decide on the story?

While this seems contradictory, in fact, SEO does not make journalists slaves of keywords. Target keywords draw more readers to a story and as a result bring in more money for advertisement.

Headlines and leads are places where SEO practitioners suggest using more keywords or niche keywords. Headlines can be produced and then find the keyword for to make the story easy to find. Tags for pages, stories, photos and other media will make changes that make the probability of the story being read even higher.

SEO is a part of understanding the platform's users. Probably most media, especially those that try to develop without getting to know their readers, are deeply stuck in a situation where readership is not growing or even declining. As mentioned earlier, a marketing approach is needed. This starts with determining who the reader or user actually is.

Creating a user's profile is not just determining the user's geographical area or age. Media and journalists need to understand exactly what percentage of users are male/female, what other languages they speak, which cities or villages they live in. And information should not be generalised and be an exact percentage!

Since we live in a new digital era and people are influenced by various interests (sport, music, art), people (influencers), values (modernity, conservative approach, etc.) and all are seen online, more profiling is needed.

Media should understand what type of music readers are interested in so it can produce stories which touch on them from time to time. For example, if users are not pop music lovers or a very low percentage of them, then stories on this topic could be skipped by the editor when making choices.

Following online habits of users is where media should dive in to enrich content accordingly. Choosing preferred days of media readership will help to determine where to place long reads instead of shorter stories, also the type of device helps to decide on the type of multimedia tools to select (since some are better on desktop and some for a mobile screen). Even knowing part of the user's mobile phone activity during the day is helpful to understand the profile of the user.

As the next step of profiling for media, enrichment of the most consumed media types is identified.

This is also helpful in order to see which media content creates a higher resonance with users.

Interactivity is what can be uncovered from profiles. Involving non-direct users into interactive media page content will help users stay for a longer time. This helps resolve two issues. First of all, various video, photo, engaging multimedia will keep users interested in coming back to the page.

Secondly, it will lower the bounce rate, which means that due to hosting interesting content that replies to the interests of users, they will stay longer and go to other pages of the same news media. In this framework, highlighting new content with multimedia, or showing that for example a well-known photo correspondent started to work with the media outlet, or a popular Youtuber/Viner joined in cooperation may involve more news consumers automatically.

Branding in this area is more important than ever before and adding user-generated content to topics for professional media is a good idea. As mentioned earlier, this could be done with the involvement of content creators directly but also by using such content for better coverage and enrichment.

Such content could be presented with special icons, or some other branding features, that invites readers/ viewers to find interesting info much faster.

All in all, enrichment of content is not a standalone issue since it only serves in adding different sides of stories, which is best presented separately from where the main content part is presented (writing, video, etc.) So, enrichments are used when it is faster and more effective to tell a story with new media content.

## Practical methods of using social media

Media organisations and freelancers, the person who runs a business or a PR manager — all have one common crossing point, they all are in a race to find the best social media strategy for their own purposes.

Social media has become a place not only for sharing information, as it was before with other media types but also is a perfect transporter of information from end-users.

For media outlets this means two-end communication, where content prepared by professional journalists can be used to learn users' different kinds of views.

This also influences changes of editorial policy, selecting platforms and categorisation of content.

Therefore, a social media strategy, which as a result will increase outreach should be the basis of any media from its starting point when the main reason for its usage is a defined goal.

Goals for using social media should be clear to all journalists and which sometimes are used by the editorial team to correlate their online activity accordingly.

Large media outlets, such as the *New York Times* and the Associated Press issue Social Media Guide-lines for their newsrooms, which even affect blogs of journalists.

As Dean Baquet, Executive Editor of the *New York Times* writes: '*The New York Times* has been a dominant force on social media for years. Our newsroom accounts have tens of millions of followers. Many of our journalists are influential voices on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms. The voices of our readers, listeners, and viewers inform and improve our reporting. We believe that to remain the world's best news organisation, we have to maintain a vibrant presence on social media. But we also need to make sure that we are engaging responsibly on social media, in line with the values of our newsroom.'

Media organisations understand that losing social media readership is easy to do, so they must have a constant presence in the digital world which shouldn't be a so-called 'firework strategy', when good, but short-lived stories are published then the online readers are left with no follow up story.

The main reason for this could be to increase outreach, increase the number of long-reads by readership, or something else, but these goals should be clear and activities updated accordingly.

Practically this means understanding that each social media platform has its own rules and users play according to its unwritten rules and general needs of society.

For example, in some ENP countries, Facebook is a platform where more negative content is posted and shared and users come to the platform prepared to react to negative content more actively than to positive ones. In comparison, Instagram, due to its differences, is seen as mostly a positive news platform and negative information is not as popular on it as it is on Facebook.

Socio-centric and ego-centric models of social media influence not only how people react, but also their information based on who shares it.

Influencers, people who have a high number of followers, likes or some other digital 'privileges' are people who are actively involved in various types of campaigns. Media platforms also use influencers for their own purposes, since reaching people via popular voices is sometimes more effective than via other 'classical' channels.

Social media is not the only a platform where information ends, but also a place where new directions and activities start. It can have a powerful influence on political life, such as the famous 'Arab spring' uprising or affect other democratic processes — such as elections and institutions.

Media is part of any political, economic and social change and is frequently involved in processes that transform society. One such platform is open data — available to everyone to access, use and share.

While much data collected by governmental and other institutions can be uncovered by the media and be presented to society by using investigations, new tools and pieces of information, that people can use.

This process is actively discussed in social media, since it happens to be one of the most practical places where data is shared.

Open Data Institute made the statement: 'If citizens know about their governments, they can hold leaders to account, make more informed decisions and demand better services. Open data can also help governments stay on their toes and make better policies for society, the economy and the environment.

And as we have mentioned, any change is of interest as media coverage.

Data visualisations, which for example show aging in Europe, war maps in Syria or interactive visualisations such as on the website *Tableau* makes it one the other most popular infrequently visited pages in digital media pages.

At the same time, governments of many countries have joined Open Government Partnership and declared they will open their data to the public and have made specified commitments to do so.

One other side of digitisation and shifting of the entire society into social media by all institutions and public affair organisations should be taken into account.

As a creator of the 'technology solutionism' theory, Yevgeny Morozov states, new technologies provide via social networks some freedoms, while at the same time take much:

''They offer all sorts of services for free...we do not see the other end of the deal' — the thirst for clicks and likes, the concentration of so much private data in corporate hands.'

Data ownership and its regulation involved media in the process already implemented in Europe which is the long-disputed General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

It is the biggest change in data privacy regulation within the last 20 years.

# Data journalism

While data journalism is relatively new to media coverage, it is quite popular among those who are interested in the growth of their audience. Data journalism brings an incredible opportunity to obtain, analyse and present vast amounts of data which could appear messy to ordinary users and place it in a form that users can easily understand and discuss.

Making big data simple is among one of data journalism's goals. Data journalism was first introduced with Dr John Snow's dot map visualisation of cholera in London and Minard's famous infographic of Napoleon's 1812 March.

With the digitalisation of media such visualisations have become popular and are now used widely. Since there are plenty of tools and data is easy to collect, use and analyse — more companies, governments and as a result, media outlets are involved in data journalism.

Data journalism is a job for not only journalists themselves, but for designers — who are able to create beautiful visualisations and make figures more understandable. This work also involves coders, who create tools and code in the R programming language, which was especially created to work with statistical information.

Therefore, this triangle of the journalist, coder and designer become the creator of the final data product for media. However, in smaller newsrooms one person, oftentimes meaning a single journalist tries to do all the needed work.

As a result, data journalism is known to last longer than other types of media products as the same data set often has the possibility to bring about many totally different stories.

Some organisations, such as the World Bank are interested in having journalists analyse their updated data which provides another opportunity to understand the world better.

There are specific steps to take which can help to collect data with various tools. Many organisations, especially governmental agencies still have problems with introducing data to the public.

Data is often either assembled in a form that only coders can decipher (while journalists mostly try to stay away from technical skills) or are set in non–machine-readable formats, such as PDFs.

Machine readable formats, such as XML are important, because they offer another opportunity to use various simple and powerful data processing programmes to analyse data very quickly. If files come in PDF format, a process called Scraping comes to work and deciphers the data.

Scraping programmes such as Data Miner or Tabula are quite helpful. Data Miner is a free plugin for the Chrome browser and extracts HTML data into a file for Excel. Tabula helps to obtain data from pdf files, which often have long pages which are even difficult to read for a human.

When simple tools do not help, the Python programming language may. Basic knowledge of Python can be helpful with many data journalism projects.

Python also uses the Beautiful Soup library, which helps to pull out data from HTML and XML pages. Once the journalist has the data, more logical and analysing skills will be required.

Then tools such as MS Excel or LibreOffice Calc are used, which allow the user to clear the data, making it more homogenous, without duplications or strange or unneeded information.

Clearing could take much time, therefore using tools such as multilingual OpenRefine for finding mistakes is a good idea. It is available for Windows, Mac and Linux. Clearing data has remained extensively non-mobile work.

After data cleaning is finished, the technical work takes a step back and the art of journalism comes to the fore. From a vast amount of data, the journalist can then determine needed particulars and create a story based on it.

Therefore, data analysis is very needed. Knowledge of simple mathematics and the ability to compare and use various Excel tools are a help. Once the needed information is extracted and the data line formulated, the story is then prepared at least in the mind of the journalist. At this point, he or she should remember:

1. It is not how big or small the data is, but more importantly, if it is complete or not.
2. Issues still to be discovered can come from other disciplines; therefore, inviting specialists for consultation could be important.
3. Updating data over time may be needed. Even after an article is published, updates may be needed to show that the data story is approaching reality.

Data stories, unlike news stories for example, bring traffic to media for a longer period. Data journalism articles are popular among scholars, trainers, students and others, who need analysis for their work or other purposes.

Resistance to data stories is always present. As soon as such stories are published on any platform, critics immediately try to find mistakes, compare to other information and raise questions.

Being prepared means doing a really good job of analysing the data. Whatever critics say, the data should clearly show trends and changes and state that only the mentioned results should be taken into account.

Data journalism provides a needed mixture of knowledge to manage the situation and make informed decisions. For crisis managers, data is the place where to start and for data journalism the stories are the place where many actions start.

Activism in society is fed by such data as well. And correctly presented data clearly shows changes should take place.

Data journalism has its weaknesses, as do all types of journalism. As there are few people in society who analyse data according to ethical media standards, data is often widely used to create fake stories.

To produce fake news, particular parts of stories are extracted from overall data and stories are then created to promote a particular individual's or institutions ideas, to attack others or to show a different (and of course falsified) perspective of the world.

Data misinterpretation is a major problem which should be exposed and communicated to society.

Having media literacy is not enough to counter these problems since data journalism includes many skills from other fields, for example, statistics, math, etc. Verification of such articles is the work of a data journalist.

There are many tools which can be used to create data visualisations. Some tools have been created by former journalists who have used their knowledge and experience to make such tools more convenient and easier to understand for journalists.

An example of such tools is datawrapper.de, which allows to create various maps and graphs, and then design them based on personal or editorial criteria. There are also more advanced tools which provide interactive visualisations such as Tableau (which is very popular among well-known media organisations) and a comparatively newer tool called — Flourish.

There are also commercial tools which are used by companies, such as Power Bi.

The main criteria for selecting a tool for creating visualisations:

- Does the journalist have the skills to use it?
- How easy it is to learn?
- Does the tool present data in a useful simplified form so the audience will understand the complex data?
- Does the media website allow embedding from the selected tool? etc.

All these questions need to be answered before a decision is made. Data journalism involves absorbing data, but also the time for media work. This is very important to understand, especially for media outlets with a small staff.

Transformation of journalists into data journalists also requires coding skills, otherwise, the involvement of a coder on the journalist's team will be required as sometimes most basic tools do not provide exact visualisations which are needed in particular articles.

More information about other data tools is provided in the next part of this course.

## User-friendly tools — photographs

There are many tools which help to create interesting multimedia content, make the written text more interesting and keep the user on the website/channel for a longer time and cause them to return in the future.

Websites which focus only on simple text and add photos or video from time to time are fighting a losing battle for users. The user wants their interests fully satisfied immediately and media already has many tools to supply this need.

Today, photo tools are highly important for professional photographers as well as simple smartphone owners who may be able to have the same starting point, such when both took images during the same important event.

Today, if photos are taken with enough focus on the event and are interesting to an editorial staff, photos taken with a smartphone can even be chosen over photos taken with a professional camera!

Although there are many photo editing applications available for professional cameras it takes time to transfer them to a desktop and change the format, whereas mobile phones have built in applications for this purpose already available to make such changes.

Here are some applications which allow simple editing:

- Camera +2
- Magic Hour
- Easy Release
- Google PhotoScan
- Adobe Lightroom CC
- PicLab app
- FotoJet app
- JuxtaposeJS
- Enlight

# User-friendly tools — audio and video content

Video has now become as popular as photos, and this trend can be seen from apps and websites which in their beginning were designed for photos, but over time presented more and more videos as content.

As Forbes stated in its Video Marketing Trends 2018, by 2021 'a million minutes (17,000 hours) of video content will cross global IP networks every single second'.

An average user already spends 88% more time on websites with video. Video is important for media now and will increase in value in the near future. This requires faster editing and preparation of interesting video content.

At the same time, this makes video an inevitable part of journalism skills.

There are many tools that are a help to work on video:

- Kate's Video Toolkit
- Avidemux
- Lightworks
- Shotcut
- Kinomatic
- Open Camera
- ObscuraCam app

## Data visualisations

Data visualisations or presenting data in a form that is easy to understand and analyse is a very important part of any data journalism process. With this comes the need to understand that even selection of colours is a highly important element that will influence the job of a journalist, who wants their work to be as presentable as possible.

Here are several tools that help with data visualisations:

- Coolor.co
- Colorbrewer2.org
- Timeline tool from Knight Lab
- Numbeo
- Salary Check from the WageIndicator Foundation

The development of visualisation skills is as important as coding skills for media outlets. More open data is available each year and Big Data is becoming an increasingly popular issue worldwide.

Data journalism as a specialisation is already being taught in universities, which means that media which had an earlier start using a different approach must catch up with modern processes.

Coding languages and tools, such as Python and R are the most used. Designers, who both produce still images and infographics with Tableau, Flourish, etc., are needed as well.

Many journalists switch their activities to this field and become popular as freelancers who work with media outlets lacking in such trained people. Factcheckers, investigative journalists, economics writers, business analysists and others need new tools to understand the world situation and provide a clear representation to users.

At the same time, not only data, but other forms of interactive relationships are created in today's media. This is now available due to tools, which allow not only giving information to the user, but also using his/her interests in adding data to the story.

Tests and quizzes placed inside articles are among such tools. There are plenty of free quiz creators online, which provide a multiple-choice testing opportunity with the possibility to add images and other elements.

Many other tools are recommended by Pointer Institute, which calls itself 'an inspirational place but also a practical one, connecting the varied crafts of journalism to its higher mission and purpose'. Please check its yearly tool review.

All multimedia, which is added to a story should be an irresistible part of it, by telling part of the story and adding an interesting approach to it. The main choice between tools should be based on the philosophy: 'use tools which will help tell the story from all sides'.

Otherwise, usage of a multimedia tool is not needed. The tool itself is not a story, but a form to keep the user on the page for a longer time, which gives the satisfaction of users choosing your media and your story from among others.

# 3. Disinformation in media

*Dr Adam Lelonek*

## Evolution of the role of media and journalists within the national information spaces

### Balance in media

The balance of the media markets, as well as in the national media themselves are becoming more and more theoretical concepts.

In each state there are various media centres, presenting different points of view in an ideological context, which more or less sympathise with some political views or groupings. This is reflected not only in the linguistic or rhetorical layer, but also in the selection of commentators, experts, co-workers, ownership structure and donors, and also in advertising contracts.

In this way, we are dealing with media sympathising with the government side, the opposition, radical representatives and/or anti-system forces, as well as niche media and the so-called alternative media. In each of the cases, their ranges are not constant, being invariably dependent on current socio-political events and the current assessment of recipients of information.

Despite the still high popularity of television, the role and importance of traditional media is decreasing in favour of online media. The growing share of social media to learn about the world connects the classic divisions through political sympathies to the past. This is because not only social networking sites, but also other service providers like Google use algorithms based on previous choices of network users.

The result is that even in the Google Play Newsstand, the user receives not a section of the most important information, but selected from a specific key content, determined by algorithms based on the previous choices.

Such a situation means that new groups of users, having completely different habits when using information, receiving a low-balanced picture of the world, often guided by different criteria than political and ideological issues, including those that they function outside the mainstream discourse.

Older recipients (50+) accustomed to traditional media have their habits that are not adapted to changing technological and information conditions. Therefore, like young people, they are in groups that are particularly vulnerable to information threats, but with different vulnerabilities.

At the same time, journalists themselves take an active part in political disputes, not hiding their political sympathies, which causes the balance in media to be shaky in an exogenous manner (behaviour of information recipients, technological changes, impact on the market from investors, owners, state, or international entities) and endogenous (work attitude of journalists themselves, observance of standards and journalist ethics, and own decisions and ambitions).

The main problem of the media and the journalistic environment is that variable readers' preferences and internal political disputes at national levels have a growing influence on the media's action vectors. Objectivity, ethics and journalistic standards are the victims, and journalists themselves can follow them to become potential sources of disinformation.

### Foreign influence in the sphere of information

The identification of foreign influence in the national information space ceases to be the exclusive domain of special services. As shown by the experience of recent years, civil society, especially non-governmental organisations and the media play an increasingly important role. In the case of the latter, it is not only about investigative work, reportage or cooperation on the analytical section with NGOs. The attitude of the media employees themselves towards recipients of the information or the surrounding reality, but also their professionalism will be important.

Having practical experience, including, for example, working with information, but also general knowledge of other, foreign information spaces is also an element expanding the perspective and understanding of certain mechanisms. Knowledge of the eastern specifics, especially of Russia, may be crucial in many respects, with respect to the sphere of information risks. They give a context without which many elements may go unnoticed. Knowledge, experience and an interdisciplinary approach give tangible results and allow the identification of a wide range of information threats, in particular external interferences.

There is also the opposite pole, associated with the danger of undermining counteraction or identification activities in the media.

There are journalists, especially those politically involved, who raise issues of foreign influence or influence, making unsubstantiated accusations against politicians or people active in socio-political life. Such actions bring more harm than benefits and in fact they blur the information threats issues, politicising them.

In the majority of societies, we still have a low awareness of information security. When the media lacks specific data and the substantive analyses related to it, and speculations and accusations arise, it causes the safety issues to flutter and makes it easier for other entities to continue hostile information activities. The actions of even individual representatives of the media can affect the perception of the work of the entire journalistic milieu and lower the level of trust in it.

Information operations are one of the elements of information interactions. They can be implemented in both an indirect and direct way. The first ones include:

- Financing scholarship programmes, grants, scientific research programmes and other forms of financial support (publishing books, assistance in establishing contacts in relevant industries, etc.), including for journalists;
- Support for the student, expert, industry exchanges or the taking of patrons;
- Organisation of conferences, symposia, celebrations, festivals or other conventions or meetings;
- Impact through private and business structures (corporations, foundations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, sports, charities, scientific and other);
- Selection and assistance in the career of promising or unpromising journalists, politicians or experts, and using them in the future to influence the information space, public opinion and the decision-making process in a given country.

Direct impacts, in turn, include:

- Establishing, taking over or destroying analytical centres, think-tanks and similar research and development initiatives that may actively influence civil society and the directions of socio-political discourse in a given country;
- Creating, taking over, or destroying media at local, regional and state level;
- Establishing, taking over or destroying social organisations, movements and initiatives, political parties or economic organisations (e.g. cooperatives) at the local, regional and national level;
- Using illegal methods, such as: bribery, intimidation, blackmail, threat, persecution, physical attacks, devastation, obstruction, and other legal and administrative obstacles;
- Discrimination of activists, journalists, groups, communities, political parties, centres or media to harm or influence their associates, sponsors, supervisors, or supporters;
- Dissemination of false or manipulated information in whole or in part, directed at influencing emotions, social moods, patriotic feelings, painful issues from a historical or political point of view through their own and friendly mass media.

The purpose of exerting an external influence on the information space is, among others, influencing the decision-making processes, including their disruption, by destabilising the socio-political situation, introducing or strengthening substitute topics, increasing social polarisation, limiting the possibilities of specific politicians, units, or centres to carry out the activities that jeopardise the interests of a given entity, and others.

## New role of quasi- and alternative media

Building a conflict between the mainstream media and the image of reality they create seems to be the essence of alternative media.

According to the first, in the mainstream there is no place for other evaluations, arguments or worldviews than generally accepted, which does not represent all environments. Hence, and building the message to groups that are ignored or allegedly marginalised in the mainstream, but also newly created groups, e.g. in external or internal information or psychological activities.

In the Polish case, niche alternative portals for many months tried to arouse hatred towards Ukrainian citizens and the Ukrainian state, fearing Ukrainian 'fascism' and nationalism, and in the context of the growing number of Ukrainian workers and students in Poland, potential subversive activities, such as spreading narratives on 'taking away jobs' or 'stopping a salary increase' for Polish workers.

