

Ethics and Journalism in the South Eastern Europe

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Media Plan Institute, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Media Development Center, Sofia, Bulgaria
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Ethics and Journalism in the South Eastern Europe

Comparative analysis of the journalistic profession

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ETHICS AND JOURNALISM IN THE SEE

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1 Journalism in SEE: Aware of the ethical code, but...

The research entitled “Ethics and Journalism in the SEE Region”, supported by the Southeast European Network for the Professionalization of the Media (SEENPM), has been conducted between March and July 2005 with the aim to perform a comparative analysis of the journalistic profession in times of transition, political tensions and electoral fighting. The model of an in-depth research has been used, with thematic, *face-to-face* interviews. Questions were prepared in advance, and answers were to be given in a free form. The research within the project SEENPM “Ethics and Journalism” has been simultaneously conducted by the following centers:

- Media Center, Belgrade, Serbia
- Media Development Center, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Media Plan Institute, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Albanian Media Institute, Tirana, Albania
- International Center for Education of Journalists, Opatija, Croatia
- Macedonian Institute for Media, Skopje, Macedonia

The main goal of the research was to identify joint strategy for improvement of the journalist profession on the basis of the assessed condition. Researchers have tried to find out to what extent were journalists aware of the code of ethics, if they act in accordance to them and if they were inclined to criticize others for breaching the rules. Researchers have tried to determine if journalists were victims of circumstances, political infighting, forced loyalty, self-righteousness or general bad taste. They have also tried to discover if there had been moral erosion in the media and why.

The state-of-art in journalistic profession

The freedom of information and quality of journalism in the SEE Europe media is open to questioning and debate. The assessment varies from “satisfying” to “worse than ever”. However, most participants believe that things are slowly improving.

Lies and head nodding – laziness or ignorance?

The following remarks from the research illustrate the sad state of professional and ethical standards in journalism in the Southeast Europe: journalists are prone to publishing unreliable information; they often cite anonymous sources; they don't always publish corrections (symptomatically, one of the journalists said that he did not publish a denial because the original information has been just imprecise and not incorrect, so he just informed his readers in an indirect way). Journalists also often shift responsibility for correctness of information to their sources and rarely react to obvious lies they hear during interviews. Instead of asking questions, journalists just nod their heads during interviews, says one of the editors, who referring to that interview as to an 'epic' one.

Bad taste, haste or tendentiousness?

The media mostly violates human rights, namely human dignity and the presumption of innocence. The main reason for such violations is sensationalism, but

also dilettantism. Journalists publish names of underage victims or perpetrators less often than before, but they almost always publish full names of their parents. One of the journalists told how he was doing a story about a raped girl when her mother showed up in front of his camera holding her hand. He made a picture and used it in his story: “I made a horrible mistake”.

In the Southeast Europe's media one will hardly ever find accurate information whether someone is convicted or just suspected, arrested or put into the custody. Physical or mental handicaps are sometimes mentioned with the aim to violate reputation, create sensation or just ridicule a person. Mentioning ethnical origin of the individual is often used for two purposes – to imply someone's “bad” or to smear a nation through an individual. Improvements are visible, but the least for Roma!

Pressure and “secret liaisons”

Although the time of dominant political control over media is over, the media and journalists in the Southeast Europe are still under pressure from politicians as well as media owners. Politicians and owners are trying to influence public opinion and protect their own interests – most often combined political-financial interests –by using journalists and the media. The word 'pressure', as well as the word 'influence', has been used more than 70 times in the analyses of answers received from 180 journalists from the region.

Politicians influence the media on two levels: they use their official positions to exert their authority (if they are in power), or they offer journalists some benefits – the material they would use (sources of information) or material gain. Journalists get involved with politicians in variety of ways – they give advice or mediate between politicians: “I did the campaign just the way I wanted!” There are still “secret liaisons” between journalists and politicians, as some kind of power-sharing relic. Some interviewees have indirectly made reference to this – close ties with politicians can still impress some journalists.

Owners usually use the most convenient mean of pressure at their disposal – journalists work for them, not the other way around. Owners often either give direct orders to journalists, or use “softer” methods to request from journalists to promote their private interests or interest of the political groups they are closely affiliated with. It is obvious that the media is getting “overpowered by a new force – money”.

In both cases, editor in chief sometimes acts as an intermediary for this kind of influence, either by issuing direct orders or by using the notorious 'editorial policy'. According to journalists' testimonies, means of pressure vary from undisguised directives to either avoid or promote certain subjects - when it's in politicians' or businessmen's interest (usually not in public interest) – to 'softer' means, like suggestions and advices. The journalists interviewed said that politicians “always complain” and editorial offices are still receiving phone calls from the politicians shouting threats to journalists (“he shouted and threatened me”). Now businessmen are doing the same thing - “he was angry, although he did not threaten us”. Situation gets even more complicated when political and business interests overlap, for example when the media promotes interests of the politicians who may influence the ownership structure in

that particular media outlet. It is general agreement that pressure increases during elections.

Analysts also drew attention to several examples of criminals or criminal and mafia groups threatening journalists, or even putting their lives in danger.

Journalists don't resist the pressure - degrading the profession

Journalists rarely resist the pressure. The fear of losing jobs is prevailing. Journalists sometimes consciously violate professional principles to keep their jobs. Only a few said that they would rather quit their jobs. They don't publish negative information about their 'patrons' or 'friends of the house', forcing positive image instead. They sometimes avoid their accountability by not signing their articles. Some national reports point to reemergence of self-censorship.

How to survive – conflict of interest

One of the most serious treats to journalists' professionalism is that they are underpaid and often forced to take additional jobs, usually in related areas. Since they spend a lot of time near politicians, journalists often work (even simultaneously) in PR offices of the state officials or political parties, especially in party headquarters during electoral campaigns. Consequently, it is difficult to avoid conflict of interest. The fact that in just fifteen days journalists can earn their two-month salaries is often used as an excuse, but nonetheless such conduct is still a violation of ethical standards.

***“Journalists used to be socio-political activists.
Today they are propagandists”***

This is the view of an experienced journalist and succinctly summarizes a significant and increasingly important cause of journalistic principles violations. Once again, money is the main motive. Journalists sell news for money and disseminate disguised propaganda. For some of them, collecting advertisements is in their job description. Journalists often receive more or less valuable gifts and take paid travels. One of the interviewees said that, journalists at the presentation of an automobile import company almost started a fight among themselves over twenty watches which were set aside for them as gifts, because there were not enough watches for everybody. How much do gifts, free travels and pocket money influence journalists to promote their donors through their media? Journalists rarely admit to be corrupted, but almost all of them point fingers at colleagues from the same or different media.

Journalists degrade their own profession by often 'pushing' information which is in someone's interest, ignoring those which is not, publishing unreliable information, tolerating lies and abuse of human rights and human dignity (often being perpetrators of such violations).

Why do journalists abuse professional and ethical journalistic principles?

Their alibi: This is the only way to keep my job! ... “Rules of the market”... “It hits emotional buttons, attracts the audience and sells the papers”...

Nonetheless, if journalism is a profession, and not just a job, if there is a difference between selling toothpaste and selling information, and since you can not purchase an illegal drug in an ordinary grocery shop – what can be done to improve the state of the media and journalism in Southeastern Europe?

1.1 How to improve the media and journalism

Recommendations:

- 1 Pressure on the media and journalists can be decreased if interests and ownership (financial and political influence) are fully transparent.
- 2 Media activities in the free market must be a subject of a necessary self-control, the fundamental humanitarian principles and basic ethical rules have to be respected, and protection of general social and moral norms needs to be carried out by the media themselves. Free market must not become an alibi for abuse of journalistic principles. Sensationalism is not the public interest. Free press is obliged to handle information fairly and to refrain from turning it into a sensation.
- 3 Independent regulatory bodies should be created and the role of the existing strengthened within the profession. They should become a guarantee of adherence to journalistic standards.
- 4 Journalists should fight for institutional framework that will bind all participants in the media business – journalists, media owners and politicians – to respect professional standards and ethics. They need to invest their own energy to this cause and attain help from lawyers and responsible public persons.
- 5 Journalist codes of conduct should be improved and promoted. This issue should be constantly discussed in the media and journalistic organizations. Internal ethical codes established within each newsroom can be useful tool for strengthening ethical standards.
- 6 Education of journalists should be improved^{*}: special courses and training are necessary – not in the form of short and sporadic attempts, both in form of permanent education in editorial offices and as specially designed courses and trainings.

*(The joint report and the list of conclusions were adopted at
The Post-Research Coordination Meeting held in Tirana in July 2005,
attended by national coordinators of the countries which conducted the research)*

* Given all this, we recommend the SEENPM network to organize a special training program with a series of workshops and discussions that would enable journalists to identify and confront most frequent ethical challenges inherent to their job. Carefully designed workshops, with realistic presentation of the ethical challenges they could face both in editorial offices and on the field, should sensitize journalists about ethical standards, strengthen mechanisms of self-regulation and warn them about possible harmful consequences of irresponsible and unprofessional work.

2 Country reports

2.1 Albania

2.1.1 It is a long way from achieving a satisfactory standard

In Albania, the journalists interviewed within the framework of this survey conveyed an almost uniform picture of the ethical problems that journalism faces. Interference on the side of editors, and especially owners, journalists' subservience to their economic and political interests, unsatisfactory material situation, exploitation of media power for economic and political gains and an urgent pressure for self-censorship constitute the main problematic aspects and trends identified by journalists. On the other hand, combined with lack of professional experience or carelessness from journalists themselves, insufficient consideration for human rights in hunt of sensationalism, and journalists' vulnerability vis-à-vis material gains, the ethical situation of journalism in Albania, in spite of the slow improvements, seems a long way from achieving a satisfactory standard.

In the course of this survey the interviewees included representatives from the main thirty media outlets in the country. Due to the specific nature of Albanian media landscape, these interviews only focused on the capital-based media outlets, given the relatively insignificant influence of media outside Tirana. The selected collocutors were mainly editors and reporters covering political, social and economic affairs. The daily newspapers that were represented in the survey were: Shekulli, Korrieri, Panorama, Gazeta Shqiptare, Tema, Koha Jone, Metropol, Albania, Ballkan, Biznes, and Sot. In addition, the main weekly magazines were subject of the research: Klan, Spekter, and Monitor. Regarding radio outlets, participants came from: Radio Tirana, Top Albania Radio, +2 radio, Radio Rash, and Radio Alsat. Journalists and editors from television stations came from the following media: TVSH, TVA, TV Klan, Top Channel TV, Vizion + TV, TV Koha, News 24 TV, Telenorba Shqiptare, Shijak TV, and Alsat TV. One journalist from Albanian Telegraphic Agency was included, as well.¹

The independence of media is relative. From direct orders to indirect pressures

The responses received in the in-depth interviews conducted show that the majority of journalists that cover political events, individuals or government institutions are under a number of constraints other than those imposed by ethics and professionalism. These constraints range from 'advice' by the editors or the owners of the media on how to cover a specific issue, to clear directives on how to cover (positively or negatively) certain government institutions, politicians or events. Many of them report specific cases when they were ordered by the owner of the media or their editor to stop writing about a specific political issue without much justification or reasoning. In many responses journalists also claim that in some occasions certain

¹ It must be mentioned that a trend noticed during the interviews was the brief responses of journalists and the relatively weak willingness to answer at length and with specific examples to each question. However, given the timing of the research, this was hardly a surprise: research coincided with the general elections campaign. These elections were deemed extremely important and received the most in-depth media coverage to date; hence journalists were under increasing time pressure.

pieces are not published due to the fact that they affect specific business or political interests. The end result of political, business and other constraints seems to be a journalist who submits to the policies of the paper, begins to internalize and naturalize the pressures under which he or she works, thus developing what a few respondents branded as 'self-censorship'. It is the process through which journalists try to assume what the owner of the media wants to hear and what is closer to their liking and interests. While it makes the life of the journalists easier, it does not qualify well for objective and/or accurate coverage of political events.