Researchers consider alternative media to be one of the elements of the so-called 'new media', i.e. more strongly associated with technological progress. However, they are more involved than both the new media or traditional media, they use new technologies to undermine generally accepted patterns and norms in social and political life.

In other words, there is not only a different choice for the recipient of information, but also a wider cognitive package which includes undermining the current state of affairs in the practical or theoretical sphere (conspiracy theories, anti-vaccine movements, accusing governments of acting against citizens, and others). They build additional structures or communities around themselves, simulating activities or realities operating in the virtual and real world.

Quasi-media can be in turn considered on two levels: as aggregators of information or objects simulating the work of real media, sometimes masquerading as known titles.

One of the distinguishing features that are easy to verify is often the lack of authors, ownership structure and information about the national or business affiliation of a given entity. They are based on a low awareness of Internet users or lack of their perceptiveness, and the emotional impact that is addressing a specifically contoured message to a specific group of recipients with given views or preferences will be the most important.

They rarely build their authorities or permanent commentators, preferring fully anonymous activities. They most often use sensation, rumours, unsubstantiated speculation and manipulation — to catch the attention of the internauts and increase their ranges or simply — misinformation and false information, including modified photos or illustrating the event data with photos from other places. Both methods can be part of the wider context of exerting psychological influence, aimed at influencing specific groups of recipients.

Both types of entities presenting dubious content may have a 'standby period', and there is no rule as to how long it can last — sometimes a few weeks, months, or even years. During this time, they try not to reveal their true preferences or goals, but simulate reliability and objectivity, although one cannotice in their work a disturbance of information balance through disproportion in the selection of commentators or quotes or frequent references or reprints straight from other, profiled sources, without a wider context — for example, referring only to quotes from Russian sources on the events in Ukraine, omitting Ukrainian sources, most often boils down to building a negative image of Ukraine and a positive of Russia.

One of the most important goals for some of the websites is to reach the widest possible audience. Hence, through a series of information activities, such as supporting government or the opposition, they try to make themselves credible. Despite the fact that quasi-media or alternative media rarely create or build the image of their own 'journalists' or commentators, it does not mean that such actions do not take place, especially on highly idealised right-wing or left-wing websites.

Often, however, they support specific people in public life with radical views. From the point of view of a journalist working in local, mainstream, and international media, particular care should be taken not to refer to such sources or their commentators and authors in their publications, because such activities legitimise them.

It should be taken into account at the same time that mainstream media (e.g. public media in Russia, Azerbaijan, but also in the United Kingdom, such as *The Sun*) can play the same role as alternative media.

At the same time, new media, including niche media, can act as a counterweight to propagandistic alternative, private and government media — which actually happens in almost all of the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods.

## Contemporary information threats

Information threats are challenges not only for individual users of networks, professional groups or state institutions. Their goal is not only to: antagonise societies and states, undermine the legal system, democracy and its procedures, build a sense of threat, attack systems of values, or to destabilise the public, regional, or even global order.

In other words, they are processes aimed at destroying the foundations on which the legal and institutional order is built, but also destroying the social fabric, including disrupting the image, and even the cognitive processes related to the perception of the world and current events or interpersonal relationships.

Information threats themselves can b e considered on several levels:

a) internal and external;

b) coming from public, non-state entities (e.g. terrorist groups) or commercial entities;

c) addressed to a domestic or foreign audience;

d) related to the implementation of political, military, or economic objectives.

Each of the planes can be associated with one another. Domestic entities can use similar methods and tools as external information aggressors ('infoaggressors') known from Russian troll factories. Such an example may be the use of bots or targeting of social media users by politicians during election campaigns. In addition, domestic entities may be inspired from abroad or, while pursuing their goals, may act unknowingly in favour of external entities.

The notions of an influence agent and a 'useful idiot' can also be recorded here — they are used more and more often in political discourse. In this case, however, they should be considered without political or ideological connotations, because they have a functional character from the research point of view.

The term useful idiot will be understood in literature as a person passively accepting or believing in propaganda messages or pursuing the actual goals of propagandists with their actions. In turn, an influence agent is a person who realises in a conscious way someone's interests, for example a foreign country. It is the awareness of our actions that distinguishes these two terms.

There are legal problems with the public use of the latter, as defining people without proof of receiving a fee or other form of remuneration in the same way, or on the contrary — acting with blackmail from a foreign state or simply for emotional or ideological reasons, may lead to politicise the issue of information threats or their blurring. They are not easy to determine and the identification activities themselves, including investigative ones, can be used to further destabilise the information space.

Internal and external actions coming from state entities constitute the greatest threat from the point of view of the security of national information spaces. All the more so because state institutions are used around them, as are also private companies and the media.

In addition to information threats, there are other dangerous trends. Commercial entities may use various marketing techniques, including the mechanisms of influence or manipulation to achieve their goals. There is a conventional boundary between what is impact and what is manipulation. If the activities are neutral or positive for the recipient — we are dealing with the recipient, and if the negative — with manipulation. The problem is that commercial activities, including marketing, are confused with disinformation.

The latter is understood as an information threat, which in turn is related to issues of national security or cyber security. The difference between these two phenomena results from who performs actions and for what purpose. Disinformation or manipulation can be used to influence society in order to change its thinking and behaviour in line with the actions of the subject. At the same time, however, activities in the economic sphere serve to maximise profits or politics.

At the international level, there is a threat to the security of the country. Here, moreover, there is a more linguistic and definitional problem. Not everything is misinformation in the sense of security, while in the public discourse both these threads are confused and mixed together. So, we have different phenomena that use similar mechanisms called in the same way.

In the vast majority of countries there is a low level of awareness, but also the state of knowledge of societies about information threats, their dynamics, evolution and nature, as well as radical changes related to a technological society and the resulting changes in the habits of using and consuming information. Taking this into consideration, journalists and the media are on the first line of the 'information front'.

Here their social role is associated with the possibility of raising the level of awareness of threats and education of the society. Individual competences and the evaluation of an editorial office or an individual journalist are often the first and often the last 'screen' through which information is filtered before reaching a broad audience, regardless of whether it is local, national or international.

In many cases, the use of ethics and journalistic standards is quite sufficient for the dissemination of disinformation, fake news, or manipulation. However, not all media are guided by ethics and standards in everyday work. It is much harder to avoid narrating or getting into the mainstream narrative.

It is also worth emphasising that the mere appearance of narratives and their spreading is the result of the growing role of identity media, highly ideolo

gised, which thus influence their audiences. What's more, neutral and correct press releases can also be used by hostile entities to achieve their goals and strengthen their messages.

The hierarchy of information threats depends on the context. It is not possible to explicitly introduce a universal model, that, for example, armed information is superior to narratives, and they in turn override disinformation or manipulation. The context can be, for example, not only the amount of action, but also the quality. They are also adapted to the given information space.

This does not mean, however, that the sudden distribution of a large amount of fake news will not be effective from the point of view of the information effect, even though it is not the main tool. This can be seen in the escalation of the number of conspiracy theories regarding the assassination of Sergey Skripal, Brexit, building a negative image of migrants, or strengthening the Eurosceptic tendencies.

Methods and tools used in conducting information activities:

a) manipulation of information;

b) propaganda;

c) disinformation;

d) false information;

e) fake accounts and profiles;

f) trolls;

g) bots and accounts with different levels of automation;

h) information targeting.

In addition to the aforementioned methods and tools, there are active actions in the form of: hacker attacks, physical attacks, and those that occur in communication, such as threats, intimidation, bribery, and others.

The tools used to carry out information activities are adapted to the identified vulnerabilities of the groups to which they are directed.

Not only Russia carries out activities related to interference in the information spaces of other countries. Its activities, however, are unprecedented in scale and pose the greatest threat to the West.

# Information threats: selected concepts and terminology

Despite the fact that the issue of information threats, especially disinformation, is so important and places so much in the mainstream, many of the following terms do not have any coherent, and even easily available definitions.

Depending on the industry, there is a narrow understanding of individual issues. It leads to focusing on selected aspects of a given phenomenon, and thus the steps to counteract it will differ depending on its perception. Below, there is a set of example definitions of hazards arranged from the widest to the narrowest.

## Information warfare

Information warfare (IW) is defined as 'actions taken to achieve an information advantage by influencing the information of the opponent, processes based on information processing, information systems and computer networks, while protecting their own information, processes based on information processing, information systems and computer networks'.[1]

IW is a total endeavour, in which civilians may be knowingly or unknowingly functioning as proxies on behalf of a government.

For example, the Russian concept of IW describes preemptive operations to achieve political goals and to control the information space, deploying all elements of society to include patriotic hacker groups and private citizens.

The Chinese theory of IW is integrated into 'the People's War' concept and involves the use of information technologies by hundreds of millions of people in order to influence an adversary's policymakers, and to gain an advantage against an asymmetric threat.

Authoritarian regimes and their control over information infrastructure facilitate the use of a wide range of actors and techniques. These regimes may compel ordinary citizens to act as agents of information warfare with financial rewards, by appealing to a sense of patriotism, or through threats and coercion.

Information warfare may be a prelude to an armed conflict, a preparation of the battlefield preceding the deployment of forces. Information operations set the conditions in theatre to gain support of locals, 'winning the hearts and minds' to increase the odds of a successful campaign. Alternatively, IW may be an end in and of itself, the process through which nations gain competitive advantages over one another without the use of force.

## Arming information

During the external installation of narrative, disinformation or propaganda, we deal with 'arming information', which is used to achieve specific goals and influence society. The information itself is neutral. Disruption of perception or assessment, affecting emotions, actions or behaviour directed at national or international opinion leaders, other entities, or environments at the level of the country, region, or beyond are hostile activities that violate the security of the information space.

The key to the success of using an information weapon is the lack of awareness of the attacked subject about the actions of the aggressor, and the external identification of imposed attitudes, views, opinions or emotions as their own.

## Information operations

'Information operations is the employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to affect or defend information and information systems, and to influence decision-making'.[2]

[1] The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction, CJCSI S-3210.01, 02 January 1996

[2] Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, Field Manual No. 3-13, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 28 November 2003

In American military doctrine, informational operations consist of five elements:

1. Computer network operations (CNO), which include computer network attack, computer network defence, and computer network exploitation;
2. Psychological operations (PSYOP);
3. Electronic warfare (EW);
4. Operations security (OPSEC);
5. Military deception (MILDEC).

One of them is particularly worth paying attention to — psychological operations (PSYOP). The Department of Defence defines them in the following way: 'planned political, economic, military, and ideological activities directed towards foreign countries, organisations, and individuals in order to create emotions, attitudes, understanding, beliefs, and behaviour favourable to the achievement of United States and military objectives.'

The entire thematic area related to information operations is the domain of military structures. This does not mean, of course, that it forces journalists to change their professional profile — it shows that media, dealing with the subject of information threats, deal with one of the elements of broader processes, which is related to security, foreign policy, and international relations.

The journalists themselves, in turn, have their practical knowledge and experience, which is also important for understanding certain processes in society and the possibilities of communicating with them. Without developing dialogue and cooperation on the state–civil society line (including media) there will be a risk that both sides will be able to sabotage their actions completely unconsciously, focusing on their areas and perception of perception of the problem.

## Propaganda

Propaganda includes activities aimed at influencing views, moods, actions, attitudes and habits with the use of mass media, a set of claims, science or other resources. They take into account the conscious use of manipulation and lies, including using graphic or audio-visual elements. The goal is to convince people (actions, policies, subjects, ideologies, legitimacy or equity) or, on the contrary, to evoke negative emotions and associations. Government, non-governmental and private entities can be responsible for it.

Examples:

1. Russia is building the most powerful fighter or tank in the world, while the Western counterparts perform poorly. Russia is a military power whose technological and military capability outstrip the military potential of NATO;
2. During the Second World War, the Soviet Union freed the territories occupied by the Third Reich from fascism (the wider context of the subsequent enslavement is omitted).

## Disinformation

Disinformation is the intentional falsification or presentation of incomplete or misleading information, usually based on facts but carefully selected. It is referred to as 'perception management'. In other words, it is a set of actions aimed at confirming or denying information, directed to the national or foreign auditorium, directed at influencing emotions, motives and objective reasoning.

Disinformation becomes the same element of activity in the area of psychological interactions; the more so, because it is synchronised with the other activities of the information aggressor. With an appropriate level of coordination, you can talk about disinformation campaigns.

Examples:

1. Europe cannot completely eliminate Russian gas from the Polish market, and American LNG will be much more expensive than the Russian product, so it should be logical for Europe to get along with Russia and not work on the diversification of suppliers;

2. Russia's release of many interpretations and explanations of the shooting down of the Malaysia Airlines 17 plane over the Donbas in 2014, encumbering the Ukrainian side, using various premises, including official announcements, that there were no Russian soldiers and military equipment in the occupied territories.

## Narrations

Narration is an element of the subjective interpretation of the worldview, embedded in the experience and perception of the individual, groups or community. It is inscribed in a political, cultural, historical, emotional, economic and even current context. It is the equivalent of a specific model of world perception or an interpretation of facts.

Properly used, it serves to relativize facts, science, values, but also to reverse the sense of concepts, manipulation, or psychological influence. In other words, it affects the perception of reality, fitting into the personal tastes, preferences or dislikes of an individual or a group of recipients.

Narrations do not have to be imposed externally, but they can be an emanation of the state of mind and perception of elites or their parts, social groups, or inhabitants of a given region. The political elite themselves may not be aware that by activating or referring to certain narratives, they facilitate the activities of external entities by being in line with their goals.

Launching or copying a narrative cannot only fulfil the goals of external entities, but also be used for the needs of domestic entities. There may also be situations in which the use of a given narrative causes only informational chaos not directly fulfilling specific goals. It implements an interpretation of masking one's own goals, while weakening the opponent and interfering with the very essence of democratic systems, institutions or public order, playing or using their weaknesses.

Examples:

1. Anti-European narrative: the EU is in crisis; the smaller, weaker countries in the EU have no voice or are used or have different interests than Brussels and Berlin; European integration threatens European countries, membership costs outweigh the profits;

2. Anti-American narrative: the US conducts aggressive international policy, not respecting the law and using or attacking other states. The US imposes its will on Europe against its interests, Europe is not an ally but a US colony that follows Washington's orders. Washington is guilty of wars in the Middle East, Georgia, or Ukraine, and US policy led to a migration crisis in Europe.

## Fake news

Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow define fake news as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers". This definition is similar to those put forward by journalists, who argue that fake news consists of "deliberately constructed lies, in the form of news articles, meant to mislead the public". This fits the definition of disinformation, as it is the manipulation of information with the purpose to mislead and deceive. Misinformation should however also be included in the definition of fake news. When unwittingly repeated, disinformation becomes misinformation. Even though not deliberate, misinformation can equally affect the audience regardless of the intention behind it. Hence, we define fake news as the dissemination of false information via media channels (print, broadcast, online). This can be deliberate (disinformation), but can also be the result of an honest mistake or negligence (misinformation)'.[3]

Many international and national institutions still perceive information risks mistakenly. Particularly worrying is the fact that the European Commission equates disinformation with the spread of fake news.

[3] Jente Althuis, Leonie Haiden Fake News. A Roadmap, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Riga, January 2018, ISBN 978-9934-564-23-9, https://www.stratcomcoe.org/fake-news-roadmap

# Vulnerabilities to information hazards

## Vulnerability

It is understood as a mistake, a weakness or imperfection in the context of a system or individual. The occurrence of vulnerability results in a lack of resistance to any threat. Research on vulnerabilities is developed mainly in the military area, but they also have a bearing on information security issues. In this context, our views and values are susceptible. That's what they manipulate with disinformation. At the same time, the lack of knowledge and skills of the recipients of information is used. The goals of such activities may vary depending on the entity that conducts such activities towards a given society, entities, or groups.

While understanding the essence of vulnerability, it will be important to simplify the process of planning information campaigns with the use of information. The logical sequence of the operation preparation process will look more or less like this:

1. Setting a task through which the goal will be achieved;
2. Identification of the target group — defining the weakest or most-sensitive element of a given group;
3. Identification of the vulnerability of the target group;
4. Adaptation of information to the target group;
5. Selection of dissemination channels;
6. Information campaign or action;
7. Evaluation: goal achieved / not achieved.

## Information hygiene

Progressive technological development and growing access to the Internet do not go hand in hand with the development of habits and the ability to use information by users. This also applies to journalists. Quite often, there were situations when even media employees with many years of experience in the industry provided false information or simply disinformed, even without being aware of it. This shows that work with source verification or fact-checking is often a challenge for journalists themselves.

Information hygiene should be understood as a process of conscious choice and the use of sources, including the ability to assess their credibility. It is also the ability to think critically, which may consist of not drawing knowledge about the world exclusively from niche media or those profiled politically or ideologically, including verifying the so-called 'sensational information' in at least three major news agencies or large media. In the next step, it also includes not transferring further in the social media, information from sources that do not have the basic information about themselves, who the owner is, where the portal is registered, provided by anonymous authors.

Hygiene of work with information is connected with the concept of media education which shapes knowledge, habits and skills for full-fledged participation in contemporary media reality. What is more, we still have digital education that teaches how to use the new technologies.

## Cognitive errors

Information threats result not only from advanced external actions. Every human being has systemic errors in his perception, assessment of a situation or thinking, remaining in the subconscious sphere, which often leads to making unreasonable decisions, depending on the manner in which the given information is presented.

This shows that, irrespective of activities aimed at raising the level of knowledge of developing educational projects in the information-only sphere, it is impossible to fully cover the area. Information threats, as has already been mentioned, are not the domain of one field of knowledge or specialisation — they penetrate many of them. This is perfectly exemplified by cognitive errors that are the domain of psychology.

They are an inseparable element of human thinking. They disturb our acceptance and analysis of information, thus influencing interpretation, and also our image and assessment of reality, facts or events. The assessments, in turn, have their impact on decisions, for example: those concerning participation in elections, political involvement, but also about the subject matter of one's own journalism or presenting some stands in their articles as the 'only ones' in the case of the profession of journalist.

There are a total of over 100 cognitive errors. From the point of view of threats related to disinformation, it is worth mentioning 10:

1. Bias blind spot — the tendency not to compensate for one's own cognitive biases. (This is why nobody thinks they are biased);
2. Third-person effect — Belief that mass communicated media messages have a greater effect on others than on themselves. (This is why propaganda is so effective. It does not affect me!);
3. Authority bias — The tendency to attribute greater accuracy to the opinion of an authority figure (unrelated to its content) and be more influenced by that opinion. (This is why Trump's supporters believe everything he says no matter what);
4. Declinism — The belief that a society or institution is tending towards decline. Particularly, it is the predisposition to view the past favourably and future negatively. (This is why 'Make America Great Again' was such an effective message);
5. Confirmation bias — the tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions. (This is why people click on fake news that reinforces their views);
6. Bandwagon effect — The tendency to believe things because many other people believe the same. (This is why people believe fake news shared by their friends);
7. Availability cascade — A self-reinforcing process in which a collective belief gains more and more plausibility through its increasing repetition in public discourse. (This is why fake news become true, e.g. Hillary Clinton is a murderer);
8. Continued influence effect — The tendency to believe previously learned misinformation even after it has been corrected. (This is why Hillary's 'indictment' had such a big effect even after Comey dropped charges);
9. Hostile media effect — the tendency to perceive news coverage as biased against your position on an issue. (This is why millions of Trump voters do not trust the mainstream media);
10. Backfire effect — The urge to do the opposite of what someone wants you to do out of a need to resist a perceived attempt to constrain your freedom of choice. (This is why the media ganging up on Trump completely backfired).

## Information bubble

The information bubble, also known as the filter bubble, is the result of technological development and the simultaneous occurrence of cognitive errors, lack of knowledge about information hygiene and also algorithms used by the largest Internet platforms, including social media and search engines. It is a state in which almost every recipient of information functions, because it refers not only to Internet users. We obtain information from various sources, including the information obtained verbally or from friends or family.

People nowadays receive more information within a month than their ancestors did several hundred years ago throughout their entire lifetime. The information noise results in the tendency to economise thinking, or use a kind of filtering information with cognitive errors, is deepening. Closing up in information bubbles is another effect. In short, we welcome the information that suits us best.

At the same time, the algorithms mean that specific content is suggested or selected on the basis of our earlier choices. The result is that the same Internet user using the same portals, for example, during searching, receives a completely different set of results or is presented with completely different information, concerning the same topics. However, not applying, the rules related to information hygiene and using profiled media, we get a specific image of the world. At the subconscious level (cognitive biases), we perceive it as the objective one. It is also easy not to take into account the fact that a completely different message reaches other Internet users.

As a result, we are dealing with a very dangerous effect of which we ourselves are co-authors of. As more and more people, especially young people, use social media, not the traditional media, this effect is getting stronger and has more and more serious consequences. This is reflected in many contemporary social phenomena, such as the increasing polarisation.

In other words, the information bubble becomes at the same time a model of information consumption and source selection. In itself, it indicates the inability to identify inconsistencies or falsifications in the cognitive area. This makes the recipient of information, for example, treat narratives referring to emotions or simply misinforming as a factual description of reality.

There are no 'closed' bubbles — they overlap. A person can be in several different bubbles at the same time, without noticing the contradictions between them. Therefore, for example, someone can be very pro-European and pro-American, but at the same time believe that Jews are trying to take control of the world.

The categories of bubbles associated with conspiracy theories appear to be the largest in scale and the most difficult to counteract, mainly due to the specificity of the recipients whose habits in using information and their analysis are already well-established.

Information bubbles will be a complex mechanism, which translates into reality perception and assessment, but also having a bearing on political decisions. They form closed cognitive realities that are not reached by all facts, or they are so distorted or incomplete so much that they become ideal ecosystems for propaganda and disinformation.

Information bubbles and social security issues are not only about information security, but also about socio-political issues. However, they can be reduced, for example by verifying and extending the sources on the basis of which we base our views and expand knowledge about the world with other, reliable sources. One would have to break out of their thought patterns. From the psychological point of view, this is impossible. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt the method of small steps, i.e. expanding information bubbles, not destroying them.

## Politicisation of media landscape

The media policy is associated with the above-mentioned processes. It can also be said that it is a direct result, in a way the sum of all of the above elements. From the point of view of the threat of disinformation, this is of fundamental importance. It is very easy to influence recipients in an environment in which politics or ideology prevails over standards, work ethics or objectivity. All the more so because it entails a social polarisation, which only strengthens the divisions, creates new conflicts, and thus opens new ground to hostile actions.

Information bubbles function in correlation with something that we can define as worldview bubbles. In the first place, people reach for information that is familiar and close to them. Thus, recipients of information select the media they use, using the key of their own views. The media, in turn, also work for readers. So, we have to deal with two-way closing of information bubbles and strengthening the processes of politicising the media market, which is after all based on the market model.

We also often have a situation in which the media recipients themselves do not have a broader awareness of the profiles, connections, or political and ideological preferences of the titles concerned.

Objectivity and reliability are not synonymous. Being honest does not automatically mean being objective, and vice versa. Reliability understood as quality, observance of standards and ethics, is not synonymous with objectivity. Journalists can refer to some values (e.g. free market or conservative ones), which does not automatically mean that they are not reliable.

It is a serious challenge at the cognitive level, giving rise to many problems in the perception of the contemporary role of journalists and the media. In the era of the growing popularity of identity media (the next lesson will include more about it) and the low awareness of information threats and information hygiene, many media resort to attacking competition, for better matching or acquiring new customers. Such activities not only generate information chaos at the same time, but can also result in hostile actions aimed at a given national information space.

# Information threats and the work of journalists

## Dynamics of the environment and the information ecosystem

Activities in the area of an information war are carried out in the network and beyond. Not just the information itself, but also the context or the way it is presented, can trigger specific reactions in different recipients. Despite the increasing occurrence of disinformation in the media space and in public discourse, the social awareness of information threats and knowledge about them still remain at a low level.

There are many elements that contribute to this state of affairs. One of these is the policy of the states themselves and the way they treat security issues as their exclusive domain. This entails consequences in the form of a lack of cooperation with civil society, including the media. There are of course exceptions, like the Scandinavian countries, the Baltic States and the Czech Republic.

The low awareness in the area of information security on the part of the decision-makers themselves and the political elite is another issue. The result is that, counteracting the information war boils down to the issue of fighting fake news for many of them, which in no way solves anything, and even causes a lot of damage.

The main problem of journalists themselves is the fact that they do not always adequately attempt to explain, analyse or counteract information threats when using various disinformation interpretations. At the same time, contrary to currently available information, journalists working with many topics, especially in the field of international relations, can become more susceptible to disinformation.

At the same time, the transformation of the role of the media can be observed. Instead of informing, they create their own reality increasingly often. The concept functioning in the Polish discourse — 'identity media' is inseparably connected with this. They are not only profiled ideologically, but as their goal they perceive the shaping of the recipient's identity and the influencing of his views. In turn, the journalists themselves take on the role of analysts or experts, without the proper preparation.

## Standards and work ethics in the context of market mechanisms and information interactions

Problems faced by journalists today are not just the low level of earnings, the growing dynamics of events, and the pursuit of 'clickthroughs', but also social media algorithms or changing user habits that affect the distribution of online content. Less and less time or professional stimulation to verify sources causes the rapid spread of false, manipulated or misinformation messages.

This also means that the publication is departing from substantive publications, and comments and journalism start dominating, which is in fact only an opinion, not an analysis. In practical terms, therefore, we are increasingly dealing with the 'journalism of opinion' instead of 'fact journalism'.

Another trend is tabloidization — the increasingly frequent use of sensational headers, and also manipulation of the message to attract the reader.

In addition to the algorithms, a cybernetic component comes into existence, like search engine optimisation (SEO) of websites. It affects not only the positioning of websites, but also affects the work of journalists who have to adapt their publications and describe them for specific guidelines.

One cannot forget about the structure of media management as well as managerial or managerial skills, but also substantive. In this episode, it is only in practice that the journalist and the editors or superiors of his texts are affected.

The information war on a growing scale and new methods requires a redefinition of not only the journalist's role and changes in the editorial approach to the issue of fact-checking, verification of sources, but also information security, which must be apolitical, interdisciplinary and perceived more broadly than through a professional perspective.

An open question asks how necessary it is to change the methods of preparation, formation and training of media employees, and how much new positions are needed, such as the person responsible for issues related to information security or journalists with analytical experience (journalist-analyst as a response to a journalist-propagandist).

## Disinformation coming from the states themselves

Taking into account the information contained in Course No 2, it should be remembered that, for activities related to information in the field of politics, it is necessary to look more broadly and on multiple levels.

Disinformation or manipulation can be used to influence society in order to change its thinking and behaviour in line with the actions of the subject. At the same time, however, activities in the economic sphere (domestic and international commercial entities) serve to maximise profits or political (in this case, only at the national level, for example, maintaining or coming to power by a political party).

At the international level, there is a threat to the security of the country. Here, moreover, there is a more linguistic and definitional problem. Not everything is misinformation in the sense of security, while in the public discourse both these threads are confused and mixed together. So, we have different phenomena that use similar mechanisms called in the same way.

For disinformation in the context of security, non-democratic countries will first of all be affected. In democratic countries, we most often deal with activities that could be described as manipulation or propaganda, used both by the power camp and by the opposition, to pursue their own political goals. We also deal with units, organisations, structures or even political parties that duplicate external disinformation, also due to the implementation of their interests at the domestic level. It is not uncommon to find manipulation and the lack of reliable journalism at the local level, where the media are more dependent on local business–political connections.

The high level of social polarisation, the functioning of the aforementioned information bubbles and the increased level of ideologisation of social and political life visible in many countries mean that issues of national security, including information security, become a field for populists, businessmen and oligarchs or interest groups, and ultimately the subject of political games.

The use of information threats to internal political struggles, especially through radical forces, or even pro-Russian or anti-European forces, is in fact another element of information and psychological operations carried out against the West. This is to create information chaos and further internal destabilisation of states, potentially including implementation and other objectives, coinciding with the foreign policy of the superpower supporting a given politician or political grouping. It's enough to mention such politicians as Marine Le Pen, Nigel Farage or the former adviser of Donald Trump, Steve Bannon, who promises to destroy the European Union from the inside.

It is necessary to develop an apolitical compromise, related to issues of national security, including in particular information security. In turn, the role of the media in this context should be observing standards and journalistic ethics in the performance of their work, including cooperation with non-governmental organisations such as watchdogs and academic and non-governmental environments, and reliable information about the activities of political authorities and parties at national level and local.

# Information security and cyber security

## The role of cyber security and cyberthreat awareness when working with information

As has already been mentioned many times, technological progress does not go hand in hand with adapting to new conditions in society. Journalism is no different in this respect from other professions. This situation is not new at all and it is natural at moments of technological jumps (the invention of printing, functioning of the Internet, etc.), changes take place faster than people adapt to them.

Another feature characteristic of them is the fact that self-regulation and the principles developed by man are also not able to immediately refer to new phenomena. The lack of awareness of cyber threats not only increases the vulnerability to a number of new information threats, but can be used against journalists themselves.

Two aspects will be particularly important here:

1. Evolution of the information environment and its impact on media work;
2. The human factor.

In the first question, we shall be dealing not only with cyber-attacks. Particularly dangerous will be the closing of information bubbles, which leads to the use of a limited number of sources, but also a different effect of the unconscious of threats — the use of unreliable sources. It is also worth mentioning errors that may happen even as a result of rushing or a lack of attention, because the network can meet a number of websites or profiles impersonating large mainstream media (e.g. *The Guardian* or *The New York Times*, but also at national levels).

The Reporters Without Borders organisation has developed a guide for journalists whose recommendations are fully adaptable also in everyday journalistic work:

**Rule 1:** Have as 'clean' a digital ID as you can.

If you are intercepted or taken hostage, everything about you on the Internet or on your computer may be used against you and put others around you in danger. Do some cleaning, particularly on social media — remove photos and comments on politics or religion that could be damaging if taken out of context. Use high-level privacy settings in order to restrict what is publicly accessible about you, including your networks, stories and photos, and on your Facebook profile, consider replacing your real ID with a nickname.

Back up your hard disk and leave a copy at home. Reformat your computer and phone, i.e. permanently wipe all the data. If you do not know how to do this, install a new disk and leave the old one at home. Then all you need to do is install the operating system and all traces of your previous activity will have been removed.

**Rule 2:** On this clean slate, install your digital safety tools.

Carry out all recommended updates so that your operating system, browser and your anti-virus software (such as ClamXav, ClamTk, Avast, MSE, McAfee or Norton) are as secure as possible when you set off. Turn on the firewall. You are strongly advised not to carry out any updates once you are in the field because of the risk of inadvertently downloading malicious software or spyware.

Encrypt your entire hard disk, using FileVault for Mac, or TrueCrypt or BitLocker for Windows. This is essential to protect your data.

Using a password each time you log in will reduce the chances of opportunistic surveillance, but a more determined hacker will be able to take control of your disk and unlock it.

Lock your sessions and strengthen your passwords. Prefer longer 'pass phrases', combining random words that can be easily memorised but could not be easily deciphered by software. For example: 'spider in pyjamas knitting bandanas'.

NB: it is advisable to use different pass phrases for different applications. If necessary, use a password manager such as LastPass, 1Password or KeyPass.

Install a Virtual Private Network (VPN) that will encrypt your Internet connections. This means they cannot be read by anyone else, making them secure against interception or hacking and will allow you to access sites that are blocked or censored in the country you are visiting.

Install the Tor Browser, which will allow you to browse sensitive sites anonymously via an encrypted Internet connection. It can be used with VPN. Install cryptographic software and applications that you can use on assignment to encrypt emails, chat and SMS messages, making them indecipherable to anyone except the sender and recipient:

- Email: Thunderbird or Enigmail;
- Instant messaging: OTR, CryptoCat, Pidgin, Adium;
- Phone calls or online video: Firefox Hello or Qtox (more secure that Skype, whose data can theoretically be decrypted by Microsoft).

**Rule 3:** Know the risks and keep your activities separate.

Computer experts note that is has become almost impossible for non-professionals to secure their data permanently and it would be counter-productive to encrypt all one's communications, as this might in fact attract the attention of some authorities. A more pragmatic approach would be to find some private space to allow you to carry out sensitive activities discreetly. You will have to decide which data you particularly want to protect and take targeted and effective action. Ask yourself these questions:

- What are the critical data that I want to protect as a priority?
- Who would want to get their hands on them and why?
- What steps can I take to protect them?
- If this fails, what would be the consequences?
- If anything goes wrong, how can I delete the data and limit the damage.

# 4. Open-data and investigative journalism

*Blaž Zgaga*

## Introduction to investigative journalism

Investigative journalism is an important pillar of democracy. At its best, it provides the necessary checks and balances on the powerful, defends freedom of expression, promotes the fair rule of law and the principles of human rights.

It achieves this primarily through the disclosure of new, and oftentimes hidden information in the public interest; investigative journalism should strive to contribute to increase the knowledge of society, trigger public discussion, and embolden democratic institutions and citizens to implement changes and fight injustice.

To earn their status as society's independent observers, all media and journalists performing in this role should always act in an ethical, non-biased, and non-partisan manner and conduct their work with integrity; although, of course, this is not always the case.

Investigative journalism is carried out using an 'investigative method' or 'investigative process', as presented in this e-learning course. These are based on the highly successful work of 'European Investigative Collaborations' (EIC), an active network of some of Europe's most prominent media and best investigative journalists.

While countries, regions or societies differ in terms of their current levels of democracy and freedom, the principles and methods of investigative journalism should be considered universal. The aim in all cases is to advocate for increased professional standards everywhere and to improve local and regional political cultures.

Not all journalists or publications meet the requirements of traditional investigative work. Nevertheless, all journalists, and citizen journalists, can produce investigative journalism if they respect the standards of the profession, write in the public interest, and always remain open to follow where the evidence leads.

There is no universal definition of 'investigative journalism', for example, as there is for the traditional hard sciences. Investigative journalism is more of a craft, a collection of ever-accruing skills, developed over time with society and technology, bound by the common desire to expose injustice or lies.

Like any art or skill, in order to master investigative journalism, it is important to first follow the basic rules and methods and then to apply the experience gained through each new investigation. The goal is for a journalist to always push beyond what we will call their 'journalistic comfort zone' — the things they already know how to do — and to always look for ways to broaden this zone.

Although it is not a science, investigative journalism's fundamental professional rules should follow the scientific method, using facts, knowledge, and logical and evidence-based conclusions.

In this e-learning course module we will use the following definition of investigative journalism:

Investigative journalism is the long-term, systematic research carried out with the goal of revealing new information in the public interest that an influential actor wishes to conceal.

There are four main parts of this definition and all must be fulfilled for a journalistic story to be defined as being investigative journalism.

1. **Long-term and systematic**

   Journalistic investigations last anywhere from a few weeks or months to many years. During the process of collecting information, the journalist employs a systematic approach to following the scientific method and which can sometimes resemble a criminal or judicial investigation.

2. **New (exclusive) information**

   Investigative journalism should uncover facts which are unknown to the public or which contribute new information, knowledge, or views on known affairs. Investigations that provide new information or address under-reported topics can contribute to better and deeper knowledge of society.

3. **In the public interest**

   The concept of the public interest is essential to investigative journalism. Any works should consider the common concerns of citizens as stakeholders of societies. This translates to citizens having an entitlement to knowledge about the activities and affairs of local and national governments, as well as certain influential private actors such as companies that provide services.

   When properly applied, the idea of the 'public interest' is a significant legal defence in criminal prosecutions or libel suits against journalists. However, the 'public interest' should not be confused with the 'interests of the public' — which often describes little more than salacious gossip about the private lives of the rich and famous and that violates the right to privacy.

   Similarly, in their work, investigative journalists should endeavour to 'strike upwards' towards power, and not downwards towards weaker and vulnerable members of society.

4. **Which someone wishes to conceal**

   Investigative journalism can threaten the reputations, profits and power of important people through resulting judicial investigations or a significant public outcry. Any report that exposes the wrongdoing of a public or private person or institution carries a high risk that the subjects will attempt to prevent its publication.

   It is for this reason that some investigative journalists face significant pressures, legal troubles, threats and occasionally violence. Although the latter are rare, all combined can make investigations the most demanding branch of journalism.

In relation to the above mentioned four conditions which should be met for a journalistic investigation, there are a few examples of widespread practices which are sometimes referred to as investigative journalism, however, are actually not:

- **Leak journalism**: Journalists often receive classified or exclusive documents from secret sources which they then publish. Even if the information is accurate — and in the public interest — this fails the investigative journalism test because the report lacks the systematic, long-term research we describe above and is a normal part of investigative reporting.

  Furthermore, secret documents are the lifeblood of good journalism, however, aspiring journalists should be mindful that powerful sources — credible or otherwise — often exploit reporters by leaking documents to attack enemies, reap personal benefits, or to push a government agenda.

- **Salacious or 'tabloid-style' journalism**: Exposing the private lives of celebrities often creates a sensation but is rarely in the public interest or considered investigative journalism.

- **Copy and Paste journalism**: Journalists often summarise judicial indictments or other official reports and these can provide important details in the public interest. But rarely is the actual investigation performed by the journalist. Such reports can be excellent starting points for investigations, however, only if the journalist follows the leads to verify the information or add new sources.

- **'Safe' journalism**: Journalists find exclusive stories via tips from sources, documents or publicly available databases (open data). Many data-driven or human-interest stories create useful or interesting findings in the public interest. Similarly, there is great journalism that tells the stories of victims of injustice.

  But the goal of an investigation is to expose the perpetrators of wrongdoing. If there is no desire to prevent the publication of such a story by anyone, or the causes are vague or ignored, it is rarely investigative journalism, even if a significant amount of time has been spent on the topic in the public interest.

These four criteria should be met in a journalistic investigation:

1. long-term and systematic,
1. new information,
2. in the public interest,
3. interest to conceal.

There are usually two types of wrongdoing by 'a person of interest', which can be a topic of journalistic investigation:

- violations of legislation and regulations
- breaches of ethical/moral rules

Crimes and violations of regulations are activities against socially agreed rules of law and its disclosure is in the public interest. This ranges from bribery in an arm deal or major construction project, tax evasion to violations of environmental regulations as well as workers' rights in a local municipality or company.

Journalists should know these laws and regulations in detail and look for evidence of such violations during the investigation.

Investigations of breaches of ethical-moral rules of society are more demanding, as these are subject to different interpretations. The public interest criteria require that such a person of interest should be an 'absolute public person' or to a lesser extent a 'relatively public person', but not a private citizen, who enjoys full privacy protection by law.

For example, if a known politician has a strong anti-immigration public position, but employs an immigrant housemaid at his household because of the lower costs, this reveals their double ethical standards. Exposing tax avoidance by the wealthy, even if completely legal, can also cause a significant public outcry.

Investigative journalism is based on facts, information and logical conclusions which first of all contribute to the knowledge of an individual journalist. After an investigative story reaches a wider audience through publication, it contributes to common knowledge in any society.

Technological changes, accelerated media cycles, media ownership concentration and break-up of traditional business models of media in recent decades negatively affects investigative journalism globally, as well as in the European Union and USA which have longest tradition and successes in this field.

Pressures and violence against journalists in transitional and autocratic countries make this branch of journalism even more challenging.

Every investigative journalist is valuable in any society because of his/her courage to expose wrongdoings of the powerful and by their knowledge, which is accumulated from experiences taken from previous investigations.

The more investigative journalists a country has, the more investigative stories are published, which increases accountability of the elite in power and general knowledge and political culture in society. Quantity and quality of published investigative stories is a good indicator of freedom of the press, freedom of expression, the rule of law and democracy in any country.

A journalist's knowledge expands with every new investigation. This is usually done by a preliminary, wide and focused investigation as presented in the following info-graphic:

Repeated cycles of investigation continuously expand knowledge and experiences of a journalist and thus also to a wider knowledge in a society.

This is one of the reasons why in transitional and autocratic countries, corrupt elites in power usually attempt to stifle investigative journalism and knowledge about their wrongdoings in the public domain.

To be able to contribute to a broader range of knowledge in society, an investigative journalist should respect universal rules of the profession. A journalist should publish only stories based on proven facts, correct information, logical conclusions and knowledge.

Respecting universal rules of the profession besides being in the public interest is also the best legal defence at any court under jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

This is why the investigative process, presented in the next lesson, should be followed.

# Journalistic investigation — from finding a story to post-publication activities

The ‘investigative process’ distinguishes investigative journalism from day-to-day reporting and other branches of journalism, because it focuses on questions of HOW (to reconstruct a wrongdoing of the person of interest) and WHY (to find a motive). In daily news reporting these questions are often neglected because of lack of time.

The central purposes of the investigative process are:

1. Identify an exclusive story (main hypothesis) which is in the public interest and which someone wishes to conceal in the preliminary investigation phase.
2. Develop, test and prove the hypotheses during the deeper investigation phase which usually takes weeks or months.
3. Check, write and publish an investigative story which reveals new true facts and knowledge to the audience in the remaining phases.

The investigative process is highly demanding intellectual work, resembles the scientific method and is similar to criminal or judicial investigations.

Initially, a journalist sets the main working hypothesis, then seeks true facts or evidence in documents and other sources of information to confirm or deny the hypothesis. If the hypothesis is denied the journalist changes the hypothesis in accordance to the facts.

During deep investigation the journalist collects all gathered facts, information and hypotheses in a ‘synopsis’ or ‘master file’ which significantly assists the journalist and is constantly upgraded with new facts, information and knowledge found during the investigation. Information collected in a synopsis or master file is also a basis for writing a journalistic story.

## Preliminary investigation

To identify a possible investigative story which meets conditions of exclusivity, the public interest and something which someone wishes to conceal can be a demanding and time-consuming process. It is also one of the most important phases, as it defines what topic the journalist will invest weeks or months of work in.

The main purpose of preliminary investigation is to set the main hypothesis — or identify a story.

According to the info-graphics in the previous lesson the investigation is inextricably linked to general and specific knowledge and experience of the journalist.

During a wide preliminary investigation, the journalist looks outside their current pool of knowledge and discovers the unknown by using any possible source. For example, a tip from a human source, information from news reports, facts from publicly available or classified documents or data from open databases.

During a focused preliminary investigation the journalist upgrades their current knowledge with new information and makes new connections between different facts he/she already knows (‘connect the dots’) and tries to find better understanding (‘the big picture’) of wrongdoing of the person of interest, which the journalist is unable to prove with documents and other evidences yet.