At this point it is important to explore how the journalists describe the interference in their work, which is the source of a long-term process that results in self-censorship. By far the majority of the interviewed journalists say that the political and economic directives by the owners or the editors of the media influence the kind of coverage they produce. These instructions range from direct orders on what to publish, to indirect pressure on how to cover specific issues. They aim to produce coverage that best promotes the immediate interests of the owners, or sympathetic coverage of government institutions, politicians or other individuals who can then in return promote their interests. According to one journalist this is a phenomenon that "more or less occurs in all of the Albanian media, including the one I work in. I would say that the instructions pertaining to economic issues influence my work the most although there are cases when such instructions relate to political matters. This happens due to the fact that the media is owned by entrepreneurs whose interests are often connected to those of the government".

Another journalist reports "I know of cases when reports which could harm the investments or the interests of the people who support the particular media group have not been published at all." This declaration is supported by other responses in which journalists provide specific examples when their work was not published so as not to alienate certain institutions which would in turn safeguard the interests of the media owner.

While in some cases certain articles have not been published due to economic or political instructions that tend to safeguard the interests of the media ownership, in other cases journalists have been asked to write articles or produce coverage that would directly promote such interests. Thus, one journalist says that on two or three occasions she had to write articles according to the orders of the owner. "Personally I never liked it and when I had to write according to the instructions of the owner, I did not put my name at the end of the article."

These influences show that the owners often use media to promote their immediate interests. It becomes even more obvious during electoral campaigns, when media owners support not only specific parties but also individual politicians. A journalist reports that during an electoral campaign she "was asked to write a positive article for a certain political candidate that was running for office and I had to do it." It also happens in other media outlets. The independence of media in Albania is relative and there are such examples. Other journalists report in a similar fashion of having been asked to produce positive coverage of business activities either of the media owners or of someone else who is supported by the owner. These are clear cases in which the media outlet is used directly for certain very specific ends.

Connection between media, business and politicians

However, many journalists claim that the influence of the media ownership has become increasingly sophisticated and is no longer as obvious and direct as it used to

be in previous years. Nowadays in many media outlets the influence appears to be more indirect and mostly in the form of advice and suggestions on how a certain event should be covered, rather than actual pressure and orders on what and how should be reported. Thus, according to journalist “political and economic directives influence coverage in Albania media in a more covert way nowadays. It has become increasingly rare for the media owner or the editor in chief to shape coverage directly or to censure it.” A number of other journalists also shared the same view arguing that the influence is exerted in a more indirect manner.

All of the responses as well as the above examples indicate that there is a direct influence of the owners on the coverage of the media, which in turn has a direct impact in limiting the editorial independence of the media. It is a phenomenon that can be identified in the response of an editor-in-chief, who claims that “as the editor in chief I am the one who gives out instructions to the journalists. I must say that 80 % of the instructions are mine and they reflect my ideas on how the coverage should appear, whereas some 20% of the instructions are result of the influence of the owners.” Although these percentages might not be completely accurate they do indicate that the media owners exert a direct and day-to-day influence on the media coverage, rather than provide a long term policy orientation for the outlet, curtailing thus editorial independence.

However, it is important to mention that not all instructions given to journalists aim to promote specific political and/or business interests. Often they are simply part of the editorial policy of the media outlet. Many journalists call this the ‘approach’ of the media and feel that the journalists that work for the paper should accept and embrace such approach as part of the editorial policy of the paper. It remains unclear though what is understood by these terms and to what extent the approach of a given media is determined by its editorial policy based on the principles and values that a given media stands for and to what extent editorial policy is just another word for covert approaches that simply aim to uphold and enhance the business interests of the media owners. The fact remains that on many occasions the journalists have expressed their disagreements with some of the stands of the media where they work. In almost all the cases they say that their views were not taken into consideration, and the policy was decided by the owner himself.

Besides influences and instructions that come from the media ownership and at times editors there are also influences and pressures that come from groups outside of the media, although their influence can be and is only exerted through the media ownership.

“There are such cases both in the media where I work as well as in other media outlets. In most cases such interventions come from the political scene although at times they do also come from businesses, most of the time not directly but in an indirect manner, asking for a favor which will be paid back in the future.” A number of examples have been given by journalists when after an intervention from state institutions or individuals they were asked either to stop writing about a specific issue or not to cover it at all. In most cases the journalists report that the interested parties contact the media owners or directors who then make sure that the journalists will comply with their requests. In one such case an investigative journalist who had been writing about pension funds and challenges that citizens were facing with regard to the pension scheme, was asked to stop writing about it without much explanation as to why, especially since the coverage had to do with the interests of many citizens. In other cases journalists had been asked to cover a specific issue in a positive light. In all these cases, which seem to be mostly interventions by political actors to stop the

publication of a certain article or coverage, the interested parties 'ask for a favor' by the media, which they will repay later on.

Such intervention is facilitated by the tight connection between media and business on one hand and politicians on the other. At times it is difficult to draw the line between them, since a media owner can be a politician as well as businessmen at the same time. However, even when the distinction is clear, close personal connections do exist. In many cases media owners and directors have close personal connections with political and public individuals which makes it easier for 'media favors' to occur. According to one journalist: "on delicate matters the media owners do exert a certain pressure. This is also due to the Albanian environment where personal connections are very important and numerous."

The close connection between media on the one hand and politicians on the other does not only occur at the media ownership level. Many journalists, especially senior ones do report of close ties and friendships with high ranking politicians or government ministers. The Albanian media and political scene after all is very small which makes it very easy for those participating in it to know each other intimately. A senior journalist reported that "I have friends who are ministers or politicians and I have had informal conversations with them outside of my working hours, through which I might have influenced them as individuals, although probably not the parties they represent." Other responses indicate the same; many journalists especially those who are more senior and famous have close and direct ties with politicians. This is also reflected by the fact that some journalists reported that they have mediated between politicians in some delicate cases. Other journalists, more junior ones who did not have such experience themselves, knew of such cases.

Of course such close ties between media on the one hand and politics on the other might have a number of serious ramifications regarding the quality and accuracy of media coverage of political events. In combination with other factors, such as business or political interests, it might explain why certain media provide positive coverage for certain politicians and not for others. At the same time it might also explain why once such friendships or informal ties and media attacks tend to be so personal and not issue-driven. In fact, as many journalists report, quite often media articles and reports attack directly individuals rather than issues. These attacks tend to be particularly acrimonious and personal in the Albanian press.

The ties between media and politics seem to be strengthened also through necessity and work, besides friendship. Many journalists seem to also be involved in providing advice and consultancy for public institutions, at least informally. One of the interviewed journalists reports that he has "informally consulted public institutions. Such cases are known to happen due to close ties between the media environment on the one hand and the political scene and public institutions on the other." In one extreme case a journalist was at the same time working as a spokesman for a Government Ministry and as a journalist at an independent private national TV station. He said that he used his position in the ministry in order to collect and publish information. In fact most of the interviewed journalists complained that quite often the same person would work as a spokesman in a public institution and as a journalist in a given media outlet, taking thus unfair advantage of his/her position. It is difficult to determine how frequent such cases are, however they do exist.

How to keep your job. Self-censorship as very useful instrument

At this point it is interesting to explore the consequences of the complex interplay between media ownership interests on the one hand and politics on the other, upon the journalists, as reflected in their answers. This interplay produces an editorial policy, or lack thereof, which often might run against the beliefs of the journalists themselves. In fact as they report, in some cases they do not agree with the political stand of their media. Yet, according to one of the interviewed journalists "in general the ordinary journalists comply with the political and ideological approach of the media in which they work. This happens primarily so that they can preserve their job, but also due to a kind of self censorship they develop." Some say that the way in which they overcome the discrepancy between what they believe and the stand of their media is by trying to report objectively and in an unbiased fashion. Many others respond that they try to adopt themselves to the editorial policy of the media where they work. As one journalist put it "if a journalist does not find an environment compatible with his beliefs he/she should ideally change his job and move into another media, yet in reality this is not easy and often one is obliged to make a compromise." This is understandable if one takes into consideration that most journalists report that they can hardly make ends meet through journalism alone. Most of them reported that they could not afford their living through journalism alone and without the support of their family. Thus, for many of them, especially those more junior, keeping the job is very important, which easily forces them into compromises and not stand up for what they believe in.

It is at the intersection of the above factors that the phenomenon of self-censorship begins to appear. Influences and instructions from inside the media outlet, outside pressures and favors from political institutions or individuals combined with a financial dependency in an uncertain job market explain why and how self censorship develops. Self-censorship is a very useful instrument that makes the life of the journalist much easier in face of numerous political and/or business interests. The most telling case was that of a young female journalist who reported that she had been asked indirectly by the media ownership to promote the latter's' interests through her writing in the media. She said that "I myself am not free from a kind of self censorship and perhaps unintentionally in my writing cover favorably those political currents or individuals that might be connected to our owner." This is a very telling and insightful confession. In the Albanian media all the employees are generally very well-informed regarding the political and business interests of the media owners, and this in itself might suffice to affect their coverage, especially among young and insecure journalists. The above example is also telling because it is provided by someone who has become aware of the phenomenon of self-censorship. Other journalists who might be affected by the same syndrome might not even be aware of their self censorship or reluctant to admit it. Therefore, it is not unlikely that such phenomenon is understated and even more far reaching than it might presently seem.

One of the first and most immediate consequences of self censorship is that it makes it very difficult to assess media coverage with regard to political developments. This is not to say that self censorship does not distort or limit media coverage of political events, but simply that it is difficult to determine to what extent this is the case. As one of the interviewed journalists noted that "more than an absence of freedom to express one's opinion, the problem in Albanian media is that there exists a kind of self-censorship that makes it difficult for the journalist to express his/her opinions." In the same fashion another journalist says that "one of the reasons why journalists might not be free to express their opinions is due to a certain self-censorship".

Another very problematic consequence of the self-censorship syndrome is the creation of a vicious circle of unprofessionalism. Given the current modus operandi of

the Albanian media, self-censorship is an asset rather than a liability, for both media owners and government and political institutions. Self-censorship is most likely to happen among young, newly recruited and not senior journalists with professional integrity. In fact as the journalists confirm in their interview answers, senior journalists with a reputation in the media have much more possibility to voice their opinions and are less likely to be pressured by media internal or external factors, such as politicians, or government institutions. Therefore, in a setting where media's role as an instrument of providing accurate information is subjected to that of upholding the owner's interests, professional journalists with integrity are more of a threat rather than an asset, unlike young, insecure ones who can be more easily used to various ends, which by journalistic standards could qualify as unethical, such as writing articles with no or under a different name.

Epidemy of “unconfirmed sources” - “there is talk that...”

This could explain problematic and unprofessional approaches to reporting. Given the incentives media responds to, high levels of professionalism and ethics do not provide an immediate goal. Thus, there was hardly a case amongst the interviewees in which journalists wrote a retraction after they had received and published incorrect information by their sources. According to one journalist “there are many cases when incorrect information is published in the papers, but they are rarely, if ever, retracted.” Another journalist after admitting that he had published inaccurate information said that he “did not publish a retraction, since the information was inaccurate rather than wrong. I informed the public on the matter through indirect means.” It is unclear what the journalist exactly meant here, but one can safely conclude that he did not clearly inform the reader on the ‘inaccurate information that was not wrong’. In a similar fashion another journalist said that when he publishes inaccurate information he “does not produce a retraction to refute it, but through journalistic means tries to correct the information to the extent he can”. Here again it is unclear why a retraction is not published in order to refute incorrect information and thus inform the reader. It is clear, as confirmed by almost every interviewee, that cases when corrections or retractions happen are very rare in the Albanian media. In other words, not only are professionalism levels low in this respect, but given the manner in which Albanian media operates, there seem to be few incentives to change this situation. As it was mentioned earlier, media's role as a source of information has been subjected to a certain extent to its role as a means that upholds and promotes certain narrow interests. It is a scenario in which self-censorship on part of journalists becomes more valuable than professionalism.