Both phases are interrelated and a journalist usually begins with information they already knew and looks into new related information from different sources to obtain better understanding and confirmation.

The preliminary investigation is a series of setting and testing hypotheses where a journalist asks themself many questions and looks for answers if hypotheses are correct or false.

## Deep investigation

After setting the main hypothesis, the journalist begins a deep investigation into all possible sources of any information related to the hypothesis. It is important to remain focused on the main hypothesis and look specifically for information which will confirm or deny it.

The journalist also changes their hypothesis according to new facts.

**It is crucial that the hypothesis always relates to the facts. If a single significant fact is not correct (for example a date or name of a person, a sum of money transfer and similar items), the hypothesis could be false.**

The main hypothesis is often scaled down or up according to new evidence. Any additional independent sources, which are added which are found in the preliminary investigation, strengthen the hypothesis and make it more credible.

Charts or diagrams, where all known information is summarised and graphically presented, are useful tools which assist journalist in better understanding and aid the journalist to focus on unknown issues. These 'working' charts can later be changed into info-graphics and published with the story.

During investigations journalists are usually limited to two regular methods:

- analyses of any publicly available documents (corporate registries, annual reports, publicly available contracts, land registry and other open-data sources, including news, archives and libraries)
- interviews with sources and experts

Other methods such as undercover video or audio recordings and work on classified documents bear a legal risk. They are illegal in many countries and should be used with care, specifically in autocratic countries.

The journalist could use these methods only if the public interest of an investigation is higher than a probable violation of law. Additionally, these methods should be used proportionally — only if no other method could prove wrongdoings of the person of interest.

Basics of work with human sources: Human sources are one of the main sources of information in any branch of journalism. This could be any person the journalist communicates with.

However, journalistic investigation work with human sources might be sensitive and risky, specifically if sources are from an intelligence/security agency, lobbyists or political agents who wish to leak a story to the media. This is why using human sources deserves special care.

- It is of utmost importance to check the background of the source. If for example, his/her name does not appear in public records or social networks, this raises questions about their real identity and credibility. Background of the source
- Examine if the source really has access to the information he/she provided. Always check such information with information from documents and/or other sources.
- Check the motive of the source. Sometimes such sources are not real whistle-blowers for the public interest, but their motive might be personal revenge or political or ideological reasons. In latter cases examine if the public interest exists and plan publication of a possible story in such a way that it will not suit the source's agenda. A usual indicator that a source's intent is to plant a story in the media is when ask for the publication of the story as soon as possible or before specific event, for example an election or meeting of a company board.
- Be careful in communication with sources from intelligence/security services and police who are well-trained in conducting interviews. Usually they try to obtain information from journalists and rarely share any useful information.
- Do not pay sources for information.
- Quoting anonymous sources in an investigative story should be minimised and used only as a last resort.

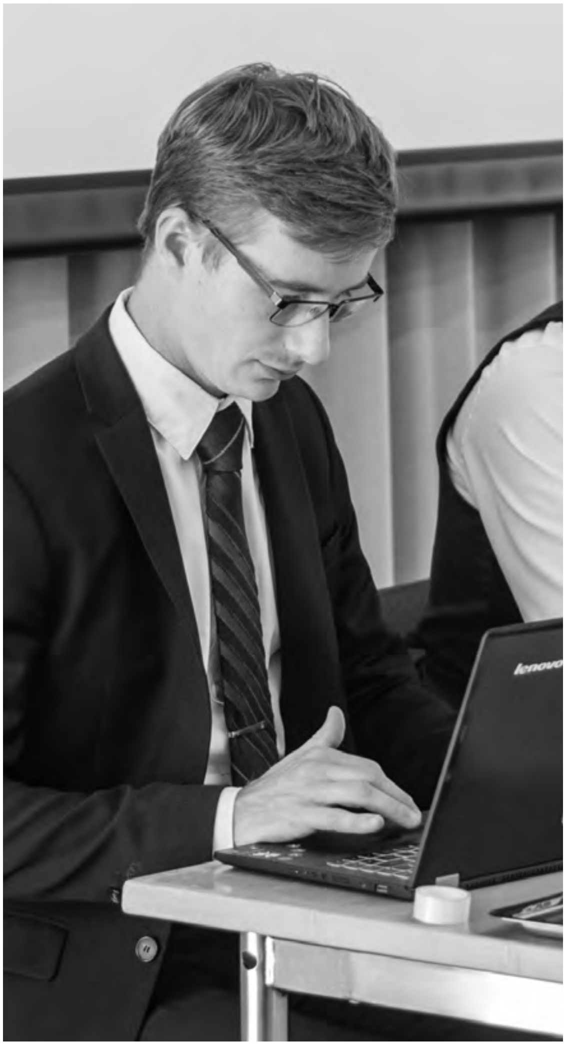
Preliminary and deep investigations are intellectually the most demanding part of journalistic investigation. The journalist should be creative and imaginative during this phase, when they try to find a truthful reconstruction and understanding of wrongdoing, which no one has yet uncovered and which is known only to persons of interest.

In this process the journalist could find and explore many new hypotheses but consequently always needs to confirm or deny them with evidence from documents and other sources.

The journalist should document all steps of an investigation (download files from open-databases to own computer, saving and archiving websites accessed as they can be later deleted or changed (http://archive.is) audio recording interviews with human sources when they agree). Documentation of a journalist's work is needed for possible legal defence in the case of libel suit or criminal prosecution.

Any investigation can get stuck as needed facts to confirm a hypothesis cannot be found. This kind of failure is frequent in investigative journalism. In such a case the journalist should look for other sources they have not yet accessed, scale down the hypothesis, wait for new events/sources or publish what they have collected if it is newsworthy.

Such dead-ends are among the main reasons why some investigations last for years. It is also normal that not every investigation succeeds and gets published. Many end without enough facts and evidences to be publishable. However, unsuccessful investigations always contribute to a journalist's knowledge and experience and increase the possibility of success in the future.




## The first draft

After confirmation of the main hypothesis and collection of all facts and evidence the journalist should write the first draft of the story. In this production phase the journalist primarily uses information they have gathered in a synopsis or master file.

Beside organising new knowledge in a concise and coherent way, another purpose of this phase is to examine if some important information or evidence is still missing. With the first draft, the journalist also identifies which persons of interest and any other persons will be named in the story and the draft helps in preparation of journalistic questions.

### A. Confrontation questions

It is obligatory to give all persons of interest named in a story a possibility to respond to journalistic questions before publication.

Journalistic questions should be concise, clear and polite and persons of interest should have enough time (at least a few days) to respond. Questions should not only be about the main hypothesis, but about every important fact or evidence which confirms the hypothesis. It is not unusual that an investigative journalist sends a dozen or more questions to a single person of interest.

Powerful and wealthy persons of interest often consult lawyers who respond in their name.

During the phase of confrontation questions, information about what subject the journalist is investigating is shared outside for the first time and this brings the possibility of legal actions such as court injunctions, threats, smear campaigns or leaks to competitive media by persons of interest. Deadlines for answers should therefore be set to only a few days before the publication date to lower these risks and journalist still has enough time to diligently conclude the remaining phases.

All confrontation questions and responses should be documented, i.e. sent and received by email, as this might become evidence in court during a possible libel or criminal case. Using telephone or personal interviews (unless it is agreed and made as an on-the-record audio or video recording) is usually risky, in a case when the person of interest later denies this communication.

Additionally, powerful persons of interest often use phone or personal communications to pressure and threaten journalists not to publish a story.

Confrontation questions are often unanswered by many persons of interest or they do not provide any comment. If they respond before publication, carefully read their answers (often persons of interest deny any wrongdoing or ignore exact answers on specific questions) and assess and weigh their answers against facts collected during the investigation.

If the evidence is not strong enough to convince the audience of wrongdoing, the journalist should postpone publication of the story and find additional evidence by another deep investigation. If answers validly show there was no wrongdoing, the journalist should cancel publication.

**B. Story-telling**

Once the deadline for responses to confrontation questions has passed, all needed elements for writing a story are collected. In this phase the journalist refines the first draft or writes a new version, which contains all facts and information gathered during the investigation and responses of persons of interest, told in logical or chronological order and in a coherent manner.

A story should present numerous facts and evidence which confirms the hypothesis and should be written without loaded words. New information about wrongdoing by powerful people is often strong enough, so there is no need to push-up story in sensational way.

Readers will decide if they will believe the investigative journalist who published the new facts, or the answers of persons of interest, and the journalist should write the story in the most objective, unbiased and non-partisan way.

One of major achievements of any journalistic investigation is to inform people who have different opinions and values about new facts.

**C. Fact-checking**

Although a journalist should check facts and information persistently in the previous phases of investigation, this is an important phase as the purpose is to prevent any factual mistakes. One single mistaken fact can damage the credibility of a story; moreover, the person of interest will focus on the mistake in a possible public response, smear campaign or legal suit.

Many major media outlets in Western Europe and USA have special fact-checking departments who check investigative stories. Nevertheless, even if a journalist is a free-lancer or their media outlet does not have any fact-checkers, it is still possible for them to do it on their own.

During the fact-checking phase any single sentence and every single fact and information written in the story should be checked with original documentation collected during the investigation. Are dates, numbers and quotes correct? Does any mistake found in this phase change the main hypothesis? If yes, then the journalist should postpone publication of the story and investigate further until all points suit the facts and evidence.

**D. The final version**

Once all corrections from the fact-checking phase are included, the draft becomes the final version. This is an important milestone, the end of the journalistic investigation.

**E. Legal screening**

The purpose of this phase is to minimise the possibility of libel suits and criminal prosecution by persons of interest. The final version should be legally reviewed by a lawyer. If all previous phases have been done diligently and with all due care, lawyers may focus only on possible words and sentences which might offend or accidentally defame persons of interest.

**F. Publication**

The major milestone of the investigative process, publication is usually the task of a publisher, editor and other media professionals, but the journalist should always be available for any clarifications until actual publication. If a freelance journalist publishes a story on his/her own blog or social media account they should take care that everything is published without mistakes.

**G. Post-publication**

Within days or weeks after publication of their story, a journalist should promote and spread news about their long-term investigation on social media and share it with other journalistic colleagues, who might be interested in the story.

If the journalist collected a large amount of important information in the deep investigation phase, which they were unable to include in the published story, they could plan and continue a follow-up investigation.

# Investigating corruption, money laundering and tax avoidance in tax havens

Corruption, money-laundering, tax evasion and tax avoidance with excessive use of tax havens are among the major issues in democratic, transitional and autocratic societies today. These illicit and unethical activities raise inequality and a sense of injustice among citizens.

Many national and cross-border journalistic investigations such as Football Leaks, Cum-Ex, Panama and Paradise Papers reveal these are widespread and important subjects which attracts much attention by the public and law enforcement.

These issues are also one of the most demanding to investigate as perpetrators damage public funds and victims cannot be individually identified and such persons have a great interest that their acts remain concealed. Law enforcement, taxation authorities and financial compliance institutions have many means to uncover such illegal activities.

However, because of complex schemes created by lawyers and accountants which cross different jurisdictions and the non-compliance of tax havens in information exchange they face many difficulties to bring perpetrators to justice.

Investigative journalists are generally limited only to public information, interviews and leaks of confidential documents or data when they occur. But they have more freedom in investigation and a lower burden of proof than law enforcement, in which every step of the investigation should be strictly in accordance to the criminal procedure code.

Successful investigations also have different consequences. Law enforcement and tax authorities file indictments to a court where perpetrators could be sentenced and fined. An investigative journalist, on the other hand, exposes the perpetrator's wrongdoings to the public.

Technological developments of open databases which merge data of company registries from different jurisdictions and the increasing number of freely accessible national databases of different sorts and databases of massive journalistic leaks has significantly increased investigative capacities of journalists.

A journalist should be familiar with definitions of such crimes and wrongdoings before any investigation. This enables them to focus on the right questions and hypotheses.

## Corruption

'Corruption is any course of action or failure to act by individuals or organisations, public or private, in violation of law or trust for profit or gain,' is Interpol, world's largest international police organisation definition of corruption (https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Corruption/Corruption).

Legal definitions of crimes of corruption vary in different jurisdictions, therefore the journalist should check the criminal code of his/her own country to understand what is and what is not a crime. Usually, corruption crimes consist of any kind of bribery and passive corruption but also any attempts to commit these offenses are criminal.

Investigating corruption is difficult without assistance of insiders, whistle-blowers, tips from other sources or leaked documents, because all parties (the person who gives or offers a bribe, middlemen and recipient) wish their acts to remain concealed.

However, when useful information appears, a journalist can trace the money-flow to other countries and tax havens with the help of open databases, as perpetrators often launder their illegal proceeds.

## Money laundering

According to Interpol, money laundering is: 'Any act or attempted act to conceal or disguise the identity of illegally obtained proceeds so that they appear to have originated from legitimate sources'.

Illegally obtained funds are laundered and moved around the globe by using and abusing shell companies, intermediaries and money transmitters. In this way, the illegal funds remain hidden and are integrated into legal business and into the legal economy (https://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Financial-crime/Money-laundering).

Money laundering could be exploited also for financing terrorism and there are many different 'typologies' or techniques used by perpetrators of which descriptions are publicly available at international organisations which are combating these illicit activities:

fatf-gafi.org, menafatf.org, coe.int/en/web/moneyval

Without tips from insiders and access to banking transactions which are available to financial investigative units and law enforcement agencies, this is a very demanding task.

However, if a journalist receives useful initial information from a source and finds a suspicious money-flow in annual financial reports by the company involved, which he/she identifies with the help of tips and open databases, the journalist might constitute a suspicion of money-laundering.

Suspicious indicators are large amounts of assets and money-flow in companies without employees and with no real economic activity. The same as law enforcement does, the journalist should also try to identify the illicit origin of the money, which originates from predicate crimes like any kind of trafficking, fraud, bribery, tax evasion and other offenses.

For example, whenever millions of unpaid taxes gained from tax evasion are funnelled to tax havens, this might constitute a suspicion of money-laundering.

Despite money-laundering being hard to prove, it is usually newsworthy and in the public interest to reveal immense sums of money transfers by persons who are unable or unwilling to explain the origin of their wealth and money-flows in answers to confrontation questions.

### Tax evasion and fraud

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the intergovernmental organisation of the most developed countries, this is: ‘a term which is generally used to mean illegal arrangements where liability to tax is hidden or ignored, i.e. the taxpayer pays less tax than he is legally obligated to pay by hiding income or information from the tax authorities.’

Tax evasion is a criminal offense which differs in many jurisdictions and the journalist should check its definition in the criminal code of his/her own country. Proving a crime, which is the task of law enforcement, can be quite difficult as a journalist does not have access to real transactions and other needed information and evidence.

Allegations of ‘tax evasion’ in a story against a person of interest without enough evidence might bring legal risks, as many countries have false accusation of crime as an offense in the criminal code. Tax evasion could be investigated mostly on the basis of tips from sources and leaked data or documents.

An aggravated form of tax evasion is usually tax fraud. According to the OECD ‘tax fraud is a form of deliberate evasion of tax which is generally punishable under criminal law. The term includes situations in which deliberately false statements are submitted, fake documents are produced, etc.’

Because tax fraud is a criminal offense, similar limitations exist as in journalistic investigations of tax evasion, corruption and money-laundering.

However, the burden of proof is lower in journalistic investigation of tax avoidance, a term, which does not constitute a crime but an ethical-moral wrongdoing.

### Tax avoidance

OECD defines tax avoidance as a term that is ‘generally used to describe the arrangement of a taxpayer’s affairs that is intended to reduce his tax liability and that although the arrangement could be strictly legal it is usually in contradiction with the intent of the law it purports to follow.’

Because this act committed by a person of interest is legal, also journalists are legally safer when they investigate and report such wrongdoing. They can publish a significant amount of information about tax avoidance, which is in the public interest, without accusing anyone of committing a crime.

Many major cross-border investigations based on massive leaks are reported mostly about tax avoidance cases for the same reasons.

During investigation of tax avoidance, it is useful to calculate and publish a difference between taxes the person of interest should pay if they were to be taxed in their country of residence and the small share of taxes they pay in tax havens.

Journalistic revelations of massive amounts of avoided taxes could cause public outcry and initiate criminal investigations for suspicion of tax evasion and fraud.

## Tax havens

'Tax haven in the 'classical' sense refers to a country which imposes a low or no tax, and is used by corporations to avoid tax which otherwise would be payable in a high-tax country'.

According to the OECD report definition, tax havens have the following key characteristics; 'No or only nominal taxes; Lack of effective exchange of information; Lack of transparency in the operation of the legislative, legal or administrative provisions'.

Major journalistic cross-border investigations have revealed some tax havens are used mostly by individuals for hiding their wealth, such as the tiny island states in the Caribbean and Pacific, while others are used by international corporations to minimise corporate taxes (usually the most developed countries with strong banking and financial centres).

At least seven EU countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta and The Netherlands) display traits of a tax haven, according to the European Parliament special committee findings. As company registers in the EU are usually publicly available, sometimes for fees, this might be a good entrance point for the start of any journalistic investigation.

Articles of association and annual reports of companies often reveal shareholders, which oftentimes are companies registered in other more notorious tax havens and conduct multi-million-dollar transactions with them.

On the other side legal loopholes which facilitate tax avoidance on a massive scale in developed countries are used by many wealthy and powerful people, also from transitional and autocratic regimes of the European Union neighbourhood.

Journalistic investigation of tax avoidance in tax havens is a quite complex and demanding task which requires a knowledge of accounting, financial forensics and taxation. This is also a reason why a journalist should seek assistance from independent experts when needed.

## Accessing open databases and public registries

Open databases are significantly increasing the capabilities of investigative journalists. Many national and international databases of different kinds are available online and major open data projects allow searches to be made in many jurisdictions simultaneously.

According to the Open Data Handbook 'open data is data that can be freely used, re-used and redistributed by anyone — subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and share alike.'

Only 4 % of the Internet is indexed by search engines like Google and Bing. Open databases are mostly not indexed and therefore form a part of the 'deep web', where journalist needs — in accordance with their hypothesis — identify which database they will use to find needed data or facts.

Before looking into the 'deep web' an investigation usually begins with major search engines, using some basic as well as advanced tech, to check what information of a person of interest is already indexed and available.

Many different open data sources are available within the European Union and its country members, such as:

- data.europa.eu/euodp/en/home
- ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/open-data-portals
- www.data.gov

Vast amounts of user friendly and visualised databases have been developed by non-profit organisations or for-profit companies, for example geospatial services, marine traffic, flights, justice and company registers. All these open databases could be a source of data or facts a journalist needs to prove their hypothesis.

Many resources on accessing, analysing and visualising data suited for journalists are available at the Global Investigative Journalism Network website.

However, when investigating tax avoidance and evasion, money laundering and tax havens, the most useful are company registers.

Tax havens are primarily used to conceal identity of real beneficial owners of shell companies, often formally owned and managed by nominee shareholders and directors.

Secondarily, shell companies are commonly used for transfers of suspicious money from the person's country of residence to the tax haven, with the purpose of avoiding taxes, or — in the opposite way — in the form of investments to other countries, also made without proper taxation.

Therefore, in journalistic investigation of companies operating in tax havens there are two priorities:

1. To identify real beneficial owners (the persons of interest)
2. To identify suspicious transactions (primarily wire money transfers, but also non-cash transactions)

Usually, disclosure of a known politician or celebrity as owner of a shell company, without any employee and real economic activity in a tax haven, is newsworthy enough, despite owning a company in another jurisdiction is fully legal.

A journalist should also look for suspicious transactions or evidence of tax avoidance or evasion and money-laundering in a deeper analysis of the annual financial report, when they are available.

The simplified investigative approach consists of three steps:

1. Hypothesis / tips from sources

A journalist begins an investigation with information he/she receives from a source or reads in any other document or news report, which seems important and interesting enough to investigate and then set a hypothesis. In this phase the journalist needs to identify the name of a person of interest (for example a known businessman or politician suspected to avoid taxes in tax havens) or a name of a company connected to tax havens.

2. The first searches in open databases

The main purpose of an initial search in open databases is to identify the legal name of a company and the country where it is registered. This data leads the journalist to the national company register, where more information about the company is available.

In this phase the journalist searches open databases which collect and merge large amounts of data from national company registers and makes them discoverable, searchable and able to be browsed across multiple countries. An increasing number of such databases are available online, but here, few are widely used in journalistic investigations.

The largest open database OpenCorporates consists of data of more than 168 million companies from more than 115 jurisdictions.

Besides the names of companies, also names of directors are searchable, which is usually not possible in many national public registries. Despite OpenCorporates not providing data from most notorious tax havens from the Caribbean islands and Pacific and is an effective tool in the initial investigation.

Initial searches could be enhanced with ICIJ's Offshore Leaks database which consists of 785,000 offshore entities that are part of the Paradise Papers, the Panama Papers, the Offshore Leaks and the Bahamas Leaks investigations. Its data links to people and companies in more than 200 countries and territories.

Also, OCCRP's databases provide numerous data collections. A detailed list of open databases is available at Investigative Dashboard.

Official gazettes can also be useful resources which contain information about significant legal events in companies which must be published in the gazette of the country of incorporation. Some open databases allow searches in multiple jurisdictions, including tax havens. (http://opengazettes.com/)

National company registries are the main source of data merged in these open databases. Therefore, when a journalist identifies in open database the legal name of the company and its country of incorporation, they should focus their search in national public company register, where much information including shareholders and annual financial reports are available.