As the above analyses and information indicates, journalists who deal with political coverage are under a series of constraints in their reporting and analyses. However, the above analyses should be approached cautiously since the situation changes very much from media outlet to media outlet, and any effort to generalize is bound to misrepresent a part of the media scene. There were many journalists who did not feel pressured or used by the ownership or editorship of their media, especially those belonging to the areas not related to political coverage. Therefore, from the above analyses it would be mistaken to conclude that there is no freedom of media in Albania. The above analyses and the answers to the in-depth interviews with the journalists simply show the constraints under which media coverage of political events takes place. There is freedom even within these constraints, especially given the numerous and growing number of outlets which provide an opportunity for diversity

given the various viewpoints they present, as well as a challenge to credibility given how far apart these viewpoints are at times.

When asked about the use of anonymous or unconfirmed sources in their work, most journalists distanced themselves from this practice but promptly indicated that it happens to other media. Some journalists indicated that the epidemic of “unconfirmed sources” or “there is talk that” appears especially in cases of government crisis and potential changes in the cabinet. The difficulty in this case lies especially with the politicians’ unwillingness to pronounce themselves. Another reason for the phenomenon of unconfirmed sources was the pace of work, which pressured journalists towards deadline and not towards ethical considerations. Yet, other journalists related this to the lack of experience in journalism: “Years ago I used to publish articles that contained ‘unconfirmed sources,’ since I lacked the work experience and the necessary pool of contacts.” Albanian journalism enjoys the vitality of young reporters as well as suffers their lack of experience: journalism students starting to work in the media since their first year at school is a widespread phenomenon that enriches their financial resources and experience while keeping the owners’ costs lower.

Another question asked to journalists was whether they remembered a case when it was clear that the interviewee was lying. Almost indiscriminately the cases brought were those of politicians’ interviews, especially during elections’ campaigns. “This happens more in interviews with political leaders, as they try to avoid the questions all the time.” However, TV journalists seemed to be more affected in this regard, given the dominance of TV coverage of political debates. Only a few of them said that they had insisted in their questions or had compiled the report by adding other sources of information. “When I sensed that they were avoiding the question I have insisted to the point of annoyance until I received an answer. This was particularly the case with high government officials.” Again, experience seems to be another factor to consider, since more experienced journalists seem to be more insistent in pursuing truth in their interviews, or at least an answer for their questions.

On the other hand, experience does not seem to particularly influence publication/broadcasting of stories that affect people personally. As expected, almost all persons interviewed indicated that they frequently witnessed such stories in their media outlets. These statements demonstrated a curious trend though: it seemed that people most affected in the stories that appear in the media are more often than not public figures, almost indiscriminately high-rank politicians. “There have been no cases of non-public figures being intentionally assaulted in the media. It is usually persons that head public institutions that are the focus of these stories.” For instance, along the same lines, many interviewees indicated as specific cases to this question the “teasing” articles that focused on Prime Minister’s wife. Although some of the journalists seemed to justify this trend to a certain extent in view of the public status of these figures and the public’s rights to know, many yet seemed to disapprove the tendency of these stories, which sometimes were rather discriminatory.

The methods sometimes used to report on some persons or institutions were considered as shameful or dishonest by the participants in the survey. Almost indiscriminately the example mentioned here was that of a satirical, very popular, yet controversial TV show called “Fiks Fare.” The program is a mix of humour and investigative journalism, sometimes claiming to make practical improvements in citizen’s lives. However, candid cameras and other similar tricks are among the main tools used, which places a big question mark on the ethical principles applied, or lack thereof. Examples mentioned were that of a secret taping of an Albanian ambassador, another taping of a high official charged with sexual harassment, etc. There have even been

cases of firing or suspending some of the persons affected, which indicated the importance in pondering the ethical issues implied in each case. Journalists were split between the ethical questions regarding this problem and the public's right to know, given the relatively positive final impact of the show. If we go beyond the specific case mentioned here, the trend between the lines seems to be that of journalists who do not have big ethical problems in intruding in personal lives of both public and non-public figures.

What renders the ethical situation in these cases more serious is the rarity of retractions published in the media in this regard. Most journalists said that retractions were extremely rare, both in their media and in other ones. There were some who further explained the situation by saying that in most cases retractions were corrections of misspellings or some insignificant factual errors; retractions addressing the actual meaning of the information were harder to find.

The situation seems to improve when it comes to the treatment of minors. Most journalists said that their media did not publish the identities of minors, except some few cases when it was essential for the story that the identity was revealed. When it comes to victims, though, their opinion was not so lenient: there were frequent cases when gory images or undue revelation of identity of the victims or persons affected were mentioned by the interviewees. Another aspect mentioned was that of hasty qualifications of convicting persons that are waiting for the court verdict. Journalists seemed to be undecided on whether print media or television deserved the greater blame. The only safe conclusion was that radio was not mentioned at all, mainly due to the technical nature of this medium.

In general the journalists agreed that there's ample room for improvement in this regard, namely in covering of courts, pre-detainees, victims, minors, etc. The combination of dilettantism, sensational headlines, and hasty and careless reporting is an obstacle that Albanian journalists have to overcome as soon as possible. "With regard to protection of privacy or human rights Albanian media lags behind in a significant way."

It seems that the situation is significantly better when it comes to distributing personal data on people or in using as sources of information persons with physical or mental disorders. Similarly, when reporting on crime, many journalists report that the cases of mentioning religious and sexual affiliations are extremely rare at the moment, although the situation in the past has been diverse. On the other hand, reporting seems to be particularly sensitive to nationality, which is always included. In fact, at a time when reporting on organized crime has become a daily task for journalists in Albania, and having in mind the increasingly transnational nature of this reporting, this finding is not surprising. It also does not come as a surprise that minorities' affiliations are used, often in a pejorative connotation. Roma involvement, for example, was never failed to mention, although often it was not relevant for the news.

With regard to quotes or memories of criminals, many journalists regarded this as a non-problematic issue, as this was not a pervasive phenomenon. Moreover, most insisted that even if quoted, this was just for the sake of balance, not with any other implications. Only one of them said that eventually the image had improved after interviews were published. Print media seemed to suffer more from this phenomenon; sensationalism was to blame in this aspect, too. On a more positive note, reporters almost always preserved the confidentiality of their sources, and their newsrooms allied with them in this regard.

Overall, it can be concluded that there is undeniable, albeit slow, progress in journalism with regard to greater respect for human rights in several aspects. However,

the road to high ethical standards of Albanian journalism is hampered by undue influence of media owners and the interplay of economic and political interests in the media area. This complex situation, combined with the lack of working contracts for journalists and the absence of a trade union, leads to the pervasive phenomenon of self-censorship among the journalism community. This phenomenon grows even stronger having in mind the lack of code of ethics and self-regulatory mechanisms within this community, as well as the weak and fragmented profile of journalism associations in the country. As a sum, the ethical standards of journalism in the country, and eventually media's public mission, are significantly compromised by other interests, seemingly more powerful than serving the public and preserving professional integrity.

2.1.2 A selected choice of characteristic answers

There is an influence - I did not put my name as the author. Reports were censored and were never published

Do political, economic or some other directives of your editor or owner of your media effect the method you are going to use to treat some topic? Do you know of some cases in your or other media?

More or less all over the Albanian media there is such a phenomenon, including the media where I work. In my method the impact is mostly through economic directives/instructions, although there are cases of political ones. This is due to the fact that the media is mostly in the hands of entrepreneurs and it happens that their interests coincide with those of the government.

Yes, there have been 2 -3 cases. I refer mostly to my previous experience when I worked in a daily paper. Personally I never liked the intervention, and when I had to write according to the instructions of the owner I did not put my name as the author. There was a case when I wrote a story about the roads of the municipality, which the owner said had to be changed and we did change it.

I am the editor in chief and thus I am the person who gives instructions to the journalists. I must say that 80 % of the instructions are mine and they reflect my ideas on how the coverage should appear, whereas some 20% of the instructions result from the influence of the owners.

I think political and economic directives by the owner or the editor influence the way a certain topic is approached.

Not directly, but there is an editorial policy, if this could constitute political and economic directives. There might be cases when the owner or the editor intervenes directly.

Of course, there is an influence. It is a fact that in Albania no media is independent; in fact all the written and electronic media are dependent on specific interest groups. They act in order to safeguard these interests. Unfortunately, very unfortunately, at this time we cannot avoid this phenomenon. I know of instances when articles were not published because they harmed the interests or the investments of those persons that were supporters of the media group.

In my earlier experience as a journalist in a daily paper I did have such experiences. Once it involved some reports on the municipality and others on the Office for the Registration of Property Titles. In fact, the latter was censored and was never published. In this case the media was used by the owner.

Yes, for example there have been cases when we have been told not to speak about the Albanian Energy Corporation (KESH).

Yes. There have been guidelines by the owner or the director of the television, on issues such as corruption, governance and the Prime Minister.

There have been a few such cases when the editor-in-chief has told me that the conditions are not ripe yet to write on a certain topic.

Such things in Albania no longer happen openly. In very rare cases the owner or editor-in-chief intervenes directly on the topic to be covered or to stop a certain report. There are however cases when well-known journalists have opposed the political interests of the owner.

When I started off as a journalist, yes I did, but not anymore. Of course there is certain pressure by the owners on delicate issues. This is also partly due to the Albanian environment where personal connections are many and matter a great deal. Of course there are such interferences; often they tend to be indirect. In my case it has happened that in my TV program there was the intervention of a spokesman of a public institution, as well as the public official himself who contacted my editor in chief. In these cases the reactions are diverse, and sometimes quite strong.

Yes, they do influence my work, especially economic interests.

I try to adapt to the policy that the media I work in has

What do you do if your political and ideological preferences do not agree with those prevailing in your media? Do you know of such cases in your or some other media?

Me, personally, and journalists in general preserve the approach and ideology of the media where they work, primarily because they want to keep their job, but also due to some kind of self-censorship. My ideological and political preferences I can perform during the voting process.

I comply with what is dominant in the media where I work.

I professionally report only the facts.

I comply with the editorial policy, since I have decided to work in a newspaper that is independent.

I usually try to make a compromise and combine my beliefs with the editorial policy of the newspaper.

I try to adapt to the policy that the media I work in has. There are very few exceptions in the Albanian media when analysts can have their independent thoughts and run even counter to the editorial policy of the newspaper.

I adapt to the dominating policy in the media where I work.

Do you know of any case that someone on the side – from a political party, from the government, from the non-government sector or from the business field – intervened that some data are published or not published or that someone intervened after the text publishing he is not satisfied with? What was such reaction like? Do you know of any such cases in other media?

There are such cases, both in mine and other media. The intervention is mostly from politics and businesses, directly or indirectly, as a favor that they will repay at some future time.

Yes, I wrote for some 6 months on the pension scheme and the Institute of Social Security, until at some point the director told me to stop writing although I had collected a lot of interesting material that should have been published. The director did not give

me any explanation as to why we should not write anymore about the Institute of Social Security.

Yes, there have been such cases, especially ones involving the Municipality, or when officials were involved.

I have had many such interventions. Investigative journalism is an area which begs for such interventions and there are often collusions with individuals or state institutions, at times even court cases.

Yes, and it happens very often. They call the director before and after the TV program. It is mostly officials or government people.

Yes there are such cases. There are interventions, especially by politicians and representatives of government, who are not happy with what we write. Reactions range from clarifications with the editor to court cases.

There are such cases. It happens indirectly. There have been cases when public officials and NGO directors have intervened in order to have certain coverage. There is also dissatisfaction with some of the coverage we provide.

There have been cases when political parties or other actors have intervened in order to avoid the publication of a given piece. In this case they ask for a favor that they will repay.

Yes, my most recent case was that of an accident that happened with the Tirana telepheric. I was asked, through the intervention of someone, not to write about the accident.

Have all protagonists in your media had the same opportunities that their attitudes are available to the public? Do you know of any such cases in other media?

Generally yes. Although it does happen that not all the journalists are free to express their opinion, also due to a certain self-censorship.

I think yes. I think in the media there is more a certain self-censorship rather than the absence of the opportunity to voice one's opinion.

I think yes. There are also some cases when the journalist does not have the opportunity to voice his/her opinions. Naturally he should in this case find another job, however in practice this is not easy so one is obliged to make compromises.

No, not so far.

Have your sources given wrong information, especially those relating to an individual? Did you write a correction because of that, a denial or launch the true facts in some other way? Do you know of such cases in your or other media?

Of course. There are such cases, but it is important to consult many sources before writing anything. This is how I do it. I have never launched a retraction and they are very rare in Albanian media.

Yes, it has happened. I have not made a correction or a retraction. There are many such cases but very rarely there are retractions.

Yes, it has happened. I wrote a retraction when I learned the truth.

Yes it has happened. I did not write a retraction, because it was a matter of inaccurate information rather than wrong information. I informed the reader through indirect means.

I have never done a direct retraction, but I try to inform the readers regarding the truth through journalistic means.

Have you received any present, been to a paid visit (lunches, journeys, usual advertising matter of small value, signs of small appreciation)? Did it effect your reporting? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?

Yes, I have been invited to trips abroad, which have been sponsored. However, these have not had an impact in me professionally, or in my articles.

No, I haven't. Even to other journalists I tell not to get involved in any of these matters.

Yes, I have received such presents. It is more than normal they have affected my reporting. Not in a radical way, but yes, they have influenced. I believe it happens in all media outlets.

Yes, I was invited in London by the British Council and after this trip I reported on it. Naturally, it was not advertisement, but it had elements of promotion in it.

Do you remember some interview or some statement published in your media that have not been justified by their public importance and the principle of being interesting, but presented a form of hidden advertising? Do you know of any such cases in any other media?

Yes, there are such articles time after time. In our publication there is a page presented as article, but in fact it's pre-paid.

Yes, there were many cases that were not especially relevant, but it was in our interest to render the information public.

I myself do not have such an experience. However, there are cases of articles written by order of the chief, especially when it comes to businesses that support the newspaper. The articles might contain true and correct information, but the initial aim was to launch a business.

Do you remember any example of infringement of personal rights in case it is written about the imprisoned, persons at court, etc.? Has it happened for the reasons of sensation, for revenge or for some other reason?

Yes, there were cases when persons that were under investigation were labelled criminals without waiting for the court ruling. Even the People's advocate has reacted against this trend.

Yes, there have been such cases, for example with regard to maltreatment in pre-detention cells.

No, but I can add the cases of using names and photos of persons that have been arrested and information comes from police only, but the Court has not yet given a ruling on them.

In Albania there is still a dilettantism in crime reporting and court reporting. Often, journalists, driven by sensation, not only report names, but also views of persons under investigation, without waiting for the court ruling. In the aspect of respect for privacy or human rights Albanian media is lagging behind.

Are religious, national, sexual or some other (minority) affiliations mentioned if reporting on crime?

These are mentioned if they are part of the news, but there are no elements of attitude or positioning in them. For example, in cases when religion itself is an issue, then it is declared.

Religious, ethnic, sexual affiliations are not reported, but if the citizen is foreign, the nationality is revealed. In cases when crime is related to sexual problems/abuses, then this information is reported.

Televisions are more careful in this respect; this is a feature more pervasive in print media I think.

2.2 Croatia

2.2.1 Small improvement, but numerous defects

“Any twit can open a radio station”. Dancer and DJ among journalists

The assessment of the situation in the Croatian media is satisfactory. This is how the situation is seen by journalists with whom the interviews have been conducted. Each of them invested a lot of efforts and broadly elaborated their standpoint on freedom of the media, ethics in the media and notably professional standards in journalism. Shortly, progress has been made: The chaos which ruled in the mid 1990s is returning to the normal but there are still a lot of imperfections and according to a young female journalist, today any twit can open a radio station, get a concession without having to employ journalists.... Newspapers are in a much better position and they are the proof that better days for professional journalisms are coming.

It is peculiar that almost all interviewed journalists said that they did not perform some function, that they do not have an impact on the decision making process, that they did not mediate between political figures, but that they heard that other journalists did.

Clearly, the interviewed journalists either wanted to show a better image of them or they do not have the strength to admit that something ugly was happening to them or that they also wrote or published something that is not entirely in line with the principles of ethics.

Who are the interviewed journalists in Croatia? Of the 30 interviewed journalists, 17 are women and 13 are men, which is still inadequate to the real gender structure, because the majority of journalists in Croatia are women. According to their functions, the interview was conducted with eight journalists, eight editors and 14 of those who are performing both functions at the same time. They are all experienced journalists; 20 of them, have been working in journalism for over ten years, ten have been working for six years and five have been working for four years in journalism.

The majority (17) never worked in any other profession, while 13 did work in various professions: university professors, seamen, high school professor, proofreaders, dancer, worker in a sugar refinery, record manager, associate in an NGO, marketing, publishing, solicitor, worker in petrochemical industry, worker in a store, information service clerk, secretary and worker in a war veterans association. Nine of the interviewed journalists received journalism awards, of which some are very prestigious.

The interviewed journalists are employed in various media: dailies (13), weeklies (2), public TV (1), public radio (5), commercial TV (3), on-line edition (2) and other (4). Almost all of them (27) say they can live off journalism and only three say they cannot. This is why 21 of them do not have any other job on a side while nine, however, work somewhere else as professors, cameramen, DJs, interpreters or high school teachers.

The politicians are leaving their influence over the media to businesspeople

There is a secret liaison between journalists and politicians. For decades, politicians had influence and had been imposing their standpoints on journalists. The relationship between journalists and politicians is very complex, judging by the answers given by the interviewed journalists. However, a new force is being born on the media

horizon, and politicians are slowly but surely leaving their influence over the media to strong businesspeople and the alliance of strong companies, marketing industry and media owners are dictating the behavior of journalists.

Journalists, at least officially, are keeping their distance from the government or the economy. Only several interviewed journalists also performed some other function, so there were not able to use their position to get to information. Journalists accept, from time to time, a temporary position in non-governmental organizations. By observing elections in Ukraine, one young journalist made more money than she ever did in journalism. There are also some cases in which journalists accept the roles of spokespeople for political parties or local governments. It is hard to establish to what extent they have been using this in this job, but an experienced female editor of a daily recalled a case of TV reporter Tihomir Radii who was the spokesman for the Social Democratic Party (SDP) during the election campaign and after the elections he returned to his job as the host of influential political shows on national television (HTV), as if nothing happened.

The majority of journalists say they avoid influencing the decision making process in the political life through informal meetings, but they do not deny that such a thing exists. Some cases are amiable and anecdotic, as was the case with legendary politician Savka Dapcevic Kucar, who was a guest in a show called "Stranački život"(Party Life – unofficial translation). She had prepared a six-minute speech, but according to the editor's scheme the speech should have been only two minutes long. "It cannot be like that"– the editor said and Savka responded: "Why don't you edit this, see what's important and I will read what you tell me to read. "

It was easy with Savka who was at the end of her political career. But such environment does exist, says an experienced female editor who "...would like to believe that the job that I do and journalist in all other media can influence either government or party officials to take this as feedback and correct their policies accordingly. "

Did all journalists served as mediators between political figures? "No, no, no, no and no! "says a journalist with ten and a half years of experience in a regional daily. Others, however, have heard of such stories. A female editor of an on-line magazine says: "I have only heard rumors that certain newspapers, namely journalists, have good connections with politicians, and in accordance with that, they help one another. I believe that Ivan Zvonimir Čičak even wrote in his column that he informed Mate Granić of being tapped when the Mirogoj case was topical".

"They always complain..."

Are editors or media owners affected by pressure? Of course, but it usually affects others, said the interviewed journalists. What if they are directly exposed to pressure? Resignation is a very efficient but at the same time a very drastic measure, says an editor at a public radio. He did it twice! A journalist from a regional daily, who tries not to fall under anyone's influence, said: "However, there were such cases in my paper, and I can see that by reading other media, namely when a journalist asks a question and suggests an answer at the same time in such an obvious way that it makes you sick."

What about suggestions? There was a positive example, the kidnapping of the son of General Zagorac. "Police asked us not to publish the story. We did not publish it because we did not want to be responsible for someone's death, "said a journalist of a daily with 11 years of experience. This is a positive example. And negative suggestions? "Nobody will say that publicly", said a reporter who is now a university

professor. However, there are brave ones, so one journalist from a weekly firmly claims: "Yes, yes. I had a case with questions which I forwarded to the Office of the President. I had never received the answers to those questions so I asked if I may publish a text with questions they did not wish to answer. I was forbidden to do so".

Asked whether they were aware of cases of interventions over a published article the interviewed journalists gave a number of names and functions, from state to local officials. "They always complain," said a journalist working for a music on-line magazine. "Almost every time an article which is not full of praises for the person or company is published, the party or company the article is about complains," says a magazine editor who also has experience in political journalism.

Do journalists withhold facts about candidates during election campaigns? I don't, but I know who does – was the answer given by the majority of the interviewed journalists. Another question is whether journalists have knowledge of certain facts but time their stories to come out during the elections? The example of presidential candidate Boris Mikšić is a good one, the case was well known before but dirty stories were published only during the campaign...

What if reporters happen to have different political or ideological preferences from the prevailing one in their media?

Rigid realism prevails: "I leave! I change the newsroom! I get upset! I never adjust! I've been dragging myself from right to left, so I got fired!" and similar comments.

Questions regarding checking the information caused confusion. The majority of journalists believe that the source is responsible for the reliability of the information and they check only "suspicious" releases. Very few check everything and some believe that the term checking means taking a look at several web sites.

Questions related to publishing interviews which do not have editorial justification clash with responses to the question whether the owner requested their private interest be promoted. The majority said that there were a number of such interviews, but they deny that the owner ever requested anything of them.

"The example is the pop singer Severina" – said a journalist of a daily – „After her affair with home made porn, our reporter interviewed her but his questions were not about the porn video at all, but only about her concert and her new record. It is interesting that our medium was the sponsor of her concert. “

Money is opening all the doors

The series of questions aimed to investigate the attitude of journalists towards money and all those who are trying to buy or sell a piece of information, opened the Pandora box. Only a few of the interviewed journalists admitted of having made a financial gain but all of them said they know about a number of cases of which one was worse than the other..

Clearly, a new force rules in the media. There is a saying -- Money opens all doors. Journalists often say they are forced to sell news, notably in the local media where it is difficult to survive so every income is important. A journalist of a daily stated the examples of her colleagues who promoted a project in Koprivnica, wrote articles about the Croatia Osiguranje insurance company, and of a sports reporter being the spokesman for a sports organization.

"Yes I did, I wrote an article with advert in between the lines, you cannot avoid that in the local media" – this is the confession of an editor with almost 30 years of experience. "I was both director and journalist at the same time, so as the director I had to collect advertisements, and as a reporter I had to write."

A journalist from a public radio said she was doing a paid political show during election campaign, adding that she was not forced to do it.