## Investigating public registries

Shell companies registered in tax havens without a single employee or real economic activity are always connected to the international financial system. They formally own companies in other jurisdictions, have transaction accounts in banks in other countries, provide loans and investments to companies or individuals in other countries or just collect suspicious money from other countries, which at the end needs to be disbursed to the ultimate beneficial owner, usually again in the home country.

Shell companies could have direct connections to the home country of the journalist and the person of interest. In such case the journalist should look in the company register of their home country.

However, when shell companies incorporated in notorious tax havens from the Caribbean and Pacific use as an entrance point to the financial system — there are other shell companies incorporated in European Union countries with low taxation like Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Ireland, Cyprus and some others. The journalist should also look in these national company registries which are publicly accessible, although there is sometimes a fee.

A list of national public registries is available at the Investigative Dashboard.

The main purpose of investigation in national company registries is to:

1. **Identify ultimate beneficial owners and corporate structure**

Ultimate beneficial registries are mandatory in EU countries since 2017 and are usually publicly available. However, they reveal only the current ultimate beneficial owner and often information in these registers is not complete or correct.

This is why a journalist should always look for original company documents (articles of association, memorandums annual returns and others) filed to registry and which contain crucial information about shareholders during and after incorporation, all changes in shareholders structures and all other important statutory changes.

A journalist should chronologically follow ownership changes from date of incorporation to the current shareholders, reconstruct all changes, and graphically draw connections for easier understanding. Sometimes a company is used for only a single suspicious transaction and sold further to other persons, so the journalist should focus their investigation on any critical period, when the person of interest was involved.

Companies could be often renamed to obfuscate traces and the journalist should identify the company ID number, which always remains the same. With the company ID number, the journalist can look also in other national public registries which contain additional data about the company (court registries, public tenders registers, insolvency and bankruptcy registers, land registries and others).

Nominee directors and shareholders are widely used to conceal ultimate beneficial owners and often traces to beneficial owners ended in tax havens whose company registries are not available. In such cases, the journalist should try to look for other sources and indicators that the person of interest is connected to this company. Despite a full connection not being confirmed it still might be newsworthy and exclusive information.

However, when a journalist finds a connection between a company, incorporated in a home country (or EU tax haven) to a shell company in a notorious tax haven, he/she should try to look also into suspicious transactions.

2. **Identifying suspicious transactions in annual financial reports**

Annual financial reports are an invaluable resource in investigation of suspicious transactions and are publicly available in company registries of EU countries. Many of the best investigative stories on tax avoidance, evasion and money-laundering actually rely on data from annual financial reports.

Financial reports consist of balance sheets and profit and losses statements which show assets and liabilities of a company as well as its profit or losses. Cash-flow statements reveal the flow of cash in and out of the business, which could additionally assist in identification of suspicious transactions.

Annual financial reports also often show the number of employees in a specific year and can assist to find out if a company has real economic activity. ‘Notes’ in annual reports are a specifically valuable source as they could reveal very specific transactions with other companies from the tax haven.

For deeper analyses of important events and transactions it is useful to create a spreadsheet with most important data from annual reports from different years. This helps in recognising patterns and individual suspicious transactions. Additionally, when a journalist collects annual financial reports of other related companies, he/she could follow financial flows between them and — when it is through a tax haven — possibly identify suspicious transactions without reasonable economic explanation.

Annual financial reports could reveal much information about business transactions with companies incorporated in tax havens and should be carefully analysed in detail. Basic knowledge of accounting, financial forensics and taxation is needed but the journalist should try to find independent and trustful experts, who might assist in such analyses.

Much information about immense sums of money transferred to notorious tax havens or in the opposite direction is publicly available to journalists in national public company registries and is waiting to be investigated and revealed.

# Ethics in investigative journalism

As the purpose of investigative journalism is revelation of wrongdoings of persons of interest, it is mandatory that the journalist does not commit any wrongdoing during his/her work and should follow ethical principles during all phases of their investigation.

For example, if a journalist were to conduct an investigation in an unethical way or use dubious methods he/she could give the person of interest an opportunity to discredit the investigation and the journalist as well.

Following ethics during an investigation is also one of the best ways of legal defence against possible criminal prosecution and libel suits. According to the European Court of Human Rights, a case law journalist should prove that he/she has reasonable cause to believe what they have written is true.

If an investigation is done in the public interest, in good faith and by following ethical principles during all phases and the journalist is able to present documentation to the court, the journalist has strong arguments at any fair hearing.

News organisations and journalists' association have accepted many standards and codes of ethics which are universal for journalists. (https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes

According to the Ethical Journalism Network, the five core principles of journalism are:

**1. Truth and Accuracy**

Journalists cannot always guarantee 'truth', but getting the facts right is the cardinal principle of journalism. Journalists should always strive for accuracy; give all the relevant facts they have and ensure that they have been checked. When we cannot corroborate information, we should say so.

**2. Independence**

Journalists must be independent voices; we should not act, formally or informally, or on behalf of special interests whether political, corporate or cultural. We should declare to our editors — or the audience — any of our political affiliations, financial arrangements or other personal information that might constitute a conflict of interest.

**3. Fairness and Impartiality**

Most stories have at least two sides. While there is no obligation to present every side in every piece, stories should be balanced and provide context. Objectivity is not always possible and may not always be desirable (in the face for example of brutality or inhumanity), but impartial reporting builds trust and confidence. Fairness and Impartiality

**4. Humanity**

Journalists should do no harm. What we publish or broadcast may be hurtful, but we should be aware of the impact of our words and images on the lives of others.

**5. Accountability**

A sure sign of professionalism and responsible journalism is the ability to hold ourselves accountable. When we commit errors, we must correct them and our expressions of regret must be sincere not cynical. We should listen to the concerns of our audience. We may not change what readers write or say but we should always provide remedies when we are unfair.

During their work, an investigative journalist should take care about some specific ethical issues and also ensure that all methods used are implemented in an ethical way.

**1. The public interest**

A journalist should always assess if his/her investigation and hypothesis is really in the public interest and addresses the common concerns of citizens and the common good. Any other particular motivation for investigation, for example opposition research or defending activists' causes which is damaging the journalist should have an independent and truthful observer position.

The public interest is different from the interest of the public. The latter is related to sensationalism, voyeurism and often invades the privacy of celebrities and ordinary citizens, however such stories do not contribute to discussion about important topics in society.

**2. Accuracy**

False published information does not enjoy any protection from the courts. All phases of the investigative process should be diligently followed to prevent publishing any false information. The journalist should always test hypothesis and check facts during all phases, and specifically during the fact-checking phase which should be done by another person if possible.

The journalist should have at least two sources confirming every fact and should always check the authenticity of documents obtained. If some fact relies only on one source or the journalist is not able to prove some lower level hypothesis (which remains probable but not established as fact), he/she should mention this in the story.

**3. Presumption of innocence**

Presumption of innocence should be applied to all people, including persons of interest. Only when the hypothesis is confirmed by a chain of facts and evidences should the journalist reveal wrongdoing to the public together with answers to journalistic questions.

**4. Protection of sources**

Investigative journalism usually relies on information and leaks from whistle-blowers and other sources. Protection of their identity and safety is an utmost priority.

**5. Respect of privacy and secrecy**

The right of privacy should be always respected and a journalist should not publish any intimate or private information they collected which are not in the public interest. An investigative journalist may often obtain different classified documents during their work and should carefully assess if publication is really in the public interest.

**6. Proportionality**

When using secret audio and video recording or undercover reporting by using a fake identity, the journalist could breach the criminal code.

These methods of investigation should be used by applying the principle of proportionality: Only when the journalist is convinced that they are unable to get the needed information about wrongdoing with less invasive methods and when the public interest is higher than the right to privacy of the person of interest, should these methods be used as a last resort.

**7. Plagiarism**

The journalist should not use text, photos, graphics and other intellectual property of other authors without proper credits and should always properly quote any previously published work.

**8. Discrimination**

The journalist should not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

**9. Evading activism**

A journalist should remain an independent observer and should evade any kind of activism even in an authoritarian regime. When a journalist becomes affiliated with any activist's cause, they could damage their credibility or perception of credibility in the eyes of the part of society which have other interests and opinions.

Combining journalistic investigations with political activism could, for example help to topple corrupt autocratic regime, but if it is acceded by a new government which is even more corrupt, the journalist could find themselves in a difficult ethical situation.

However, activism in defending freedom of the press and freedom of expression does not fall in this category and a journalist should speak out if they are unable to do their work due to censorship, pressure and other kinds of repression.

**10. Evading collaboration with authorities and private entities**

A journalist should not share their data and findings with police, intelligence and security services, nor work for private intelligence agencies, which could be hired by any client, including state actors. The purpose of any journalistic investigation is to contribute to the public's knowledge and not to contribute to the knowledge of private entities or the state.

# 5. Value-based and conflict-sensitive reporting

*Dr Roxane Farmanfarmaian*

## The role of the media in society: balancing truth and values in conflict settings

### Part I: The role of the media — Communicating and gatekeeping

To understand objectivity and values in reporting conflict situations, we need to understand what media is and what role journalists play in society. At its most basic, media communicates information — it takes facts about the world, whether events, issues or ideas, and packages them into stories for audiences. Since most audiences cannot experience first-hand the majority of the news, or form opinions as direct observers, they rely on journalists to collect and process information for them. Good journalism therefore rests on the notion that media provides accurate and factual narratives that correspond to an objective reality.

Yet, this is only half the story. Lisle points out that the information we get from the media is never neutral or innocent: it is always biased in that it 'leans toward a particular view of a given issue'. This explains why media operating in environments that Freedom House would rate as totally free, still produce very different versions of the same event, political speech, or conflict issue. Very simply, the other half of the story is that media will produce narratives that are sensitive to the culture and norms of their journalists and audiences, which means the practice of media in every country differs. As Hallin and Mancini point out, every media is a reflection of the society that produces it.

Consider this example of reporting the same story, first by the German press, then by the Iranian. The former points to the dire effect of US sanctions on doing business in Iran: the latter illustrates that sanctions are not harming German businesses that badly in Iran: same facts, different agendas, both true.

German: 'Volker Treier, the foreign trade chief of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry, told news agency *DPA* on May 26, 2019 that German exports to Iran were down 50 per cent. Of 120 German companies that were active in Iran, only 60 are still in the country.'

Iranian: 'Dozens of German companies have continued to cooperate with Iran and keep their offices in the country open despite the US pressures and sanctions. Figures released by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry indicate that 60 German companies are still keen on being present in the Iranian market.' (28 March 2019, Iran Front Page)

The reasons for this are two-fold. First, journalists practice what theorists call gatekeeping: collecting, culling and crafting many pieces of information into a limited number of articles or broadcasts, and presenting the chosen facts in a coherent, and preferably compelling narrative (Shoemaker). Each journalist will use the material differently, representing the world based on their own beliefs, political leanings, professional experiences, etc. We shall discuss this aspect, and what it means for objectivity and truthfulness, in the next lesson.

The second reason is that the agendas for different media outlets, political systems, and audiences differ widely, and journalists will gatekeep (that is, make decisions both consciously and unconsciously in how they produce their stories) according to the requirements that are set out, or implied, by those in authority. All media representations are grounded in cultural systems of values. Every story journalists tell, every image they construct, every sound bite they repeat is shaped in a way that reflects and advocates a pre-existing agenda — a picture of the world that privileges some people and ideas and excludes others.

In Lebanon, for example, every major TV channel and newspaper conglomerate is backed by a particular confessional group. Its media is unabashedly partisan. Everyone from owners, to editors, to reporters, conform to the political and religious agenda of their own outlets. Lebanon's distinctions are particularly stark, but the principle applies everywhere — reporters for France's *Le Monde* are more liberal than *Le Figaro's*, and both will produce more pro-French, pro-EU stories than will reporters from the US, or Russia.

What this means is that media is inherently political — it is always part of the system. What's more, societies, usually in the form of governments, control what — and how — information passes through the gates, impacting the journalists' approach to any given subject, as well as what audiences learn about the story, which in turn colours society's opinions, and more widely, its world view. Information that does not travel through a gate — or decision-making point — simply does not reach the audience, which remains unaware of its existence — a process generally known as censorship.

## Part II: Freedom of expression, cultural values and agendas

Every country practices a degree of censorship in favour of the common good and collective wellbeing that ensue from the social compact. Reporting on Hezbollah in the UK, for example, which has labelled the group 'terrorist', forces BBC journalists to self-censor if, rather than using the officially required term 'militants' to describe them, they wanted to use a term such as 'elected members of government'.[4]

[4] BBC Guidelines: Language When Reporting Terrorism. For designated terrorists: 'We should use words which specifically describe the perpetrator such as 'bomber', 'attacker', 'gunman', 'kidnapper', 'insurgent', and 'militant'.' bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidance/terrorism-language/guidance-full

What's important is the degree of restriction, as that determines how free the media is to exercise freedom of expression. In countries where there are few legal constraints, journalists can communicate a great deal of information to their audiences, helping them become informed as citizens. In this way, media is critical to democratic practice, because it helps to turn publics into constituencies armed with knowledge to make political decisions.

In countries with less freedom of expression, laws restraining journalists from reporting certain stories ensure that information is curated for a particular purpose. However, it is not always the government that limits freedom of expression for the purpose, for example, of protecting its own power. It can be society itself that does not want the media to be completely free.

This was the case in Tunisia after the Uprisings in 2011 when its president, Ben Ali, fled, leaving the media suddenly without restrictions. Within the year, demonstrators were in the streets demanding greater respect by journalists for Islamic sensitivities, social values, and government actions, particularly regarding its attempts to contain terrorism, which had become a significant source of conflict and social concern. The general feeling was that a media without limits had become a 'media of shame'. Responding to the 'street', the government passed laws laying down new red lines on freedom of expression.

Working as a journalist in an autocracy (even a 'liberal' one), means staying clear of taboos in order to continue working. In such states, the red lines are clear and often protected by law. Banned in Algeria, Morocco and Lebanon, for example, is defamation of religion, nudity, explicit sexuality, and criticism of the army/regime's handling of terrorism, with Morocco adding red lines around criticism of the King and the national claim to the Western Sahara, and Algeria including criticism of the army, the Polisario, and support for Morocco; in Lebanon: there are curbs on insulting the flag and inciting sectarian strife.

Yet, red lines can be variable; seasoned journalists are adept at addressing areas of sensitivity (framing Hezbollah's Syrian battles in Lebanon so as not to undermine Beirut's US alliance, for instance). In Algeria, journalists, including cartoonists, can poke fun at government and party officials (including ex-President Bouteflika) as the government has long viewed this as a way to diffuse public disaffection with no adverse impact — although the current demonstrations calling for change bear out Whitten-Woodring's study that if the media provides information and a platform for dissent without there being other institutional outlets to express political dissatisfaction, protest is likely to occur (p. 597).

According to Mirgani in *Bullets and Bulletins*, 'resistance to the overarching state-imposed restrictions on media, or at least engaging in alternative practices and discourses, is also part of these very same media systems, and flourishes in tandem'. The convergence of traditional and digital media began a transformation in the culture and structure of journalism that has added a significant dimension to the diversity of opinions and the amount of information publicly available.

Despite increased government control over the internet, often through harsh internet laws, trolling and phishing, which are particularly evident in the Middle East, the rise in an assortment of alternative websites, often appealing to smaller groups and using secondary languages (such as French, in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco), now provide investigative reporting, more visuals and a range of information and reader commentary, smudging official limits on journalism, and affecting the media landscape as a whole.

Yet, this does not mean that freedom of expression, or the practice of journalism, are defined in the same way as in the West, as histories and cultural rules differ, and the Western model is viewed in many cases by Arab journalists and authorities alike, as ineffective in reaching their national publics. Expecting all media to be similarly socially defined by universal concepts of free expression, investigative journalism and the task of holding government to account, is to miss the important differences in media's role in and engagement within different societies.

In many of the regional Arab states, where civil war, conflicts on their borders, terrorism, refugee pressures and international military intervention, not least during the colonial period, have significantly implicated views on social stability, political opposition, foreign meddling, and ethnic/religious relations, the room for even-handed journalism can be narrow, and reporting is frequently conflated (by government and/or the public) with incitement.

Because the balance between strong policing authority, weak judiciary systems, and ambiguous laws knits the social system into a fabric different — and more fragile — than in the West, media is perceived as being as much a disruptive, as a collective resource, with significant symbolic power. This is not to say that all Arab journalists subscribe to these restrictions, or that there is today not a vocal group of both online and print/tv editors and others in the field that disagree strongly with the growing limitations on the media, and the shuttering of outlets found by the regulators and courts to have broken the law.

However, it is difficult to know how much these voices resonate with the sensibilities of society at large. Veteran *Daily Star* journalist Rami Khouri contends, 'The freedom of expression debate … is the wrong issue …, because everyone I know around the world basically agrees that people should be free to speak out and give their opinions on a range of issues,'. In his view, the real issue is the difference in value placed by Western countries on freedom of the individual, and by Middle Eastern countries on communal respect, which for the latter is the most important collective, personal and national value.

This presents a conundrum for journalists practicing in different regions particularly under circumstances of conflict, for it highlights not only differences in their own professional and cultural perspectives, but in how those they are covering and interviewing — including in the language being used, the nature of the information shared, the identities projected, and indeed, the expectations and reception of the story and its ability to convey truth, can be fundamentally different. These are issues in the specific we take up in the next three lessons.

# Sensitivity, objectivity and facts — The journalist's role in framing information relating to conflict

## Part I: The role of media in society

We start with the question, how can journalists covering conflict in regions with different political and cultural values produce stories that are sensitive but likewise good practice, and what does being 'objective' really mean? The answer gets back to the role media plays in society. As a communicator and disseminator of information and ideas, media is often called the '4th Estate', a force operating between what Europeans historically defined as society's three significant, and usually, antagonistic, components — the religious establishment, the landown-ing elite and the people.

Today, media retains its role as a fourth player among society's three — and still competing — modern components: the executive (the elites that lead), the judiciary (the lawmakers) and the legislature (the representatives of the people).

The role of the media, as 4th Estate, is to provide *veritas*, truth, by questioning the agendas and facts put forward by the other three through reporting, investigation, verification, and offering a platform for the voiceless. Media is therefore understood to have two purposes: to serve as a watchdog over government and, to serve the public interest. Media scholars Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) define news media professionalism and objectivity as generally associated with cultivating values such as fairness, independence, and a sense of responsibility to serve the audience.

This is on the one hand idealistic, for the reasons discussed in Lesson 1, and as subject to agendas in the West as they are in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. At the same time, new media has complicated the situation. The 24-hour news cycle, the dissemination of fake and partisan news, the reduction in accountability, and the fragmentation of audiences — all have contributed to journalists facing hurdles that affect their ability to be informative, avoid sensationalism, and yet serve the public interest. This is particularly the case in conflict situations, where no matter what the political nature of government — whether democratic, autocratic, or a hybrid of the two — official, and indeed social, tolerance toward freedoms enjoyed by the media drops.

## Part II: Facts

The core of every story in any situation is the facts. A fact is something that's indisputable, based on empirical research, quantifiable measures, or direct observation. The Oxford Dictionary defines a fact as 'a thing that is known or proved to be true'. This suggests that facts are always true. Yet, facts do not necessarily constitute 'The Truth'. The Truth requires more than facts. As economist Charles Wheelan wrote in his book *Naked Statistics*, 'It is easy to lie with statistics and facts, but it's hard to tell the truth without them.' Facts can be interpreted in different ways in different narratives. To produce truth requires the ability to connect the dots and discern patterns, and to aggregate and summarise facts into statements of cause and effect.

The media provides a vital role in discerning fact from fiction. We assume expertise and a professional attitude on the part of journalists, the gatekeepers and providers of news. This assumption implies something of even more value than expertise and professionalism: Trust. The public relies on journalists to record, investigate, interpret and publish the facts truthfully. Journalists gain trust by offering objective coverage by first obtaining accesses to various sources who tell their own truths, and then juxtaposing these versions of reality into a story that enables the public to arrive at the truth on its own.

As the Network for Ethical Journalism explains, 'Journalism is not just another competing voice in the public information space where all sorts of ideas, opinions and stories (including bias against religious groups) jostle for prominence. It is a specific stream of public information constrained by a framework of values. Journalists cannot say whatever they want.'

To be objective, then, requires verification of facts in a narrative that is fair, sensitive, and encourages trust. Recently, Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism were recognised for driving a cultural shift in the region, from opinion to fact-checked inquiry, a process both ethical, but technically much easier today through apps on the internet. Research at the French academy INSEAD shows that especially in crisis and conflict situations, media offering facts and objectivity was far more potent than adversaries pushing spin (Hunter and Wassenhove 2019). Communicating facts in a manner that is sensitive to society's values, however, is a critical factor.

## Part III: How to understand stories as subtexts

Reporting is a fundamentally human process — ideas, data, and anecdotes all pass through reporters, whose perceptions of the world, areas of interest and biases are all reproduced, often unconsciously, in their reporting — sometimes by omitting information that distorts stories, or by their personal views of national, social, institutional and political factors. Some factors are obvious — such as what the journalists imagine their proprietors or editors might want to read or see. Other factors are more abstract — such as the sense of responsibility to help people, or to 'tell it like it is'. This can have a big impact on the reporting of a sensitive issue, such as gender-based violence, discrimination towards migrants, or on audience responses, such as how younger groups engage.