Hidden advertisement is not recognized even by newsrooms. Journalists mostly claim there is no hidden advertisement, but said they've noticed that an article about getting rid of cellulite discretely mentions the name of a "miraculous" cure and that the advertisement is packaged as a newspaper article. Therefore it is not a surprise that it is hard to make a difference between an advertisement and an article. There is a rule that advertisement must be clearly marked, but what to do when the owner, Karlovačka bank, seeks all possible ways to advertise in a radio station which it owns? What to do when automobile company, which advertises in the auto pull-out on a regular basis, opens a new car salon? Photo reportage is the least one can expect.

Journalists should not collect ads, but such times have come, said a journalist of a daily with a long work experience: "In the past journalists were social and political activist and today they are spreading propaganda." However, some journalists do not even understand what propaganda is, so a young radio journalist believes it is okay to "lend" her voice for a radio commercial even for free, "...Because everybody is doing it."

And gifts? Nobody has a problem with small gifts, but people had been really competing about who will give a better gift to a journalist. Once, Zlatko Mateša, a former prime minister, gave journalists expensive cell phones for Christmas. Only one journalist returned the gift while the other accepted it as something entirely normal. Trips are on the top of the list of gifts to journalists, and there are some cases of a journalist being given a company credit card.

The mixture of journalism and public relations offices is visible the most in the use of PR material. The majority of interviewed journalists do not believe that using such materials is a wrong thing to do, even though they are aware that it is entirely propaganda. "You don't have photos and they send you some. Of course I use them" says a female journalist working for an illustrated magazine.

Unconfirmed information, anonymous sources ...

The third group of questions covered the area aimed at investigating to what extent are journalists aware of ethical standards in the profession and how do they behave in delicate cases: publishing unconfirmed information, supporting allegations, failing to react in cases when the interviewed person is not telling the truth, writing denials and corrections, open attacks on certain people, using dishonorable methods while collecting information, protecting human rights, protecting victims and revealing sources, taking advantage of mentally ill people and people with various psychological and physical disabilities, unnecessary mentioning of someone's national, religious or sexual orientation, promoting the standpoints of criminals.

The majority of interviewed people have been publishing unconfirmed information, but everybody said that they almost always wrote in the article that this was an unconfirmed piece of information or speculation, even though "some other" media houses are not paying much attention to that! One of the interviewed journalists believes that due to the tight deadlines, it is simply impossible to check all information on time and it is a common practice that information is published under "according to unofficial sources." Unverified pieces of information are "the necessary evil", and one cannot manage without them. The journalist says that the problem is that in a lot of cases they cannot access information in various state services institutions. One journalist said "You send a fax asking for information to be confirmed and you wait 63 years for an answer."

The role of spokespeople has been underlined. Spokespeople are said to be the main reason why only partially verified pieces of information are published. Journalists are aware that an extremely large number of anonymous and unconfirmed sources in an article are leading to newspaper becoming tabloids and as a result it portrays a poor picture of Croatian journalism in its entirety.

Also, the responses about the cases in which it is obvious that the person cited in the article is lying and the interviewer is not opposing are very interesting. A significant number of journalists believe that almost all interviews with the prime ministers or the president are done in the way to make them look "as if they were written by the same hand" or "journalists are spineless people because they fail to stand up against Mesic or Sanader when they talk nonsense" or "journalists are clearly humoring the politicians whose standpoints they share" or "all interviews done with late president Franjo Tudjman were of that sort". The conclusion can be drawn from the standpoint of a journalist who thinks that when a journalist does not ask a person in a very high position anything, that journalist becomes a spokesman for that person. As opposite examples, namely when journalists showed no mercy and underlined that the interviewed person is telling lies, the journalists pointed out the interviews with former Foreign Minister Miomir Žužull and former Health Minister Andrija Hebrang. Some journalists say that reporters don't care about professionalism in journalism or about the opinion of their colleagues because they clearly have their own interests.

What happened in cases when sources had given false information to journalists, notably the information referring to a specific person? Did journalists write corrections and apologies?

Sources are precious to all professional journalists. A special bond of trust is being established between journalists and their sources. When the opposite, as one journalist wrote, than "this source can be used the first time, the last time and never again"! All journalists said in such case they would always write a correction and a denial. They stressed, however, that they try to previously check information personally, particularly when the source offers an exclusive piece of information. "The biggest deceits and mistakes were happening with the information received from intelligence circles", says a female journalist, "... and one should be aware of that!" If one piece of information turned out to be correct, it does not mean that the next time all information should be published without being checked first". Clearly, interviewed Croatian journalists have been deceived and they have reservations when it comes to generous offers from sources.

"Were you the witness of personal matters being settled in the media?", was one of the next questions. A brief summary could be drawn from the answer given by the journalist who said „Every day somebody squares accounts with somebody else". However, a small number of the interviewed journalists underlined some concrete examples saying that they cannot remember. Those who did remember pointed to the practice of influential political weeklies in which articles had clear attacks on public figures (the attack on Goran Bregović in *Globus weekly*; Vladimir Šeks's attack on Branimir Glavaš, the story about presidential candidate Mikšić, the attack on Milan Bandić, Zagreb deputy mayor). Several journalists singled out the example when the attacks in the media were directed against the innocent and entirely private persons – who have AIDS or those false accused of having committed a rape.

More exclusive, more sensational

In connection with the use of dishonorable methods in gathering newspaper information (secret taping, set-ups) the interviewed journalists singled out several examples in which journalists were using *undercover* methods for example with the aim to reveal to the public trade with body organs (research by Hrvoje Appelt) or the pretence of former director of Commercial bank who is in a psychiatric hospital instead of prison (report by Robert Valdec). Interviewed journalists share the same standpoint about this way of collecting information – none of them did something like neither that nor they have justification for the cases mentioned above. None of the interviewed journalists would misuse the statements given *off the record*, even though there is a record of such cases occurring. These are all ways to become “better”, “more exclusive” and “more sensational” than others.

Two questions directly referred to the respect of human rights and children’s rights. Croatian journalists are aware of a number of intentional and accidental mistakes made that affected private persons, suspects in official investigations, members of minority ethnic groups, minority religious communities, or minorities in general. The majority believes that sensationalism and poor education of journalists contributed to insensitivity in the protection of human rights and the rights of children. The interviewed journalists do not find justification for mistakes in the media which happened in the past several years in Croatian journalism: from the unnecessary toying with HIV positive little girls, unnecessary stressing the nationality of the Roma and Serbs exclusively in the cases of negative character, the protection of the identity of suspected rapist but revealing the identity of a victim (US female basketball player in Gospić), publishing a photo on newspaper front pages (“This is a pedophile from Istria”, “This is a rapist”). Several interviewed journalists have noticed that the establishment of the institution of the Ombudsman for Children contributed to accelerate reacting to media excesses when it comes to children.

The next three questions also refer to concrete cases connected to the disrespect of human rights, making fun of somebody's disability, illness and using sick children as the information source or media exploitation. Some of the concrete examples are already mentioned and partially absolved in the previous group of questions, so some of the infamous media incidents have been mentioned several times (little girls who are HIV positive, falsely accused rapist, the program on local television in which the main characters were people with poor mental abilities, then re-broadcasting the recordings of politicians with body disability, the recordings of really short politicians who are purposely being shown next to tall ones, the TV show in which a blind person is being taken to a strip night bar, etc.). The interviewed journalists – by pointing to these cases – wanted to underline that they are aware that some media are insensitive towards people with physical or mental disabilities - both private and public figures.

The question referring to revealing the source, the majority very briefly and resolutely responded: We protect and do not reveal our sources. Naturally, the journalists were pressured – the pressure usually came from the outside, even from a court – to reveal their sources, but the majority had managed to avoid that. In some cases, the interviewed journalists shared the information about their sources with editors whom they trust or their colleagues, but they do not reveal their sources. In Croatia, the State Prosecutor's Office has opened proceedings against Counter-Intelligence Agency officers who violated the human rights of a female reporter because

they interrogated her without the authorization, with the aim for the journalist to reveal her sources.

Croatian journalists are definitely determined to protect their sources, notably when it comes to political pressure. The smaller the town is, the stronger the pressure becomes. In smaller towns attempts of pressure are more frequent and more common which makes journalists in those towns speak about them publicly.

2.2.2 A selected choice of characteristic answers

A female journalist, 12 years of experience in journalism, awarded, currently works in a weekly, commented on the relationship with politicians: "I believe that a journalist is dead when he is no longer a journalist, but instead giving advices to politicians. We are here to be *watchdogs*. Some journalists in Croatia write columns and entire articles which are nothing but pure advices, even more so, they brag about it.... We have a commentator who is bragging that he and a number of editors sat with the president of some country or a state official, that they ate together, drank together and gave him advices which the official took. That is conflict of interest. That is Croatian journalism, no professional distance."

A female journalist, 12 years of experience, works in a weekly: "I know about a lot of cases of interventions aimed to stop the interview from being published. In these cases the news desk hardly ever wins. There was this case when the entire issue of the *Arena* weekly was withdrawn from news stands over the scandal with (The Minister of Science) Dragan Primorac. I think that a big problem in journalism today is that it is being done according to instructions, the fact that all interests are connected and you cannot go against it."

An editor with 15 years of experience: "Do I know that there are people who had information but did not make them public? Of course I do. The entire Croatian Television. The entire *Vecernji list*, *Vjesnik*, *Slobodna Dalmacija*. I generally speak about news desks, because unfortunately there is this one dark part of Croatian journalism which still has not been cleared and these people who decided not to reveal information before and were doing the opposite are still taking part, even today, in the establishment of the leading political dailies and weeklies.

Feral has a list of people that they are not allowed to write about. The list is contains names of Vesna Pusić, Stipe Mesić, Damir Kajin...All of the sudden they became a sacred object, they cannot be criticized and only positive things can be written about them. Even before *Feral* had a number of lists, but the open list of people about whom articles must not be written is something horrible "

" A package from the Company waiting for me at my desk..."

An editor of a daily with 19 years of experience, awarded several times, had an encounter with dark sides of the media capitalism: „We did some kind of a story, more a commercial article. I was not willing to do it but I had to collect ads. This is considered to be in the job description, it is even stated in the contract of employment. Today, more and more journalists, especially in smaller towns, are not only journalists but ad collectors as well. I think this is absolutely intolerable, but it is mostly requested by foreign employers."

A female editor of a daily with 15 years of experience had an unpleasant experience with "fresh" businesspeople: "I asked the office of a young, famous businessman to send me information about the social background to portray him in a

“Now and then” fashion. He refused. In the meantime I decided not to write the story, but his office didn't know that. So one day I come to my newsroom and I had a package from that company waiting for me at my desk. The package was full of gifts plus a memo to make me understand why information about this businessman cannot be released. I called the man and returned the package, but this sort of behavior insults me.

And it's a horror to be a journalist during Christmas holidays. The main topic of all conversations is who got what from whom. You get cell phones, recorders. It is unbelievable. One starts wondering how to be objective.“

A journalist working for a daily, with long experience in journalism, recalls his free lunch: "I was writing about a trial and the man the story was about insisted to buy me lunch. It was in his restaurant and the situation was very unpleasant. I simply was not able to say no. I wrote the article that he was not satisfied with. He called the editor in chief and told him that I wrote a story about him but did not present him in the best light even though he invited me for lunch. „So, what did you think, to bribe him with lunch?“ the editor in chief responded.

But some situations are less funny. I went to an auto-show, privately. A car dealer had a presentation at which they gave journalists watches and stickers to everyone else. They almost started a real fight for those twenty watches, because people would not leave until they got their watch. I also know about some cases where journalists were given 100-200 euros of spending money for casino. “

News editor on a public radio station says that some ministries, ahead of parliamentary elections, organize trips for journalists covering this field. "Journalists use those trips organized by the ministry to write several stories. I personally used this one paid trip to write two stories which had nothing to do with the institution which paid for the trip. All those who want nice stories to be written about them go to reporters they know they would actually publish the story.“

If you don't have the information now, someone else will have it

A political commentator, working in a daily, with 20 years of experience, commented on unverified facts: „I always include several sentences to explain that something is a rumor or an assumption. *Globus* and *Nacional* often publish unconfirmed reports and rumors. They operate as a PR agency.“

A female editor, ten years of experience in a daily commented on unchecked information: „I know that using unverified information leads to newspapers becoming tabloids. If you don't have the information now, someone else will have it. And you feel bad not to use it. A lot of information is hard to check. You are always running late, and on the other hand those who should, refuse to either confirm or deny the information – and the information in question is of the public interest.“

An editor, five years of experience, public radio, commented on unconfirmed information: "The best example of unconfirmed information publishing is *24 sata* daily. I know a journalist who used to set up information. Once he was in charge of covering the professional skiers at the St. Moritz competition. However, I found out that he never went to St. Moritz, even though he wrote a report as if he was at the place. I discovered that by calling him on his cell phone and instead of a foreign answering service taking the call (which would have been the case if he was really outside of Croatia) I got the Croatian answering service. Later he admitted to me himself that he never went to St. Moritz.“

A radio reporter, seven years of experience, commented on *undercover* journalism: „On the occasion of Combat AIDS day, several years ago, two female journalists wanted to investigate whether or not doctors ask patients taking AIDS test inappropriate questions. The basis for the investigation was that due to these inappropriate questions, a lot of people do not want to go to doctors to get tested. The girls were wired and went *undercover* and they in fact did come across some very awkward questions. The public has positively reacted to the show.“

A political commentator, 20 years of experience, working in a daily, commented on journalists' using blackmails: "I know about some classic examples of blackmail. A journalist is threatening a politician or a businessman to publish something only to get certain information he is interested in. Often, journalists do not have the information to be able to blackmail certain people, but they are only bluffing.“

Editor of a monthly, 14 years of experience, commented on unverified information: "We never publish something that hasn't been checked. But that is a practice in weekly magazines. They publish unverified assumptions only about certain groups of people on a regular basis, but on the other hand, they don't publish verified information about certain people and companies.

A female journalist and editor, 17 years of experience, working for a daily, commented on the interview authorization: "We have a legal obligation to authorize the interview, which is scandalous. This means that you interview somebody and then send all interesting parts of the interview that to be authorized. Then, this person crosses out, changes or adds new questions. According to the law, you are obliged to publish what has been corrected. The result: journalists are publishing something that people have never said. In a normal world, this cannot happen. None of the foreign officials that I interviewed, including President Havel, asked for the authorization. It simply never crosses their mind.“

A political commentator, 20 years of experience, working for a daily, commented on the source credibility: "Politicians have realized that they can sell their stories to journalists who yearn for sensationalism. Therefore, one should not take things for granted, information must be checked “.

A female journalist, 12 years of experience, commented on publishing (un)verified information: "We checked information at five different sources. It turned out that everybody was lying. It was a great deceit by politicians who were in fact fighting but in certain ways they were unified...“

A female radio journalist, 17 years of experience, commented on politicians as sources: "During the terms of office of the former coalition government, one party attempted to plant information about politicians from the other party. The example is Mato Arlović of the Social Democratic Party who launched a story that Vesna Pusić of the Croatian People's Party had asked for a jacuzzi to be installed in the Parliament building to publicly discredit her. The actual story was that Vesna Pusić said that maybe, considering the expenses of the remodeling of the parliament building and its coffee house, it would be better to build a fitness centre for MPs to be able to exercise so that their brains could start functioning. So the politicians, release partial information, and journalists publish some of that, including me...“

A radio editor, five years of experience on reckoning in the media: "*Radio 101* insults people. They give themselves too much freedom to insult those who don't think like they do.“

"A raped Croat women, a killed Serb man, a thief of the Roma background...."

An editor in a daily, eight years of experience, comments on the human rights protection in the media: "I don't know the General Declaration on Human and Citizen Rights by heart. I am not aware of each and every action that is considered to represent the violation of human rights... But those who published the names of protected witnesses violated human rights and the statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague. There is a lot of ignorance. There is some media in which editors in chief have only elementary or high school education, so they are unaware... It is also being done because of the newspaper circulation, but also because of ignorance.

A female journalist-editor, 8 years of experience, working for a private radio station, commented on human rights: "Human rights are violated to a great extent in our media. Start with Nina and Ela and end with American girl. I consider journalism to be a sacred thing, but we also have a number of media which does not practice journalism, but something else. They are printed on the paper, in color, they have letters and headlines and they look like newspapers...but I do not give them the right to call themselves a newspaper. "

A female reporter, 12 years of experience, working for a weekly, commented on the media promotion of prejudices towards national minorities: "A Croat women_raped, a Serb man killed, a thief of the Roma background.... this is a common thing in Croatia. I remember when a representative of the Roma association in Croatia, Kasum Cana, presented a painting as a gift to President Mesić, being completely unaware that the painting was stolen. In the morning program of the *Radio 101*, one of the hosts said "What else can one expect from the Roma ". I think that this is chauvinism, disgusting and an intolerance preaching."

Editor, 15 years of experience, working for a monthly, commented on the human rights violation: "Robert Knjaz's TV show "Mjenjačnica", for example. They took a blind man to parties and a strip show. That is just not right!"

A journalist, 10 years of experience, writing for a daily commented on human rights: "The example of the Roma family was an indication. In one TV show, a journalist was reporting about a raped Roma girl. She got a statement from the girl herself who was raped by her brother for the second time already. The girl was mentally retarded and the journalist proudly said how she got a statement from a mentally retarded person... it is horrible!"

2.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina

2.3.1 Positive, but slow moves

(Self) regulation – thanks to the international community's engagement

Compared to its neighbors, Bosnia-Herzegovina has a solid legislative framework within which media operate. The Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) is responsible for radio and TV stations and the entire communications sector at state level. The CRA issues licenses to broadcasters and monitors adherence to the Broadcast Code of Practice. It focuses on the aspect of program contents and applies a more complex criterion to public broadcasters, in light of their position and funding. The catalogue of possible sanctions for violations of the CRA Code of Practice ranges from a written warning, through issuance of fines, to withdrawal of license, i.e. shutting down media outlets.

The print media in BiH are left to be regulated according to the concept of self-regulation. It had originally been planned that the Independent Media Commission (IMC), the predecessor of today's CRA, would also be responsible for the press, but the standpoint that that the press in BiH should be left to self-regulation prevailed, being advocated by the international representatives, based on European, most of all British, experiences. That is a dominant stand in the international media community, according to which broadcasters use frequency resources, a public commodity, and therefore institutional (legislative) regulation under stricter criteria is necessary for them. In this regard, BiH is the first country in the region to establish a self-regulatory body called Press Council, composed of representatives of the profession and non-governmental sector, civil society and citizens. For a long time the Council was headed by a foreigner (from Great Britain), Robert Pinker, but in April 2005 a local man was chosen as the head of the Council, ending the international protectorate in another media sphere. Namely, the Communications Regulatory Agency, which had been headed by foreigners for a long time, has been entirely composed of local people for the third year now and it seems operations are continued successfully.

The state as a castle in the air - the concept of self-regulation simply cannot work

However, the future of the Press Council, since it does not dispose of repressive measures, is still questionable. Its operations are based on adherence to the Press Code, which is mostly a compilation of existing codes of ethics, with certain paragraphs which suit the specific organization of post-Dayton B&H built in. The Press Council became operational two years ago, but its effects and range have been very modest. To recall, the very term media self-regulation suggests lack of any legislation or force. However, in the environment of a country which is like a castle in the air, with cultural traditions, disturbed values, split consciousness and identity, strong animosity buried in ethno nationalism and the past, overnight and showy religiousness, and traditional irresponsibility and sloppiness of people in the region, the concept of self-regulation

simply cannot be applied. Therefore, it should not be surprising that broadcasters in B&H are at a somewhat higher professional level than the print media, particularly with regard to journalistic ethics. Fearing Regulatory Agency penalties, radio and TV stations refrain from using hate speech, or emphasizing just “their (political, ethnic, economic...) side,” and also from various other methods of manipulation. On the other hand, some newspapers have been waging media wars against those with different opinions, thus constantly generating new crises and new enemies. The worst case scenario for them is someone suing them for defamation, in a long civil court case, since defamation in B&H has been completely decriminalized, also as a result of international protectorate.

With the aim of providing a reliable picture of the situation in the B&H media, the sample was divided by media type and seat. In light of the specific social and political situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and its ethnic division, journalists and editors from different parts of B&H were interviewed. In the Federation of B&H, journalists from the following media outlets were interviewed: FTV, OBN, NTV Hayat and TV SA, TV Tuzla and in Croat majority populated areas HTV Oskar C. Among radio stations: BH Radio 1 (BHR 1), Radio Federation BH, Radio Stari Grad (RSG) from Sarajevo, Tuzla Canton radio, and Bihac radio, and in Croat majority populated areas Radio Postaja Mostar. Among print media, the following dailies were included in the survey: Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje, as well as the weeklies Slobodna Bosna, Dani, and Azra. In Croat majority populated areas, a journalist of the Mostar-based Dnevni List was interviewed. In the Republika Srpska, the following media outlets were encompassed: TV – RTRS, Alternativna TV, Arena, and Pink Bosnia-Herzegovina; radio stations: Nes Radio, BIG Banja Luka, RTRS, Pan Radio; among print media: dailies Nezavisne Novine and Glas Srpske, and weeklies Novi Reporter and Patriot.

The research shows somewhat encouraging picture. Journalists do make efforts to respond to professional tasks and principles. Awareness of ethical principles is in place, but stumbling over them is still an evident reality.

Political activists in the media. Editors and directors are “untouchable”

Interviews with journalists started with a question on whether, in addition to being journalists, they had also done other work, primarily in the area of politics and economy. B&H journalists more often mention cases of journalists from media outlets moving to some other positions, in various governmental and nongovernmental institutions. The most frequent reason for leaving the profession is a higher salary elsewhere, since it is very hard to live off journalistic work. Most of them have no knowledge of any cases of previous positions abuse, for better or more extensive reporting work, but at the same time they admit that journalists who moved from the media to other positions have found it easier to deliver information from their new organization to their former media outlet and often serve as a source of information for that outlet. What helps them is acquaintance and friendship with former colleagues.

However, a few said there were a lot of political party members, i.e. political activists, who work in the media in this country and use the media as to propagate a certain political orientation. *“I know people who are engaged in the media, but at the same time they are engaged in a political party. They, being more devoted to the party than the media outlet they work for, either “push through” information or suppress it, depending on the interest of the particular political party they are affiliated with,”* says a journalist from Sarajevo. It seems that such situations, namely abuse of employment in media with the aim of propagating one’s own political orientation, are somewhat more

common in the Croat majority part of the B&H Federation than in other parts of B&H. The names that most often stand out in this regard are the editor Veselko Cerkez from Hrvatski Radio Mostar, Zoran Kresic from HTV Mostar, Ivana Kristic from Radio Herceg Bosna, the controversial journalist Smiljko Sagol. According to the interviewed journalists' allegations, they have all worked in their respective media outlets, directly or indirectly, for certain political parties, while at the same time they were better paid than politically uninvolved journalists. However, examples such as these are present in other parts of B&H as well. An example that stands out is that of Dika Bejdic; according to the allegation of one of the interviewed journalists, she was working at the same time as a free-lancer for the daily *Oslobodjenje* and as the information advisor to the Head of Bihac municipality. Still, according to the information received, these cases mostly concern editors and directors of media outlets, who are "untouchable," and whose ethics "no one dares to question." In certain media outlets, rules and regulations have been set down for such cases: "*A person who during an election campaign or something of a kind, wishes to work as a spokesperson or to be engaged on any other basis, must have the consent of the general director and, in line with regulations, must have his status in the news and political program frozen,*" said a journalist from Mostar. It is debatable to what extent such rules are respected and even how many media outlets have them enacted. However, even more problematic is the possibility of having someone, even with the director's consent, taking the job in an election campaign, and after that returning to the media outlet. What we have is a combination of public relations, which is done for a client, and journalism, which is supposed to be work in the public interest. Even when these two things are not done at the same time, to a rational viewer, listener or reader, a journalist of that kind does not generate trust.