Stories then are mechanisms that mediate identity, history, politics, society and ethics — that is, beyond the words and facts lies a language that operates as a subtext with layers of meaning. Subtexts articulate cultural symbols, historical associations, author and audience positioning, and many other elements representing self and other. Understanding the language subtext is a fundamental first step to understanding how to produce a story that is both trustworthy and sensitive.

What we say and what others say of us matters because identity is involved. When identity is at stake, one is sensitive — and whatever is said, written, blogged, filmed or projected — can be understood as reflecting on the author, the subject and the expected audience. The journalist will reflect a number of subconscious traits — for example, the need to protect their own image, honour, integrity, and their own cultural values and beliefs — all of which may differ markedly from those of the subject, and at times the audience. This can lead to a level of cultural dissonance for journalists covering foreign conflicts and societies, as over time, understanding 'the other' becomes easier, and journalists will struggle to present stories that conform to the values and interpretations of their home audiences, particularly when conflicts involve complex issues that are difficult to capture in 3-minute segments or short news stories.

The standard questions of 'Who, What, Why, Where and How?', ensure the facts are correct (and should never be ignored). But these same word questions take on a different colouring when posed within the context of meaning: presenting facts so they are true, providing context, and instilling trust through multiple voices. What's more, they do not encompass language and terminology use, issue framing, or other key aspects necessary to produce sensitivity in a story.

## Part IV: Language and terminology

Language describes social worlds from peoples' experience, not objective reality. The link between language and meaning is complex. Language interprets developments by fitting them into a narrative that provides meaning for the past, present and future. Language can evoke beliefs that may be contrary to historical fact, and even science. It translates 'inner speech' or thought into the public space.

Language consists of sound waves or marks on a screen or page, or imagery, that become meaningful because people project some significance into them. Terms and pictures that are repeated in a certain context become shortcuts — called heuristics — that come to evoke certain events or emotions. 'Migration' is currently such a term — instantly conjuring up mental pictures of refugee camps, people crushed into small boats crossing the Mediterranean, and the image of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, dead on a Turkish beach. The term remains volatile, and its use requires sensitivity. As a Hungarian broadcast journalist noted: 'We prefer to use the term 'refugee', as … in Hungarian a 'migrant' is an enemy who will kill us. We could use the term 'migrant', but it is a delicate one as it is widely used by pro-government propaganda.'[5]

Language reflects identity because we each use words that interpret the world the way we understand it. It reflects the 'me', the 'you' that is like me, the 'us' — unlike 'them', those 'others' unlike us. In fact, language defines us from them — and this can include differences between young and old, for example. Young people use social media more easily, being better at online media literacy, and tolerate fake news, hate speech and disinformation dissemination as a normal part of media's language.

### Language creates spectacle — placing people in a world of threats or reassurances.

Power in language means to use words in a way that enables others to recognise their own feelings. Politicians, corporate leaders, journalists, are understood to be powerful because they produce words and language others adopt and follow — and this is a powerful right. Bloggers, personal websites, YouTube films, tweeters have populated all levels of the author/language structure — but have not fundamentally shifted power relations. Organised media and communications networks remain in a position of information dominance — except for the short while when something might go viral.

Power in language enables certain phrasing, framing or interpretation to appear natural, as though it was always that way. However, these are not 'natural' but constructed, through framing, repetition, imagery, etc. Once an interpretation appears 'natural', it becomes accepted without question, so that, for example, when demonstrations in Algeria erupted, it seemed 'natural' that state media would stay silent on the protests. When scuffles broke out between the police and demonstrators, the clashes were the only events that journalists for state-owned media, Canal Algérie and ENTV, filmed and aired, implying they were a central feature of the protests. However, national radio journalists sent an unsigned letter to management attacking the 'decision by the hierarchy to ignore' the rallies. This began a re-calibrating of what was 'natural', with media in Algeria at first hesitatingly, and then more robustly reporting on issues previously constrained by red lines.

An article published on April 19, cited three Algerian media outlets in the first few lines: 'The Algerian authorities are investigating seven Algerian businesspeople on corruption charges after confiscating their passports, reported Ennahar TV… News about the investigation was released after Algerian media announced the arrest of Ali Haddad, a prominent businessman known for his close ties with President Bouteflika. Local news websites indicated that the Algerian authorities issued a travel ban list that included state officials….'[6]

Yet, sensitivity in journalism remains important — and difficult, as reported by Al-Jazeera's Listening Post, when state-owned radio channel, RA1, cancelled Merouane Lounnass's show after 12 years on air, 'because he did not choose his words carefully enough.'[7]

[5] ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/migrants-media-narratives-immigration
[6] middleeastmonitor.com/20190402-algeria-seven-algerian-business-people-with-confiscated-passports-are-being-investigated/
[7] aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2019/03/bouteflika-protests-algeria-shifting-media-space-190317083422948.html

## Part V: The power of framing

Framing is one of the most important instruments of journalism, and particularly when the subject is contentious, such as gender-based violence, human or labour rights abuses, or ethnic discrimination, all of which may be informed by cultural and ideological value differences.

Framing involves selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution (Entman). Framing determines whether a story is boring, sensationalist, informational, one-sided, etc. Two approaches stand out:

1. Substantive, which involves defining effects or conditions as problematic, and then endorsing remedies, such as identifying causes or conveying a moral judgement, to stimulate support or opposition to the sides of a conflict. Support or opposition can be measured through cultural resonance — using terms that are emotionally charged, carry historical symbols, are memorable and evocative, etc. Repetition is a common element of framing, as it increases resonance.
2. Procedural, which defines actors' legitimacy, based on their successes, failures, representativeness, etc. This is called defining the 'game', and occupies much of the news.

A key aspect of framing links to gatekeeping: what is covered, what is not. This includes recognition of the story at all, providing input on only one part of the story, approaching the facts as a straight timeline, or, alternatively, including and highlighting those that create drama (which sells better and is more easily remembered), while ignoring others. The *sin qua non* of dramatic framing is magnification, emphasising elements to favour one interpretation, shrinking others, developing personality labels to create heroes and villains, repeating symbolic imagery, and utilising emotion so audiences respond to the frame instinctively.

Sensitive reporting does not mean having to be boring. It does mean recognising the subtext in emotional language and developing a 'cooler' more detached tone that allows facts to speak for themselves, without evocative adjectives. It means producing verified facts. And taking responsibility for the story.

It requires professional choices, such as focusing on one small element of a story that is otherwise hemmed in by red lines, or joining with journalists from several other outlets to ensure distribution of information — and risk, as for example, in the story of the 17-year-old Khadija in Morocco, whose torture and rape was covered simultaneously by five independent Moroccan media sites, as well as the international press, so Moroccan journalists could point to the inadequacy of the law with less official blowback, and raise the culturally contentious argument that the violators' assumed they would escape unpunished, because in Morocco, the sexual revolution is contained within the zone of piety.[8] Much of the ensuing coverage reflected admirable sensitivity, including facts on assault in Morocco, quotes from families of both victims and perpetrators, and government responses.

Critically, the even-handedness of the stories did not confuse neutrality toward such violence with fair reporting. As noted by INSEAD's Hunter and van Wassenhove, 'Ethical journalism has shifted, and ethical journalists can no longer be objective, but must remain factual and be clear what they stand for, seeking tested truths, and reporting with fairness.' This debate first attained public notice with the coverage of terrorist acts, where the media was faulted for practicing objectivity by giving equal voice to the perpetrators.

Today, the growing adversarial use of news as a mechanism to curate — or indeed create alternative — facts for political purpose, emotionalise the news, and demonise those who fail to be co-opted — a situation long faced by journalists in autocratic states but joined more recently by journalists in many parts of the West — mean the role of media as 4th estate is all the more important. Exercising principle in journalism means that neutrality is not the same as objectivity.

They key is sensitive reporting, using the lessons of covering conflict situations and applying them to the everyday, meaning journalists must recognise their own values and cultural biases, and the power of the language they use, in order to present stories that are true, fair and trustworthy.

[8] liberation.fr/debats/2018/08/28/viol-de-la-fille-aux-tatouages-qui-va-sauver-les-femmes-marocaines_1674817

# Military and social conflicts in media

## Part I: Contrasting military and social conflicts

Military and social conflicts differ in two significant ways in relation to media coverage:

1. Military conflicts include organised information control by combatant organisations, which reduces access for journalists, unless they are embedded with the troops. In the case of Syria, for example, information and source management by the Syrian, Russian and US governments and many of the other fighting groups has been a significant factor; on the other hand, few journalists have been embedded in that conflict, unlike in Iraq, for example.

2. Military conflicts engage players from multiple nationalities and with multiple agendas — today even civil wars (such as in Syria, Yemen, and previously Lebanon) fit that description, unlike social conflicts which tend to be contained within states, and occur between government and people or different ethnic groups. Access to government and military leaders is difficult, and when obtained, not easily repeated.

   The complexity of the players in military conflicts makes on-the-ground coverage both dangerous and confusing, and journalists undertaking such coverage will usually be from major regional channels, such as *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya*, Anglo-American media such as the BBC, or wire services such as Reuters or AFP. Coverage by smaller regional and national media rely on short visits by their own reporters and reporting by local journalists, and tend to use foreign reports around which they use quotes from home government sources, street commentary, and local expert opinion.

   This contrasts significantly with coverage of social conflicts, such as the demonstrations in Algeria, or the migrant crises in Morocco and Lebanon, in which journalists, both local and from abroad, can easily witness the action, obtain quotes from multiple points of view, move around relatively freely, and access officials easily through briefings and by developing personal relationships over time.

Yet military and social conflicts also share a number of common elements:

1. They are points of engagement between players with strong differences of opinion and programme, in which identity, values, and views on social organisation and political goals, among other issues, differ sufficiently that conflict between them has ensued.

2. They are events in which emotions run high, and commitments on both sides to attaining their goals has hardened.

3. They tend to be uncharted, and will often be chaotic.

4. What the media says about them plays an important role in how they are seen, understood, and directed. 'The media in the modern era,' observed Payne in 2005, 'are indisputably an instrument of war. This is because winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield. And it remains true regardless of the aspirations of many journalists to give an impartial and balanced assessment of conflict.' The same can be said in 2018 of the media's importance to the conduct of social conflict.

Payne's point on the role of media in swaying public opinion, regardless of their intentions to be impartial and balanced relates directly to the issues we have discussed in these lessons — how values consciously or unconsciously are being projected, how sources are utilised, and how framing of narratives that surround the facts create meanings that can accurately tell a story — or distort it, and that can address issues with sensitivity or ignore context for the sake of promoting a specific picture.

## Part II: Framing, sources and eye-witness accounts: Values in Lebanese broadcasts of the Syrian War

The following detailed discussion draws on a study by Daryl Carr of Lebanon's television coverage of the Syrian war in the early years (2012–2013). The study found that framing, the choice of sources, and the use of eye-witness accounts varied markedly across the Christian channels LBC and MTV and the Hezbollah Shia channel al-Manar, leading to significant differences in reportage and messaging.

**Framing**: According to Carr, MTV most frequently talked about the Syrian crisis from a humanitarian perspective. Its focus was on how the Lebanese government was absorbing large numbers of displaced Syrians, who were fleeing because violent conflicts between opposition forces and the government had stalled the economy and destroyed infrastructure. International intervention, it argued, was required immediately to stop the civilian suffering.

LBC frequently used the humanitarian angle as well, but dedicated more time to the repercussions of the conflict on international politics. It foregrounded how Turkey and Iran were responding to the developing events, while also describing the internal bargaining within the UN Security Council, highlighting disagreements over next steps between Russia, China, and the United States. LBC presented the Syrian crisis as a problem that was polarising global politics in addition to threatening Lebanon's stability.

Al-Manar framed the Syrian crisis very differently than the other two, seeing it as the result of an illegitimate insurrection by anti-democratic rebels. It presented the Syrian government as defending the well-being of its citizens while the rebels were depicted as foreign proxies meant to destabilise an anti-Western regime.

As Carr notes, 'The story is almost the complete inverse of LBC's framing. While LBC portrayed the conflict as polarising global politics, al-Manar portrayed global schisms as tearing Syria apart.' What this suggests is that the al-Manar's and LBC's audiences, though living in close proximity to each other, were receiving substantially different interpretations on the crisis, the role of its major actors, the impact on Lebanese society, and the likely outcomes — all based on facts and verifiable footage.

**Sources**: The choice of experts and government officials can support any chosen frame, and will impact the nature of the reportage. Carr's research is revealing: 'The stations sources had a strong influence on how the stories were constructed.' MTV frequently framed the stories using commentary from Lebanese or international observers with sparing use of Syrian voices. As a result, the Syrian crisis felt distant and less immediate. The only sense of immediacy was when reports covered the Lebanese government's response to the influx of refugees, and included the refugee complaints about the depravations they were suffering, and their fears that instability would spread to Lebanese society.

LBC and al-Manar tended to use more statements issued by groups within Syria. LBC frequently repeated statements by both opposition and regime figures. Al-Manar tended to limit its quotations to statements from Syrians officials. Al-Manar also included statements from organisations that represented Syria's civil society and were cooperating with the government. LBC frequently showed refugees who had fled to Lebanon, in contrast to al-Manar, which, with only occasional exceptions, ignored the influx of refugees.

**Eye-witness accounts**: According to Carr, when LBC and MTV employed eye-witness accounts, they were used to humanise stories of civilian suffering. Contrastingly, al-Manar used civilian accounts in order to illustrate efforts by the Syrian government to ease suffering caused by armed rebel groups.

In Carr's words, 'All three of the stations routinely edited footage of eye witnesses to an extent that the context for their comments was determined predominantly by the newscaster's commentary'. This last observation reflects how media, even when using direct quotes and input from a variety of sources, will shift meanings to fit a particular frame, producing 'news' that is specific to an agenda and evokes values that link the report and the journalist to a known audience. Fitting witness accounts into a specific frame is a common technique used by interviewers, who will set up the source to answer leading questions, or edit out parts that do not support the message.

What all three broadcasters achieve is to tie together the Syrian crisis, Lebanese politics and regional dynamics, in a process that allows them to suggest linkages between Lebanese opposition groups and their Syrian equivalents, as well as between the legitimacy of the Lebanese state and that of Bashar al-Assad, and the meddling of international powers both at home and in Syria.

The angles taken differ widely, but the overlapping themes are presented by all three with examples and language designed to promote emotional responses: anger for the suffering of the Syrians, pride at Lebanon's generosity in offering refuge, fear of international power agendas. This linkage allows journalists to reap a double effect from their reporting by bringing foreign stories, and voices, into perspective through domestic associations, and vice versa.

The Syria story also offered the opportunity to produce very different arguments around local issues: For al-Manar, the Syrian rebels were causing chaos and civilian suffering by attempting to topple a legitimate regime, much as Nasrallah's opponents were doing in Lebanon; for LBC, there was a need to protect Lebanese politics from the threat of Syria, a viewpoint it used the Maronite Patriarch to address when he stated it was a shame that Lebanese elections were being delayed due to instability in Syria, a subtle attack on Syrian refugees for preventing Lebanon's citizens from exercising their democratic right to vote; MTV structured its coverage to imply that events in Syria could lead to an increase in sectarian violence in Lebanon.

These different story message reflect in part the plurality characteristic of Lebanon that is maintained by the fractured nature of the media sector, and as noted in a previous lesson, the extreme partisanship of Lebanese media is unusual, though beneficial for this analysis in that the contrasts in presentation are significant, and would be less visible elsewhere in the Middle East. What can be further attested, is that the linkage between conventional and social media in terms of political and confessional orientation remains strong in Lebanon, meaning that the frames and agendas produced by the different stations had their parallel in much of the online activity.

## Part III: Covering terrorism and islamophobia: Contrasting values in Middle East and European media coverage

Terrorism is an issue for the societies, and media that represents them, on both sides of the Mediterranean. For much of the past two decades, the majority of the terrorism in both Europe and the Middle East has been generated by Muslim extremists. This places the emphasis on historical associations, values, beliefs and intentions in a different framework for Muslim countries and Western ones. Muslim extremist violence has had a longer history in the Middle East, including the assassination of the Persian King Nasr-din Shah in the 1896, and Egyptian President Sadat in the 1981. The perpetrators share the same body of belief as the Islamic-dominated societies of the Middle East, though laced with a violent ideology rejected by their populations and leaders alike.

Yet once translated to Europe, the distinction between violent jihadism and Muslim practice became blurred, and Islamophobia took root, as much within the media as in government and among the citizenry. Complicated by the migrant crisis, the coverage of terrorism has exhibited important differences in the Middle East and Europe, with Islamophobic language, terminology and emotional resonances figuring consistently in European reporting.

This does not mean that all European reporting lacks sensitivity and context; nor that all Moroccan, Algerian or Lebanese reporting, for example, is even-handed. What it does mean is that journalistic vigilance is necessary, not only to avoid possible pitfalls of misinterpretation, but to acknowledge sensitivities on the part of Islamic, including the diaspora, communities.

On the day after the terrorist attack in Paris on the Bataclan Concert Hall, the editor of *Deutsche Welle* online, Alexander Kudascheff wrote: This 'Black Friday' will change Europe, even though no one yet knows where the 'IS' assassins came from. Were they from the banlieues? From the suburbs of French cities, where parallel societies of rootless young people with a Muslim background have long been a reality, where — as a book by the Algerian writer Sansal describes it — 'men with long beards call the shots' and the rejection of the French and Western lifestyle is total?

This would only add fuel to the fire of the European, and especially the German, debate on migration.' On the surface, this is a straightforward description that Kudascheff carefully constructed to avoid emotionalism and bias. But it does not entirely succeed. What Kudascheff does not acknowledge, is that Islamic violent resurgence is therefore not about religion per se, but an expression of marginality. To miss this social context is to miss its primary importance, which conveyed a mixed message to a large audience.

Many in the French, and other European media that covered the attacks were less careful in their references and use of language than Kudascheff. Soon after the truck attack in Nice in 2016, for example, Prime Minister François Fillon declared, 'This radical Islam is plaguing some of our fellow citizens. It challenges our common values. I will not allow this. I want strict administrative control of the Muslim religion before it takes root within the Republic'.

Fillon's loose linkage between radical Islam and administrative control of the Muslim religion in general gave an opening to journalists to do the same. What Fillon accomplished was to securitise the concept of Muslim, that is, to turn it into an object that is dangerous, and hence, in need of security to contain it.

Securitisation creates a system of language, symbols and narratives around the object that imbues it with threat and risk, and links it to other securitised objects, such as migrant. Media is instrumental not only in disseminating such narratives and the images that accompany them, but creating labels and shouty headlines that designed to capture audience attention, promoting further fear and prejudice, leading to broad assumptions that, for example, all Muslims are dangerous, and Islam is a religion that supports terrorism.

A report out this year by the Ethical Journalism Network looking at how Muslims are portrayed in the media, has measured rising levels of anti-Muslim hate crime across Europe, and incidents of discrimination which increase following terrorist attacks. 'These may be the work of violent extremist minorities' it acknowledges, 'but within many communities, there is deep-seated anxiety about identity and cultural values which is being readily exploited by extremists groups and, indeed, by some national political leaders. These realities put journalists and their professional ethics to the test — to report accurately, fairly and with humanity on Muslim and Islamic affairs and to effectively counter hate speech and anti-Muslim bias.'[9]

In covering terrorist attacks, expressing outrage is not contrary to media ethics, but succumbing to the use of violent language and symbols is, as that serves neither the public good, nor indeed, helps to hold the government to account. Appropriate media coverage is as much about conscience as facts, giving readers and viewers a full perspective, and helping them confront hatred and discrimination through the narrative.

That many victims of the terrorist atrocities in Europe were Muslim was picked up much more frequently, for example, in the media coverage in Morocco and Algeria than Europe. They featured victims' families and friends as often describing the perpetrators in words similar to Mohamed El Bachiri, quoted in *Al Jazeera*, 'If you think that taking innocent lives and creating traumas is a form of justice, even of God's justice, then you and I do not belong to the same religion.'[10] Yet this message was not often presented to European populations, who frequently were quoted as feeling that Muslims did not take responsibility nor speak out strongly enough against the jihadis.

Journalism has a critical role to play in bridging such fears and misunderstandings among communities divided by this kind of social conflict. It is therefore worth remembering how *Le Monde*, deeply concerned about the rumour-mongering and intolerance on social media, in magazines and the press after the Paris terror attacks on Charlie Hebdo in November 2015, felt the need to remind its readers 'that the role of journalism is an antidote to the poison of lies and prejudice.'[11]

[9] ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/muslims-media-tolerance-diversity/introduction
[10] www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2018/08/victim-attacks-affected-muslims-europe-180801145915309.html
[11] ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/muslims-media-tolerance-diversity/bias-news-reporting-terrorism

# Part two

## Journalistic contest

# Journalistic contest

## Overview

The journalistic contest of the Journalistic Craft for Neighbourhood project organised by the College of Europe Natolin Campus was open to all the participants in the Journalistic Craft for Neighbourhood project who have participated in the in-person JCN workshops and study visits in August 2019 or November 2019.

JCN Contest submissions could have been submitted in a written, audio or video format. Written submissions may have been accompanied by photos or video footage. Each JCN Contest submission had to be the entrant's own original work.

Pieces in the following formats were accepted (list non-exhaustive):

- An informational piece — e.g. a report, feature story, reportage;
- A commentary/op-ed — e.g. journalistic commentary, a feuilleton or critique, a review, or an essay;
- Other — e.g. an interview, a debate, a blog.

Preferred focus areas included, but were not limited to:

- mutual relationship between the EU and the ENP;
- the state of the media sector in selected countries and/or regions;
- freedom of speech;
- women's rights, minority rights, democratic governance, respect for human rights, freedom of religion, rule of law;
- developing digital society.

Evaluation of submissions used the following criteria:

- Journalistic merit, strength of story and angle;
- Commitment to principles of ethical journalism;
- Originality and approach;
- Regional (EU, ENP-East, ENP-South) relevance or inter-regional relevance;
- Incorporation of journalistic craft topics found in the JCN obligatory e-learning courses, topics addressed during relevant workshops/study visits, and/or non-obligatory JCN e-learning courses.

Seven journalists were awarded.

First place:

- Karine ASATRYAN (1st place, ENP-East)
- Al Mustapha SGUENFLE (1st place, ENP-South)
- Lucy FULFORD (1st place, EU)

Second place:

- Fatma BABAYEVA (2nd place, ENP-East)
- Hagar OMRAN (2nd place, ENP-South)
- Lucia POSTERARO (2nd place, EU)

Third place (not awarded for ENP):

- Katarina GULAN (3rd place, EU)

The winning stories are presented below in their original unedited forms without references.

# 1st place, ENP-East: FakeBattles without rules

## *Karine Asatryan*

On Sunday, I felt like Don Quixote as if I was fighting the windmills, and in the end, I was left with a broken spear. Everything started when my colleague, who had returned from abroad, published a photo on the Facebook page of A1+, a media outlet, showing how salt was being scattered by hand in the streets after the snowfall. Astonished by this photo that they fight against ice in the same way as about 20 years ago, he had captioned the photo: 'B.C.'

Though the sidewalks had become impassable and icy after several hours of snow, a flood of comments began beneath that photo, particularly, 'Do not you see how the authorities work?'

After removing another profanity with sexual content and asking not to swear, I realised that 'I am fighting' against fake profiles—with fake photos and names—for about three hours. Reading the comments, it was obvious that the picture would be the same if the photo title were in a positive sense.

The sense of wasted time reminded me of a conversation that happened last night when my interlocutor had expressed very strictly about fake profiles, considering them an insult against real profiles.

Anzhela, my interlocutor, had explained it this way: If you falsify your passport details, the law will punish you; it should be the same with social media, as social media become an integral part of our lives, and we trust virtual friends—sharing our most sincere moments and feelings.

What to do with fake profiles?

### Facebook battles

The Velvet Revolution that has taken place in Armenia in 2018 continues on Facebook, but calling it 'velvet' is already wrong. There are two main 'armies' on Facebook: revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, and the battles between these armies are taking place without any rules.

On April 4 of last year, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan urged the National Security Service of Armenia (NSS) to fight against fakes in a way that will not put the right to freedom of speech and expression at risk.

The NSS does not respond to the question of A1+ about how many fake accounts have been revealed in the course of ten months without putting the right to freedom of speech at risk.

However, the public has been only informed about two cases of fakes yet, and according to the NSS, both of these cases have been in their spotlight and were charged with causing significant damage to the national security interests of the Republic of Armenia.

By the way, after Nikol Pashinyan's well-known order to the NSS, Samvel Martirosyan, a Social Media and Information security analyst, doubted the fact whether it would be possible to implement such security without putting the freedom of speech at risk. 'I do not understand what kind of mechanisms would be implemented in this case, especially when taking into account the fact that Armenia does not have the legislative restrictions for such things,' he said.

## 'Political' battle of fakes

'I am in the target of some people's fake 'armies.' I guess there is a task to comment on every word and idea which are posted on social media in order to humiliate my dignity,' says Ani Samsonyan, the deputy of the RA NA 'Bright Armenia' Faction.

According to the opposition MP, these attacks are permanent, but they are especially active on the days when she criticizes the Armenian authorities. This circumstance has convinced her that these 'attacks' by fake accounts have been directed by the authorities; 'It is logical, is not it? Who else should I associate these activities with?'

'I do not know about such information,' Shake Isayan, the opposition MP from 'Prosperous Armenia' faction, says to the question on so-called fake 'armies.'

She cannot say whether there is a specific force, that fights on social platforms using fake accounts, but she can say that their activity is obvious.

'From time to time, when one shares his\her opinion, which the other political forces do not agree with, some fakes accounts start actively commenting on the announcement,' she says.

Kristine Poghosyan, a member of the parliamentary majority 'My Step' faction, was surprised by the opinions of her colleagues about the Armenian authorities and the faker accounts.

'I urge all those who have such information about the fake accounts to apply us and we will deal with that problem through law enforcement. I exclude such a ruling style of the current governing,' she says.

Kristine Poghosyan also insists that fakes are not only cursing but also threatening her. She brought the example of her interview with a media outlet about the names of Hrayr Tovmasyan, the head of Constitutional Court of RA, Arthur Vanetsyan, a former head of the NSS of Armenia, and Robert Kocharyan, the second President of Armenia.

'I received hundreds of letters with threats and curses. A lot of posts have been made with my photo, using my words out of context,' the deputy says. 'The criticism should never be followed with a curse, I can criticise any political or public figure, but I shall never use any cursing word because it speaks of a person's educational low level.'

Arpi Davoyan, another MP of 'My Step' faction, also demands proof from the opposition for the statement that the government has fake accounts and tries to offend the critics with their help. 'Let them prove it. I can also make any statement without proof.'

Generally, she believes that a local fight against fakes is impossible. She has learned herself to ignore the Facebook comments: 'I do not have that much time to read all Facebook posts.'

But the fact is that not everyone is able to ignore such cursings under their posts.

How to fight against such comments on social media?

'I always say that there is no state that will show such a legislative initiative through which fake accounts on social networking will be eliminated. It is a fairy tale,' says Ani Samsonyan, a deputy of the 'Bright Armenia' faction.

According to her, the solution to such an issue should be unique, every user must 'clean' his\her social media account. First of all Ani Samsonyan emphasizes the politicians, who do not delete the cursings made on their posts.

'According to the Civil Code of Armenia, the cursing is punishable when you apply to the court to receive moral compensation. But on Facebook everyone is cursing, sometimes you do not know that person and cannot identify him\her in order to apply to the Court and demand compensation. It means that it's left to an individual— to me, to those users who do not tolerate insults on their pages,' she says.

Deputy Kristine Poghosyan reminds me that a few months ago she was for criminalising the blasphemy, but then she realised that the source of such a phenomenon is not the law. 'We cannot eliminate blasphemy in a day, because it speaks of the educational level of a person, and we must fight against it by rising the educational level,' the deputy says.

Arman Babajanyan, an independent MP, introduced the draft fake news law in December 2019 to criminalise the spread of fake news. But there is nothing in this draft about cursing users.

As for the disseminated fakes, it is obvious for new government that they have become a political tool in the hands of the supporters of the former authorities. By the way, the two fakes that the NSS has identified have been charged with inciting national, racial or religious hatred. Otherwise, they would not be arrested for spreading fake information.

## Facebook 'civic' war

Last year the court satisfied Marina Poghosyan's, 'Veles' human right non-governmental organisation president's claim and imposed user Astghik Ter-Sahakyan to apologise and pay AMD 500,000 for making an offensive and sneaky note.

And this is not the only claim of Marina Poghosyan against her offender on Facebook. As Datalex Information System reports, the second case is still in process. The same system notifies that there are more Facebook posts that have reached the court, and it is obvious that there can be scandalous cases involving politicians. There is already a case like this.

At the end of last year, President of the National Assembly of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan applied to the court to claim against Narek Simonyan, the president of 'Civic Conscience' NGO, for his Facebook post that insulted and sneaked his honor, dignity and business reputation, demanding 3.5 million AMD (7000 euros).

## Forced labour

While wars against fake accounts continue, Armenian media outlets have to create a special job for 'cleaners' for moderation in the social platforms. Unlike the lawmakers, they cannot ignore those comments, as there is a precedential decision by the ECHR, when at Delfi AS v. Estonia case the online media outlet lost for not removing the offensive comments. To note, in the aforesaid case the issue was the comments on the website and not on social media, but who knows…

Armenia has its own precedent when a journalist was fined AMD 50,000 for Facebook post and forced the journalist to disseminate a refutation as while publishing a post about a certain media outlet 'no activity to check its authenticity was carried out'.

According to the medial experts, this decision equaled Facebook post to a journalistic article published on the media outlet and the judgment was made according to its status.

'Saturday cleansing days on Facebook' coming next

# 1st place, ENP-South: From Libyc Writing to Graphisation[12]

***Al Mustapha Sguenfle***

Morocco is a country of a solid tradition of transcribing the Amazigh language in Arabic letters, especially in the Souss region. However, this tradition has not erased all tracks of the original Amazigh alphabet, the Tifinagh, whose letters adorn rocks and epitaphs along extensive geographical areas in Morocco and throughout North Africa.

Many of these tracks date back to ancient times and refer to what experts call 'Libyan script', derived from the name the ancient Greeks used for the Amazigh people.

According to El Mahfoud Asmahri, researcher in the ancient history of North Africa at the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (Institut royal de la culture amazighe, IRCAM), this alphabet was used in North Africa several centuries prior to the arrival of Islam, before gradually disappearing in the areas bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

The Tifinagh, however, was still used by nomads living in desert areas, which remained safe from the influences of ancient Mediterranean writings, said Mr. Asmahri in a statement to the Moroccan News Agency (MAP).

Mr. Asmahri explained that experts have distinguished three regional branches of Libyan or Libyco-Berber writing; the first in eastern North Africa (the area between nowadays Libya and eastern Algeria), the second is west of ancient Morocco and nowadays western Algeria, while the third was used in the Saharan region, where the Tuareg people granted it a symbolic value.

Falling into disuse for centuries, Tifinagh made its return in Morocco starting from the second half of the past century thanks to associations which were active in promoting the Amazigh cultural and linguistic rights.

Since the speech delivered by King Mohammed VI in 2001 in Ajdir, the importance of the Tifinagh script has grown steadily. Following the constitutionalisation of the Amazigh language in Morocco in 2011, the process of adopting Tifinagh has gained momentum.

It has also been at the heart of one of the most important projects on which the IRCAM researchers worked on, namely the codification and the development of the Tifinagh script in order to transcribe and spread the standard Amazigh language in Morocco.

'Tifinagh is the main technical means for conveying and transcribing the Amazigh language, and integrating it in all fields, particularly those of high priority, such as education, media and translation', said Abdeslam Boumisser, a researcher at IRCAM's Language Planning Centre, to the MAP.

According to Mr. Boumisser, the process of the graphisation of Tifinagh is based on precise and gradual methodological choices which, in turn, are underpinned by basic principles such as historicity, economy and harmonisation.

[12] Originally published in Agence marocaine de presse (MAP), and republished republished in other Moroccan paper and electronic media outlets

This endeavor aimed also at respecting the principle of unambiguity, which means that each sound is equivalent to a letter, in addition to that of simplicity which is freeing the proposed graphic system of any technical complication that could limit its dissemination.

This task required a meticulous study of many Tifinagh transcriptions in previous contexts and a familiarisation with aspects of the different adopted written forms, said Mr. Boumisser.

He added that two field studies were conducted by the IRCAM in partnership with the Ministry of National Education in 2010 and 2012, and both testified to the success of the graphisation of the Tifinagh script.

The first study had a diagnostic nature and focused on learning reading and writing in Tifinagh script, while the second focused on evaluating the academic performance of primary-school students in reading and writing in the Amazigh language.

Both studies show that learning reading and writing in Tifinagh alphabet does not pose any difficulties for learners, noted Abdeslam Boumisser.

In addition, the Tifinagh has succeeded in taking over the national public space by appearing on the fronts of certain public and private institutions, said Mr. Boumisser, adding that this alphabet also appears on some websites, and was successfully used in various published studies and translations.

At the continental level, the Tifinagh script, as developed by the IRCAM, has been used to transcribe the Amazigh language in certain countries of the Greater Maghreb, such as Algeria, Libya and Tunisia. Training sessions have been organised for this purpose to allow different users to master its use.

# 1st place, EU:

# No place to call home — instability for Ukraine's displaced population[13]

***Lucy Fulford***

When intense fighting broke out in 2014 near Svetlana Kozlova's apartment in Donetsk, where she was raising her newborn daughter, she didn't want to leave. But when a mortar attack blew out the windows, she packed her family's bags and they fled for their lives within the hour.

Five years later she is one of 300 people still living in grey container blocks erected on the outskirts of Ukraine's second city of Kharkiv to house — supposedly temporarily — the flow of internally displaced people (IDPs) escaping conflict in the country's eastern Donbas region.

Russian-backed armed separatists seised swathes of Donetsk and Luhansk — the provinces that make up Donbas — in the wake of the 2014 Euromaidan protests that saw president Viktor Yanukovych flee the country and the subsequent annexation of Crimea by Russia.

The conflict between the government and the forces of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics has claimed 13,000 lives — including more than 3,000 civilians. It has also wounded 30,000 people and left 3.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

Kharkiv Oblast bore the brunt of the initial exodus, with 250,000 people coming through in 2014. With no resolution to the conflict in sight, displacement is becoming increasingly protracted for 130,000 IDPs remaining in the region.

Nationally, 1.4 million IDPs from Donbas, Crimea, and Sevastopol are registered by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, with the largest numbers in the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kyiv, and Kharkiv.

While the majority of those displaced across Kharkiv province live in rented apartments, families residing in the modular grey container homes live under fear of eviction from a site that has long passed its use-by date.

## A life of instability

'Normally, you do not live in these conditions for such a long time,' said 54-year-old Natalia Yefimava, who has been living in the block since the separatists occupied Donetsk in 2014. 'This is a temporary solution, but it has turned permanent. It's enough for survival. We got so used to it that, at times, it feels like it's for life.'

With her wheelchair-bound adopted daughter, finding private accommodation has proved impossible and she says the 6,000 Ukrainian hryvnia ($238) disability pension they receive each month would not cover rent for an apartment for their family of three. When families have been offered alternative housing, it has often been in the form of beds for the infirm in hospices or hospitals.

Lack of housing, income, and employment opportunities remain the biggest issues for IDPs trying to integrate, according to a March 2019 survey by the UN's

[13] Originally published in The New Humanitarian

migration agency, IOM. Only half of those surveyed said they felt integrated into local communities.

'The IDP town was supposed to house people for a few months,' said Yuri Shparaga, head of the Social Security Directorate for the Kharkiv Regional State Administration. 'It was not meant to withstand the elements for years, so the roofs and walls are crumbling. Now, we face accommodating these people permanently, because many cannot return to the occupied territories. Nobody expected the war to last this long.'

Many people remaining at the Kharkiv centre have high needs — from single mothers to the disabled or the elderly, or the 130 children growing up on site.

Kozlova, 40, is one of the minority of residents who is working, hand-sewing clothes from a corner of the two-cubicle home her family of five recently moved into after years in a single 13-square-metre room. Her salary, combined with her husband's pay for ad hoc labour, just covers their electricity bills.

'If we didn't have this place, we would have had to go back [to the occupied territories] because renting here is expensive,' she said. 'We are even ready to move out of the city into a rural area for a permanent place where we  would not have the risk of eviction. The main difficulty is starting anew, as it's hard to find a job if you are not settled.'

Her 16-year-old son struggles to commit to future plans, because of the question marks over his future. 'It's very difficult for children to move all the time,' said Kozlova. 'My son does not know if he should start anything, because we might have to move at any time.'

For the larger proportion of IDPs across the region who rent, housing costs remain a major burden. 'We have a semi-basement apartment, but because of the demand, it is the same cost as a normal apartment,' said pre-school teacher Irina Slyucareva, aged 51, from Horlivka, Donetsk, who is adjusting to life in a small village near Izyum, Kharkiv, with her nine-year-old son. 'Housing conditions are bad, but we are thankful, after living in a hotel for a year.'

## Permanent displacement

Vartan Muradian, assistant field officer in Kharkiv for the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, said that a comprehensive programme of affordable housing solutions was a very acute need for the province.

'IDP households residing in rented accommodation feel highly insecure as the local markets are inadequate and continued discrimination — on the basis of the area of origin, persons with disabilities or families with many children — make it difficult to find appropriate living conditions for a reasonable price,' he said.

The government launched a national IDP strategy at the end of 2018 to move from dealing with primary needs to defining long-term solutions. However, its impact has been limited, partially due to its lack of inclusion in the current budget, said Valijon Ranoev, from the UN's emergency aid coordination body, OCHA, in Ukraine.

'While some progress has been made, large numbers of IDPs remain in protracted displacement, and overall income for IDPs remains below the minimum wage,' he said. The average monthly IDP household income is half the national Ukrainian average.

At the local level, projects are underway to rehouse and support IDPs permanently. In Izyum, a city of 50,000 with 7,000 registered IDPs, a former Soviet-era kindergarten has been refurbished into dormitory housing that will soon open for IDPs and veterans.

The project is one of many developments in the country being funded by the European Investment Bank (EIB) to support areas that have had the highest influx of IDPs. Through the EIB's emergency credit programme for Ukraine, Kharkiv has 13 projects underway to increase capacity at schools and hospitals to cater to the growing IDP population, including new surgical, ophthalmology, and cardiology wards in the city.

Kharkiv's Social Security Directorate is also in discussions with funders to develop 75 new houses to rehome families living in the outdated units. 'The IDPs have the same basic rights as every person in Ukraine and we need to supply them with the facilities,' said Shparaga.

While many IDPs are resigned to settling permanently outside Donbas, others still hope to return to their own homes one day. 'Some people want to stay, but I'm ready to sign an obligation that says when the war ends, I will leave,' said Kozlova. For now, she remains in purgatory waiting to see if her family will be moved from their container home. 'Here I have understood the true meaning of 'live for the day'.'

# 2nd place, ENP–East: The Media Landscape of Azerbaijan

## *Fatma Babayeva*

You are what you consume — This is especially true when it comes to the information that you get daily. If you do not have free media, your mind will be fed by a propaganda machine that promulgates the interests of a certain group of people in your country. Consequently, you will end up being exposed to the one-sided and often biased viewpoint. The poor and corrupt educational system and low media literacy level among the population may compound the situation even further.

After Azerbaijan regained its independence from the USSR in 1991, many hoped that the things for the country will get better. Nevertheless, it was not the case. The Press Freedom Index (by the Reporters Without Borders) fell gradually from 101 (2002) to 166 (2019) among 180 countries along with worsening human rights situation in the country and a range of journalists being prosecuted, harassed, beaten, blackmailed, kidnapped, arrested on trumped-up charges and/or killed.

Journalism is not considered a prestigious job in Azerbaijan since it is low-paid. Plenty of journalists around me view their current occupation as a career ladder leading to the press secretary and/or PR officer positions at the major governmental institutions. Additionally, the programme of allocating around 200 apartments to the journalists and reporters as a gift by the President on the National Press Day of Azerbaijan, which is the first such case in the world's media practice, incentivizes media workers to praise the incumbent rulers and prove themselves as avid supporters of the regime. In other words, rewarding its advocates and punishing its critics is the government's way to muzzle the press in the country.

On the whole, the media outlets in Azerbaijan can be divided into two groups: pro-governmental and oppositional. It is noteworthy that it is hard to find a media outlet in the country, which can be evaluated as a neutral one. The broadcasting sphere is completely dominated by the pro-governmental TV and radio channels. The oppositional media function in digital form and use social media platforms to disseminate its outputs. The access to the latter one is often blocked by the government within the territory of the country. They also frequently encounter troll and DDOS attacks and/or their social media accounts are hijacked.

Last year (2019), I had a chance to visit some media organisations in Berlin and London, which exposed me to the Western media environment and armed me with necessary insights to compare local media in my country to the one in Europe.

The first thing that caught my eye was the business mind of the western media people. In Azerbaijan, the media is either largely subsidised by the state or foreign donors. Full-time journalists and media managers are not concerned about how much the journalistic material they produce will sell or how much revenue it will bring to them. Consequently, it kills the competition in the media market for the audience, which in turn, makes journalists reluctant to improve the quality of their work and be innovative.

Similarly, the pro-governmental news agencies in Azerbaijan spread the news they get from the state institutions and/or they produce themselves in an open format to the public. Thus, traditional news wiring practices and business ties do not exist between news agencies and media outlets. To put it differently, many media outlets play the role of re-circulating the same news published on the websites of the state news agencies. The mainstream media in the country has lost the classic watchdog function of the media.

Another problem in the Azerbaijani media is the professionalism of the journalists. When I started working as a reporter in one of the local newspapers in 2016, I had neither an educational background nor work experience in journalism, like many people working in this field. It was not required either. I just needed to follow the instruction of my editors. There was no place for criticism and negativity in our writings. We always reported from a positive news angle. Sometimes, it made me have an uneasy feeling inside when I knew what I wrote did not reflect reality.