Journalists suggest, politicians manipulate, but the most powerful is the owner

Journalists' influences on the decision-making process in political parties or public institutions fall into two categories. Articles and media contents aiming to create a sort of public pressure comprise the first one. However, journalists also mention informal conversations, through which journalists try to suggest their own opinions and proposals. These conversations are a relatively common attempt of journalists to positively affect happenings in the country. However, most of them claim that they do not know how significant their advice and suggestions have been. The example of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which organizes regular informal meetings with journalists, is more an aberration. One of the interviewed journalists in Sarajevo referred to the Minister of Foreign Affairs as an example of a public official who listens to and partly accepts the advice of journalists, viewing them as link to the general public. Although journalists admit less often that they have influence through media, continued publication of media contents certainly influences various public subjects, as well as public opinion in general. On rare occasions journalists admit that they consciously try to create public pressure. Such pressure, for example, has been exerted by the HTV Mostar; through its media contents, it has often put direct and indirect pressure on the political parties to vote in the Canton Assembly in favor of adopting a budget, since HTV Mostar itself is financed from the budget. In this case, media influence was not aimed only at bringing about positive social changes; the aim was partly the benefit of the media itself. Journalists speak more often about influences of this kind, justifying it as an attempt to improve the situation in the country, better inform the public, etc. For example, a journalist from a radio station from Bijeljina admits: "*Such actions were usually related to possibility to create public pressure through the media, to bring about*

certain decisions. But, I must say, at state level, these decisions were not of a crucial importance. If I would, in the course of covering a trial or investigating a certain issue, realize that there is a danger of a case being hushed up or of a culprit going unpunished, I used to directly say: 'You know what, if the case is not dealt with the due respect or the offender goes unpunished, I'll raise the entire press.' Exposing a story would have resulted in the case entering court procedure..." I think we influenced the law to be abided by, at least occasionally, and some things in institutions to be regulated more fairly than they would otherwise. Perhaps it's a small percentage, but we have managed to reduce the level of corruption." Nonetheless, journalists agree that political parties' influence on journalists, and thus on public opinion, is much more common and efficient than vice versa. B&H political parties, through informal meetings and influence, even direct pressure and blackmail, manipulate journalists and the media in general. The mediation between political actors in B&H media mostly takes form of moderating talks among opposite political options and publicizing their stands in the same news item. Such conduct on the part of journalists is particularly common during election campaigns, in order to accomplish balance and give everyone an equal opportunity for media support. The mediation effect in these cases is not especially strong, although some journalists believe that in this way they enable people with different political orientations to come together, discuss a particular issue and find a common solution. And, of course, to present to the public an objective view of the situation and political stands.

In the Sarajevo weekly political magazines *Dani* and *Slobodna Bosna*, there have been examples of a more direct and efficient mediation. These magazines organized reconciliation of political actors at the magazine premises, and affected by articles and informal pressure, according to journalists, the Alliance for Democratic Change was formed on the eve of the 2000 elections.

Editors' and owners' of the B&H media influence the topic selection, manner of reporting and the general standpoint journalist adopt. In the case of Banja Luka media or Mostar broadcasters the influence is mostly political in nature. Strong political orientation of editors and/or owners puts major pressure on journalists and many of them had to leave their jobs for that reason. In some cases, dismissal was an automatic consequence of disputed media content publishing, but also journalists themselves have also resigned as a result of censorship and changes in content made by the editors. Interviewed journalists cited HTV Mostar, Radio Postaja Mostar, the public RTRS and FTV, Glas Srpske, Prst, Patriot, RTV Tuzla, Radio Soli from Tuzla, Dnevni Avaz, and Oslobodjenje. At the same time, was a rare issue for which interviewed journalists gave more examples from other media than their own. According to the journalists, due to strong political orientation of media, which is clear and evident even to viewers, there is a resistance on the part of public figures towards certain media outlets. FTV was mentioned as an example: for quite a while now, Sulejman Tihić, B&H Presidency Member; Borislav Paravac, B&H Presidency Chairman; Paddy Ashdown, High Representative to B&H do not wish to appear as guest. However, it should be noted that there were also cases of journalists themselves being politically oriented and editors censoring them because they believe political, and even nationalistic, ideas cannot be propagated through the media.

All the best about sponsors. Dangerous threats, usually made by criminal groups

Journalists do not consider the economic pressure to be disputable from the ethical point of view to such a degree as the political one. Still, in many media outlets there is an unwritten rule that negative contents about sponsors are not published or broadcasted, although there are issues and events that should be covered. The reason being presented is that one must also think of the outlet's survival and the fact that the 'culprit' of the events in question is actually paying journalists. Some journalists even believe that editors and journalists often unconsciously yield under their financiers' indirect pressure. As an example of strong and wide-spread economic pressure, one of the interviewed journalists cites Aluminij company from Mostar: "*This company 'rules' the media community in Herzegovina. It is the financier of 'suitable' media to a great degree. If a journalist happens to mention Aluminij in a negative context or simply makes a news item that is not in line with the company's interest, the financial tap is turned off.*" During research, the only reported example of opposing economic interest of media goes back as far as 1998. A journalist from a private TV in Sarajevo cited the example of the company Elektroprivreda, the most powerful state-run company in B&H. "*When we criticized them for good reason, we lost funding from that organization. What Elektroprivreda was doing was a drastic example, and we couldn't remain silent,*" he explained and added that journalists, despite such developments, remained salient in their criticism.

Editors and sponsors are usually those who suggest how and about what the journalists should write. Still, generally speaking, such cases are relatively few in number, but the percentage of journalists who do not give in to such suggestions is also low. On the other hand, editors' professional suggestions are something that journalists, at least according to the interviews conducted, accept and consider necessary in journalistic work. Journalists are open to suggestions, as well as to a compromise and changes in their original media contents that leads to quality. Several journalists reported more or less anonymous threats received via telephone, mail or e-mail. Most of them do not heed such threats and even publish them in their media outlets, informing the public about the pressure. They take this risk, naturally, only when they have strong and trustworthy data on what they are publishing. Threats usually come from politicians and businessmen, and sometimes even from unnamed groups of citizens. Journalists mostly believe that the threats are not "dangerous" and do not pay much attention to them. A case that stands out was when one media outlet threatened another, i.e. a journalist threatened a journalist. However, some threats, usually made by criminal groups, are very dangerous and threatening, and journalists think that judicial bodies do not react adequately. Passive attitude on the part of the police and judiciary suggests that they may have been urged not to do anything concerning the matter, said some of the interviewed journalists.

Dissatisfied reactions to published or broadcasted media contents are an everyday occurrence for B&H journalists and media. According to journalists' allegations, everyone reacts and complains, starting from ordinary citizens, through companies, governmental and non-governmental institutions, to the Communications Regulatory Agency. Reactions are diverse: from expressing verbal dissatisfaction, denial writing or lawsuit filing, to serious threats. It should be mentioned that reactions are not always direct, but it is relatively easy to figure out who is behind them. Political figures and well-known businessmen are most inclined to indirect reactions. Journalists react differently depending on the case. In most cases, they ignore the expressed dissatisfaction when they are sure the published information is true. If a denial shows

that the initial contents were untrue or incomplete, the objection is accepted and effort is made to remedy it.

There are also attempts of bribery, as in the case when the Rector of the University of Banja Luka to the owner of Nezavisne Novine Zeljko Kopanja “*offered a lot of things so a series of articles on criminal activities in that institution would not be published*”. There are not many open threats and direct danger, but from time to time they do occur. It seems that *Dani* and *Slobodna Bosna* once again bear the biggest brunt of these threats, although other outlets are also sometimes subject to them. The example of *Slobodna Bosna* stands out, whose editor Senad Avdic has even been beaten up and the outlet has often suffered break-ins in their offices, thefts, etc. *Slobodna Bosna*, despite direct danger to its journalists, tries to resist such pressure. However, there have been examples when journalists, fearing for their lives, published untrue material. One of the interviewed journalists declined to provide us with the names, but he did give the following example: “*I know colleagues from the bureau of a daily newspaper in Mostar, where once a criminal broke in and demanded from a journalist to write a denial of an article. He even gave him photographs and ordered him to publish them in the newspaper, threatening him that “anything could happen”. Tomorrow, both the photographs and the denial appeared in the paper.*”

Fortunately, examples such as this one, are few, but it is a fact that today’s B&H journalists are faced with different forms of pressure and threats and that the media, in addition to editorial, also have this kind of censorship. The role of editors in such situations is different. Sometimes the editor is the person who makes threats, and in light of his or her position in the outlet, such threats have the strongest effect. Sometimes editors are victims, such as Senad Avdic, but there are also many cases of editors pulling back and “leaving the journalist unprotected,” said the interviewed journalists. To what extent threats and reactions will influence the specific media reporting to a great degree depends on the editors.

Election campaign – seed-plot for unprofessional journalism

The analyses of media coverage of election campaigns, done by Media Plan Institute, showed that the most prominent print media to a great degree expressed political sympathies and inclination towards certain political options, parties or party leaders, or were waging campaigns to disqualify those who did not suit them. Most newspapers and magazines use the form of commentary, which is used to draw attention to problems, to criticize, even attack a certain figure. However, formally speaking, commentaries, especially if they are frequent and aiming in the same direction, result in profiling readers. In addition to this genre, there were evident unprofessionally interpreted reports which were aimed against certain parties. Selective presentation of information, as well as featuring articles from other media which are corresponding to the particular newspaper’s political concept is a common practice. Furthermore, instead of promoting the option represented by the subject of the interview, interviews are conducted in such a manner, to provoke answers aimed at criticizing or even discrediting certain options or persons (which the particular paper dislikes). Hence, newspapers seem to have a mission to criticize or even present certain parties in a pronouncedly negative light more than they promoted or had a positive attitude towards certain parties. Of course, one should not neglect the so-called indirect effect here either – if you strongly criticize one party, consequently you are sending the reader a positive signal about the opposite party.

Responding to a question on potential political party bias in media coverage, interviewed journalists claim there are many such cases, but they deny their own outlets' participation. Journalists consider the publishing of unverified information or details from party figures' private lives (which is often the case in the B&H media during election campaigns) to be unethical. For example, they regard the Dnevni Avaz attitude towards Zlatko Lagumdžija, president of the Social-Democratic Party of B&H, who sued the paper over the matter a number of times, as a textbook example of lack of professionalism.

Political parties often provide media outlets with questionable data about their rivals. Even the international community resorts to this when it wants to remove certain officials, claim some of the interviewed journalists. This is mostly related to political conflicts through the media. To what extent the particular media outlet becomes a mediator in these extremely unethical conflicts depends on the outlet itself and degree of its politization.

Information is more often abuse than suppressed. If a political party supported by an outlet does something questionable, the media outlet often does not publish such contents, but it does publish their denial. This leads to an absurd situation: an outlet denies something that it never wrote about. Journalists believe that along with Dnevni Avaz, lately FTV, Oslobođenje, and Slobodna Bosna have yielded to such influences, and in the Republika Srpska the RTRS, Nezavisne Novine, Reporter, Patriot and TV BN. It also happens that a journalist does not convey all information from a press conference or some other election event, primarily due to lack of time and/or media space. It seems that journalists themselves, when it comes to election battles act according to ethical codes, but under the influence of editors and owners they are sometimes forced to violate their own principles in order to keep their jobs.