After a while, I attended journalism trainings and courses organised by civil society organisations both in Azerbaijan and abroad. Surprisingly, I found out that the news writing structure my editors taught me while I was working in the newspaper was of Soviet-style — starting with a sophisticated introduction and leaving the main newsworthy part towards the end of the article instead of providing a lead at the beginning. Unfortunately, this old school journalism is still what is kept being taught at the journalism faculties of the local universities in Azerbaijan.

In Azerbaijani media, sometimes, any may come across the news taken from other websites without properly attributing to the source. In some cases, journalists do not bother verifying the facts they re-publish, which every now and then contributes to the spread of disinformation.

The ethics of journalism is also recurrently compromised while covering the news on underage or minority groups.

There are no protection mechanisms or entities for journalists and free speech in the country, except for a small number of NGOs and human rights defenders. Regulatory bodies of the press, trade unions and/or journalist associations fail to ensure freedom of expression. Liquidation of the Lawyers' Representation Institution in early 2018 and giving full control to the state-controlled Bar Association on practicing law in the country made the situation much worse.

It is unfortunate that under such harsh and poor circumstances, not all of us are brave enough to remain loyal to the principles of real journalism and practice free speech. Most of us do not want to put ourselves and/or our beloved ones under the risk at the expense of risking our future as a nation.

# 2nd place, ENP–South: EBRD, Egypt discuss developing country's water desalination sector[14]

## *Hagar Omran*

*Offering military owned enterprises on EGX to unlock FDI to Egypt, says Harmgart*

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) discusses with the Egyptian government developing the country's water desalination sector, said Heike Harmgart, Managing Director for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEMED) region at the Bank.

'We want to potentially prepare a number of desalination plants on a public–private partnership (PPP) basis in the same manner we prepared the 6th of October Dry Port Project which was recently awarded to a large private sector consortium,' Harmgart added.

Interestingly, EBRD's interest in developing Egypt's desalination sector is in line with the country's efforts to face water shortage issues through alternative solutions due to the shaky outcomes of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations.

Egypt is expanding the implementation of desalination projects with costs worth EGP 200bn which will increase to EGP 300bn in 2020, President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said on 13 October 2019.

Political events in some countries in the SEMED region do have an effect on the economy and the overall business environment which includes the appetite of foreign investors, she added.

'As a development Bank, we are more resilient to political events and we are committed for the long run to develop the economies of our countries of operations, not only through our financial support but also by strengthening their governance and by creating an enabling investment climate as well,' she assured.

Daily News Egypt seised Harmgart's first interview to the Egyptian media since assuming office in December 2019, to learn more about the Bank's plans for 2020 in Egypt and SEMED region, transcript of which is below, lightly edited for clarity;

**What is EBRD's plan for Egypt in 2020?**

Egypt has done very well in putting forward the reforms over the last three years and is becoming more dynamic, competitive, and attractive to foreign investors.

We will continue in 2020 investing across all sectors and increasing our support to the private sector, which accounted for 80% of our financing in 2019.

Equity is an important sector for us and we try to do more this year however they are limited compared to the loans we provide.

[14] Originally published in Daily News Egypt

**What is the share of the banking sector of the total EBRD's funds for Egypt in 2019?**

In total, 25% of our investments in Egypt are in the financial sector but more importantly is the impact that the Bank is trying to achieve through its investments in the financial sector.

The Bank has previously introduced small and medium enterprise (SME) lines to help target that particular sector of the economy, it has also introduced GEFF lines and Women in Business credit lines to directly provide better access to finance to target specific segments of the economy to ensure financial inclusion.

In 2019, the Bank introduced for the first time Youth in Business and Skills in Business lines to promote access to finance for the young and skilled population of the economy, which we rolled out through our credit line to the National Bank of Egypt (NBE).

**Can you please elabourate on the EBRD's SMEs assistance in Egypt in 2019? What is the plan for 2020?**

In addition to our financial support to SMEs that I mentioned, we also run our advisory programme, which provides direct technical assistance to SMEs. In 2019, we started 200 new advisory projects which include 46 projects owned and led by women and 60 projects are in Alexandria and its neighbouring governorates in the Delta.

This year we are planning to start 158 new advisory projects with a special focus on youth and employment.

**What is the exact timing of EBRD's inauguration of new branches in Egypt in 2020?**

We are aiming to inaugurate two offices in 2020. We will open the Ismailia office in the first quarter (Q1) and Assiut towards by the end of the year.

**How many projects does the Egyptian government negotiate with EBRD now?**

The Bank is in constant dialogue with the Egyptian government to identify key priority projects to which it can contribute effectively. One of the key priorities of the EBRD is to increase private sector participation in infrastructure projects which are typically undertaken by the state.

The Bank also seeks to improve governance of state own entities through direct engagements.

**Did EBRD take real steps to assist Egypt in offering its state-owned companies and military owed enterprises in to EGX? Do you think 2020 will witness updates in this file?**

We are still looking forward to our first investment in the government's state companies' offering programme, which we hope to have an effective engagement to improve governance on the level of state-owned companies. We also welcome the idea of offering military owned enterprises (MOE) on the EGX, which would help level the playing field, and in turn, help unlock FDI for Egypt. The devil is in the details of course and we wait eagerly to understand how this will be implemented to see how we could potentially engage on a constructive basis.

**Will EBRD announce new projects in the water sector with Egypt in 2020?**

We are very interested in developing the water desalination sector and we are in discussions with the Egyptian government to potentially prepare a number of desalination plants on a PPP basis in the same manner we prepared the 6th of October Dry Port Project, which was recently awarded to a large private sector consortium.

**What is the total amount that EBRD offered for SEMED region in 2019? What are the expectations for the region's funds in 2020?**

We have been very active developing the economy in the SEMED region, which currently includes Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, the West Bank, and Gaza. Our investments have reached more than €11bn in 255 projects across a wide spectrum of sectors of which 72% are in the private sector.

In addition, we have an advisory programme for small businesses supported by the European Union. In 2019, we provided our support to 676 projects.

**Do you think that the recent political events in some countries in the SEMED region would negatively impact your activities there?**

EBRD was founded after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which is by itself a historical political event that has marked the 20th century and our current time. Since then, we have been active in our countries of operations despite the difficulties.

Political events do have an effect on the economy and the overall business environment including the appetite of foreign investors. But as a development Bank, we are more resilient to political events and we are committed for the long run to develop the economies of our countries of operations not only through our financial support, but also by strengthening their governance and by creating an enabling investment climate as well.

**Can you please rank the SEMED's countries in terms of the largest recipient of EBRD's funds?**

The size of economies in the SEMED region varies from one to another and obviously, our investments reflect the relative size of the economy. Egypt is by far the largest economy in the region and for the second year in a row, it topped the Bank's annual investments with €1.2bn in 26 projects in 2019.

Since we started working there, we have invested over €6 billion in Egypt. We have so far invested close to €1.5bn in Jordan, over €2bn in Morocco and close to €1bn in Tunisia.

In Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza where we started investing only 2 years ago, our investments are €558m and €15m, respectively.

**How many projects do you have in the SEMED region? What about the expectations for the projects' numbers in 2020?**

In just eight years, we have invested over €11bn in more than 250 projects in the region and we expect to have another strong year in 2020.

**How many offices do you have in the SEMED region? Do you have plans to inaugurate new offices in the region in 2020?**

We believe it is very important to have a presence on the ground so we have a better understanding of the countries where we work. It allows us to maintain closer relations with our counterparties including the clients, the authorities, and other international financial institutions (IFIs) and stakeholders. This helps us deliver even more impact in the countries we serve.

We have nine offices in the region, including offices outside the capitals to help develop regional integration and to reach out more broadly across the countries. We have two in Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria) with plans to open another two this year.

We have three in Morocco (Casablanca, Agadir, and Tangiers), two in Tunisia (Tunis and Sfax) while we have one office for Lebanon and one in Jordan from which we serve the West Bank and Gaza.

**What are EBRD's main economic sectors in the SEMED region?**

We focus across the SEMED region on supporting the competitiveness of the private sector, helping to improve access to finance for small and medium-sised enterprises and achieving greater economic integration and increased opportunities for women and young people.

We also work on the modernisation of municipal infrastructure and on improving the quality and sustainability of public utilities through private sector participation and helping to improve the level of services in each country.

# 2nd place, EU:

# Lucia Posteraro on Georgia's fight for democracy

***Lucia Posteraro***

The winning submission captioned 'Glasgow Guardian Contributor Lucia Posteraro explores the current situation in Georgia as citizens fight for democracy' was published in video format on 24 January on the Facebook page of the Glasgow University's newspaper *Glasgow Guardian*.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2525022241045346

# 3rd place, EU:
# Katarina Gulan on migration and women's rights

## *(transcript of the report)*

Around the world people migrate. Some search for better opportunities and some are escaping war and devastation. Migrant crises has been important topic in the media for years but how often do we think about how the media approaches it and how important is the role of media in combating fake news and manipulations on migrant crises.

What is the role of the media in creating perceptions and how much did fake news and disinformation influence public perception on migrant crises in EU.

For countries of the Western Balkans, including Croatia, in 2015, was the first time they confronted massive refugee flow since the war in 1990's. Having that experience from the 90's, people reacted in a sympathetic way when the crises occurred. In the meantime, perspectives and reactions changed. Right-wing populism played a role in that, but the media also play a big role… not just in the way they report (depending on what happens behind the scenes in media organisations) but also how they combat fake news that can spread rapidly on social media causing fear, panic and even hatred towards migrants. And when there is lack of knowledge, the fear of the different and the unknown grows. We have seen that too many times.

And in that chaos of trying to identify real from fake news, there is hardly any space in the media for women migrants/refugees and their stories although a good half of migrants and refugees worldwide are women who in transit face specific challenges like the risk of gender — based violence. The only way to change that is to talk about their stories and give necessary attention to the topic.

Journalists are also affected by their environment and the society. Sometimes, all we need is a change of angle to achieve more objective and constructive approaches… This is what I desired to achieve here.

I went to Berlin. In restaurant called Kreuzberger Himmel, I met Alaa, a woman from Syria which, as many other refugees, found there the chance for new life. Although she studied English in Syria and worked in office, she is happy with job in restaurant in Berlin. The main purpose of the restaurant is to give refugees a shelter and chance for new beginning, says Anreas Tolke, former journalist who opened the restaurant in 2018. When migrant crisis started in 2015, Andreas was shocked how unprepared Germany and Berlin was. Wanting to help, he opened his own home to the refugees. Along with other helping friends, Andreas started an organisation 'Be an Angel', that provide support to refugees — accommodation, medical and psychological help, counseling and language course. Eventually, in year 2018, he opened the restaurant to help refugees but also to help Germans understand refugees:

'It is also intended to have Germans getting in touch with refugees. Because we all have pictures in our minds how the refugees should be but we most of the time forget that they are human beings not so different from any one of us. But going back to 2015, people were coming from Balkan route… when you saw them once you get the idea how horrible the situation in their home countries must be to make them leave and go on such a horrible trip. So once they arrived in Germany, although organised, state wasn't able to support them so it had to be civilians to step in.'

The restaurant is also an example of coexistence of religions — Catholic church leased the workspace for low price, while the initial investment came from a Jewish donor who chose to stay anonymous.

'When we opened on 4th of January 2018, none of us had any experience in hospitality management. We started with the team of 12 from 6 different nations and 4 different religions', says Andreas:

'We all see refugees as one group. That's not working. Syrians are more or less like Italian — very outgoing, sometimes very loud and with lot of temperament and Afgani can be compared to Japanese with very conservative ways of behaving to each other. At that point it was only me who was translating different cultures to each other. And that was funny. The intent of the restaurant is to enable the refugees to start their own life. We tell them 'if you see something that you do not understand and do not like, we will tell you later what it means'. We also tell them 'the freedom that you want to have is the freedom that you have to give to us. Otherwise it's not working.'

So it has been really tricky and difficult. But, out of the beginning team of 12 people we started with, there are only 2 people still here. All the others had been 'delivered' to other hospitality companies which are entirely German economic business companies. Right now we have 16 people working here, we grew a bit. We now have 7 nations, the number of religions is reduced to 3 but now instead we have Africans working here... which brings a new topic.'

And what is it like today to be a migrant from Africa? , I asked the 'Mother of African animation', Ebele Okoye — a multidisciplinary artist, designer and animation filmmaker resident in Berlin. She was 35 before she could accomplish a vision she had when she was seven — to become an animation film maker. And she became not just the first female animator of Nigerian origin but one of the pioneers of African Animation. But that journey hasn't been easy. Because of her own experiences, Ebele is active in social relevant areas. That reflected on her work too, so she made several films about women's rights, domestic violence and migrants. 'We live in the age of fast and easy accessible information but migration issue remains the same'

'Technologically, things are better but the visa problems are still there and then with the whole thing of the people going through the Mediterranean Sea, it's even tighter for them now. Because, every African or Nigerian who is trying to go abroad to gain knowledge is automatically seen as a refugee who wants to go and kind of open hands to get benefits. I would say migration was much easier in my time. These days, under this umbrella of refugee crisis, nobody is listened to because you are put in the box that you just want to run away.'

Ebele says she is lucky to have had encouraging awards for her work — like the Africa Movie Academy Awards, DEFA research award, Robert Bosch prise for Animation and the 'Redefreiheit' of Amnesty International. Those were awards for hard work that started long before she came to Germany in 2000. War child and a rebel in the society with very traditional gender roles, Ebele never had a feeling of belonging.

'I was born during the Nigeria-Biafra civil war which lasted from 1967 to 1972. In a place called Onitsha. Immediately upon my birth, the hospital got bombed and my mum had to escape with me, the umbilical cord still dangling. I am the youngest of seven children. After the war, my father went back to the city with my siblings and I stayed with my mother and sister, we went to live with my aunt. First encounter with storytelling as a kid was in the village where I lived with my mum. Children would gather around during the full moon and stories would be told by adults. I was seven when I realised ... the stories I heard, I wanted to bring them to life. Yes, it was a tough life because we were poor but I've come to appreciate it because most of the things I do now professionally, were things I started doing as a child.... for instance, the first time I made clothes I was 12. We didn't have money and we were surviving making Nigerian delicacy called Akara....and I'd carry it to the market about 13 km away to sell them...'

Her own imagination, creation, and urge to learn and question everything didn't make life easy for her. On the contrary:

'Of course, I was in girls' brigade, in the church, in the choir but it was always problematic because I didn't get along with people mostly. My ideas were completely different. For instance, challenging the pastor in the church... I was called the devils child for questioning that. And these things kind of define who you are in that society. So you keep getting excluded from a lot of things. Secondly, my mom was very strong woman with her own integrity. Also, she didn't look like the typical African woman. She was very thin and muscular... and it's a society where a woman has to have a certain look to be accepted... So, on that level my mum was also not accepted.'

Years later, 'certain look' again played the role in her life. While she kept nursing the dream of animation and applying to study abroad, Ebele studied Fine arts. Her first opportunity to study abroad came when she was 16 but she could not get the money for the ticket... So she studied in Nigeria and kept seeking for opportunities. Upon graduation, she ran tailoring business in Enugu before moving to Lagos where she worked in advertising. However, after one year she got fired for not following female dress code as obtained in her society then.

Subsequently, she settled as a full fime independent studio artist and in 1995 had her first solo exhibition at the National Museum, Lagos. That was a stepping stone for her to start building network. In the meantime, she started learning German. Effort had to yeild fruites.

Opportunities to go to Germany showed up but accompanied with problems and obstacles she faced as a Nigerian citizen traveling to Europe. That's when she got to know 'charm' of being a migrant struggling through bureaucratic maze. At the end, she made it to Germany in year 2000, to study and start making her childhood dream a reality.

When she was seeking ways to leave, she vowed she would bring her knowledge back to Nigeria. Using social media, she started networking group and that was how 'The Animation Club Africa' in 2010. was made and Ebele later became a mentor for many young people that had the same dream as she:

'So, this pledge I made, I was mentoring in this group privately and openly. I gave a lot there... and then in 2013. I organised the first ever animation course in Nigeria. I had a rule in my mentorship which was that for me, in the first place I focused on talented people who didn't have a good financial background... because this is what I went through so I knew what it was to have a dream that you want to do somethin but you dont have the means to do it... So that was my very first focus ant it yeilded fruits, I'd say.'

She still has many dreams and keeps working on another passion from her childhood — making clothes. 'With perservance and hard work, we can reach our goals even if it takes a while', says Ebele.

Yes. With those words I will conclude this report… with perservance, changing the angle,

we can approach many topics in a more constructive way. This was my effort to do so… and thanks to my guests, I managed to broaden my aspects and gain new knowledge.

# Summary

Although the levels of media freedom set apart countries of the European Union and the European Neighbourhood Policy, there are global challenges that are common for them. The degree to which they are prepared to face these challenges varies.

The sudden change in the viability of business models has disrupted the news cycle, and led to tabloidization — a decrease in content quality for the sake of emotions and scandals. The other important change was the increased importance of multimedia.

The politicisation of media remains a major issue. Mainstream media often reproduce political messages of certain political actors in order to sustain their audience's expectations, compromising their objectivity and contributing to societal division along political lines. This has also led to a radical decrease in the trust in media.

The e-learning courses, even though only in an abbreviated form, were presented in this publication in order to alert journalism students, practitioners, and anyone interested in journalism of these challenges and most importantly to offer ways out.

The lessons offer guidance to media managers and journalists on how not only to survive in the changed business landscape, but thrive. They offer practical skills in the use of multimedia — an essential tool to catch readers' attention in the sea of content created with the sole aim to distract. They discuss the importance of values in the increasingly nihilistic world and how journalists can achieve real change with in-depth investigative reporting. Finally, the dedicated course alerts readers to disinformation and raises important questions about the nature of bias and what makes a voice in a public debate legitimate.

The College of Europe in Natolin hopes that the readers found these lessons timely and of practical use to face some of the numerous challenges that quality independent media face in the EU and its neighbourhood.


# The Natolin Campus

The Natolin campus of the College of Europe with its historic Palace and 120-hectare park is probably one of the most beautiful student campuses in Europe. The old historical buildings, including the Manor House, the Stables and the Coach House, were brought up to contemporary living standards, and new buildings were erected in a style keeping with the harmony of the Palace and its surrounding park. The Stables today house the Library, an auditorium-style lecture hall, as well as a computer room. The Coach House contains several small seminar rooms as well as the centre for Languages and Intercultural Dialogue.

## Natolin Nature Reserve

The Natolin nature reserve borders two districts of Warsaw: Ursynów and Wilanów. It covers 105 hectares out of 120 hectares that constitute the Natolin palace and park estate. The protected area is covered with an old growth oak-hornbeam forest, which in some places transitions into a wetland and riparian woodland. Remnants of the vast Masovian primeval forests, flourishing as late as the Middle Ages, have survived in the Natolin reserve. The most valuable stands include, first and foremost, historic oaks, whose age often exceeds 300 years!

Moreover, observations and research conducted over many years have confirmed that the Natolin reserve is home to Masovia region's largest density of occurrence of the middle spotted woodpecker, and a considerable population of the common toad, a protected species.

## History of the Natolin Palace and Estate

The Natolin palace and park estate dates back to the 17th century. It was then that the Polish King Jan Sobieski III, the ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, used these remnants of the primeval forest as pheasant hunting grounds. Hence, the initial name of this place was 'the Pheasantry' (Bażantarnia). In 1807, the name of the estate was changed to honour the only child of its owners: Natalia Potocka. This was the day when, along with the birth of the heiress to a grand Polish family of the Potockis, Natolin was born.

The Natolin Palace dates back to 1780, when the then owner of the estate, Prince August Czartoryski, commissioned the architect Szymon Bogumił Zug to design and build a neoclassical summer residence, with a characteristic semi-open viewing reception room (salon oval) facing east.

The ceiling of the room, painted by the renowned Italian artist of that time, Vincenzo Brenna, has remained untouched to this day.

In the early 19th century, the palace was reconstructed according to the design prepared by Piotr Aigner, another distinguished architect of Polish neo-classicism. Natalia's grandfather, Count Stanislaw Kostka-Potocki, had commissioned this work. At the same time, changes were also introduced in the park where, while retaining the existing tree stand, a new spatial arrangement, characteristic of landscape designs in fashion at that time, was put in place.

The Natolin palace and park estate gained its final form between 1821 and 1845, under the ownership of Count Aleksander Potocki, Natalia's father. To honour the memory of his prematurely deceased daughter, Count Potocki erected a statue, whose form was stylised after ancient Etruscan and Roman sarcophagi. The lost in thought, resting figure of Natalia is the work of a well-known sculptor of the time, Ludwik Kaufman. The statue forms part of a broader landscape composition that also includes a Moorish gate straddling the park's ravine.

Another historic structure stands beneath the escarpment: the Doric Temple modelled on the Poseidon Temple in Paestum, an ancient Greek colony located in Southern Italy. The lower part of the park also hosts picturesque artificial ruins, loosely modelled on the Claudius' aqueduct on Via Appia in Rome. Henryk Marconi, a distinguished Italian architect who spent most of his life in Congress Poland, designed the historic structures.

It is in these magnificent surroundings where the Natolin Campus of the College of Europe is anchored, and where it has thrived for over quarter century.

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**Nowoursynowska 84**
**02-797 Warsaw, Poland**

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