Some journalists admit that they sometimes keep a trump up their sleeve. One of the interviewed journalists said: *“Once, for example, I had information that a local politician was accused of fraud, but didn't report it although I had the opportunity. Of course, the man arrived in the studio to talk about his platform for improving living conditions. When I asked him about the fraud accusation, I was sorry that we weren't on television at that moment. He went red in the face and started stuttering...he simply hadn't expected it. These are the moments that a journalist savors.”*

Some are ready to make compromise, while others rather leave their newsroom

It seems that the majority of both journalists and editors try to work professionally, without putting forward their political orientation. Even if there is a conflict of opinion, they try to reach a compromise that will primarily satisfy professional and not ideological criteria. However, the problem appears in media that are distinctly politically colored. Journalists' reactions to imposed editorial pressure vary. Some of them make a compromise and try to hide their own views, while others leave their newsrooms and search for conditions in which they will be able to do journalistic work freely and professionally.

It is interesting that interviewed journalists from media that are considered distinctly politically colored mostly speak about compromise solutions reached in talks with colleagues and editors. It is justifiable to assume that those remaining in these outlets are mostly supporters of the same political orientation and that conflicts of opinion are not as frequent as in the other media.

According to the majority of the interviewed journalists, everyone has an equal opportunity to express their views, except in several most pronouncedly politically

oriented newsrooms. Namely, in the media such as Dnevni Avaz, Slobodna Bosna, FTV, Radio Postaja Mostar or HTV Mostar, extremely dominant editors, sponsors and/or owners prevent free expression of views regardless of whether they concern journalists themselves or views expressed by the people in articles and items. Namely, journalists are instructed to make so-called negative selection of information or footage.

Journalists do not have a uniform view of press releases made by political parties. Some of them maintain that the Defamation Act clearly specifies that journalists are also accountable for truthfulness of allegations, whether they are made in the form of a press release or in a form of a statement. Although there is a large number of political parties and each one issues many press releases, journalists must check them. Other interviewees believe that only negative contents or contents that may provoke incidents related to other people or organizations need to be verified. Finally, the third group maintains that responsibility lies solely on those issuing the press release.

They publish them as they get them, and they relieve themselves of responsibility by clearly stating the source. As authors of this analysis, it is our duty to say that this approach is wrong. The Regulatory Agency has, on several occasions, penalized electronic media for broadcasting press releases that instigate ethnic hatred or mislead the audience. Therefore, journalists must be capable to assess when, how and in what way to broadcast or publish a press release. B&H journalists are not denied the freedom and opportunity to react if they do not agree with contents published in their own media. Exchange of opinion among colleagues and professional consultations are very common and usually happen in a friendly conversation. Most outlets, especially public services, have editorial and newsroom boards, which are organized precisely with the aim of exchanging opinions and suggestions on selection and treatment of various media issues. Journalists are sometimes dissatisfied when their suggestions are not accepted, but they are aware that opinion of the majority prevails. In only three isolated cases (broadcasters from Banja Luka and Mostar), it was reported that journalists dare not express their disagreement fearing to be fired as a consequence. Overall analysis shows that there used to be many more of such cases, but the number has been decreasing over the past years. Such a finding suggests that journalistic freedom of expression is expanding.

The propaganda disguised as a news story

Most of the interviewed journalists have done commercial items and see nothing disputable in such reporting. Since these items are signed as “PR material” or “paid space” and since they are clearly separated from non-commercial contents, journalists believe such conduct does not violate journalistic ethics. In fact, the interviews showed that some journalist refuse to do commercial items, but solely on the premise that it is not “real journalism.” However, they are uniform in the assessment that it is normal for journalists to do such stories because most of them need additional pay or because commercial items are part of their job description. Journalistic work is very poorly paid and most B&H journalists cannot support themselves solely off journalism. For this reason, doing additional work in the most diverse fields is a very common and generally accepted practice among journalists. There is an interesting case of a journalist who is ready to do promotional programs for non-governmental institutions for free if he supports the same idea: “...if they have a good idea, such as civil military service or any other good initiative, which is democratic, I will be glad to support it, but I won’t ask for a counter-favor or something like that,” says a Sarajevo journalist with 12 years of experience.

B&H media try to clearly demarcate commercial from non-commercial contents. However, this is not always simple. Inexperienced journalists often unconsciously circulate classical promotional content, which they sign as their own. In some media, the following situations occur: *“There are frequent examples of automobile showrooms or banks opening, which is actually propaganda, i.e. marketing, but it sometimes happens that we broadcast the item in the news program in the form of a journalistic story for the simple reason that it was paid for.”* (Mostar, TV journalist).

Although journalistic work is poorly paid, statements such as this one are common: *“I was offered to do an interview with a representative of a coffee making company, which is prepared to pay me extra for the article, which is to be published in the newspaper as part of its informational contents. However, I could not accept the offer because it clashes with my moral principles.”* (Sarajevo, print media journalist)

Journalists agree that marketing agencies and marketing departments in media outlets deal with advertising. There are isolated examples in media of “strong dictatorship of the editor” in the marketing field and in these cases, it is mostly editors who deal with preparation, organization and realization of marketing. A journalist even points out that it is illegal because the Communications Regulatory Agency prohibits the appearance of the same voice, for instance in the news program and a commercial advertisement. Another kind of research would be needed to check whether this regulation is adhered to. Disguised advertising is often accidental and unconscious, which one of the interviewed journalists explains in the following way: *“It happens to everyone – concealed advertising – I claim this with full responsibility, but with the explanation that we are often not even aware what gaffes we make when using footage to accompany a story. For example, a B&H Presidency session, if you look at the outside details, details of Sarajevo; at every corner there are things lurking which can be understood as political or economic advertising (posters, products, politicians taking a walk), which our camera catches accidentally. How can you later clear yourself and say that it was accidental and that you did not intend to show a billboard with a Coca-Cola advertisement, or Zlatko Lagumdžija taking a walk in the city while you were talking about a Presidency session or?”* (Sarajevo, TV journalist)

Receiving small gifts, such as souvenirs, cigarette lighters, pens, umbrellas and similar small things, even going to dinner or on a promotional trip, is a common, everyday, and even normal practice for B&H journalists. The majority of journalists maintain that this is an everyday occurrence in their job and therefore does not affect journalistic reporting. One of them explains it in the following way: *“Regardless of how many pens and cigarette lighters they Tuzla Canton Government give us at the New Year’s Eve press conference, what’s wrong-doing on their side remains wrong-doing, and what’s good remains good. We will report about these things objectively.”* Still, several maintain that bigger gifts, journeys or visits are sometimes a form of disguised bribery. These things are often discussed, but they usually cannot be proven and are a speculation. There is an interesting and unusual example of journalists being bribed by an editor: *“For instance, our editor, in order to ‘reward you,’ sends you to a BH Telecom press conference because he knows you will get a free mobile telephone card or some other gift.”* However the general conclusion is that these are usually symbolic signs of courtesy that do not affect journalistic objectivity.

PR material, and less commonly photographs, are mostly used by journalists as a source of information when creating their own reports. Some disputed data in such material is checked. Assessing what could be disputed depends on editors’ and journalists’ previous knowledge on the subject before publication. Journalists maintain that (usually in “other” media) young, inexperienced or lazy journalists just copy a press

release. Even the absurd examples have been recorded, when even typing errors have been copied. Journalists draw attention to the fact that this does not happen only with press releases and PR material, but also with agency news items and media contents “borrowed” from other media, which are signed by certain journalists. For example: *“In Dani, under a picture of Ivo Miro Jovic (B&H Presidency member) they printed his statement which he had given in my program, but they failed to say that.”* Older and more experienced journalists stress that press releases are often incorrectly and unprofessionally written and that, besides the code of ethics, another reason why they cannot be used is their form. A journalist from a radio station stated: *“SFOR and OSCE are disgustingly tiresome about this. When you ask them something, they say we’ve said everything in the material. They offered everything in advance, without giving you a possibility to ask them. They terribly abuse the media and violate fundamental rules. They want us to publish only what they think should be published.”* Photographs are often carried, usually when an outlet does not send its own photographer or a photograph from PR material is of better technical quality. A few outlets publish entire PR material or parts of it, but they do not sign them as such. As for press releases, the example of a private radio station from Banja Luka is isolated, where the following case was reported: *“Well, we really do try to carry it as it’s written in the materials that we get, but if it’s a political stream that the editor favors at a particular moment, then it’s rephrased a little in positive terms, and vice versa.”* So, we see that there are also examples of weighing up and rephrasing even PR material, although various forms of manipulation are more present in journalists’ original reports and selection of facts.

Pitfalls: The interviewed can lie as much as he/she wants

Publishing unverified information is a common practice among B&H journalists, especially when it comes to contents which are regarded to be exclusive. Most of them distance themselves by using the following phrases: “according to unverified information,” “the talk in the lobbies is that,” “we have found out unofficially,” etc, in order to emphasize that the published content has not been fully verified. A question mark is often placed after big headlines that state something shocking or that accuse someone, by which journalists think they are disassociating themselves from the claim if it is not true. However, even such a headline inflicts damage that is hard to repair on the mentioned people, institutions or any other entities. There have been even cases of unverified and unchecked contents being published as a factual situation, without indicating their reliability, even in such a clumsy way. Therefore, hundreds of civil lawsuits against journalists and media should not be surprising (defamation in B&H was decriminalized in 2002). Such conduct is characteristic of print media, namely tabloids, and a number of interviewed journalists claim that Dnevni Avaz and Patriot often resort to this practice. The explanation for such practice lies in the fact that newspapers are sold with difficulty and journalists must constantly search for sensations. When nothing important is happening, they resort to and often rely on unofficial rumors. The second reason is the fact that print media in B&H are not under jurisdiction of the Communications Regulatory Agency; instead they use the principle of self-regulation through the Press Council. Therefore, broadcasters pay greater attention in order to avoid legal sanctions.

Lying in the media is a common phenomenon, while publicly opposing and disclosing lies is relatively rare. It mostly happens in pre-election programs, in which representatives of opposing political options participate. Most journalists do not react if

the person speaking is obviously lying. Reasons for this are numerous: journalists are often unprepared for the interview; they are unsure of the data they gathered themselves and which denies certain allegations; they feel it is impolite to directly draw attention to untruthfulness of information; they feel it is unnecessary to intervene because the audience will know the person is lying, etc. Older and more experienced journalists are in the habit of reacting right away by asking adequate questions, they protect their professionalism with footage of the interview, verified information or similar techniques. It happens relatively often that journalists and media react subsequently, by later publishing “the other side of the story.”

Incorrect and inaccurate information, received from unreliable sources, is published or broadcasted relatively often, but it is followed by denials and public apologies. Journalists emphasize that those to blame for these situations are journalists hungry for sensations. However, in a few media outlets denials are not published or broadcasted and the “damaged” parties are forced to send their denials to other outlets to be published in paid space. Sometimes, abuses of denial happen.

“Usually, another article is added to this, in which the other side is attacked, and it never ends... For example, everyone watches '60 Minutes' on FTV. Always a denial, and after the denial a 60 Minutes reaction, and in the next program a reaction to the reaction...” (Sarajevo, radio)

“Public media trials” – 400 Convertible Marks as the fine for mistake

Media often attack public figures. In doing so, they try to stick to verified facts and do not breach the person’s “privacy and intimacy” but only to present information of public importance. The interviewed journalists think that the public has a right to this kind of information and it is a journalist’s duty to provide the information. *“You know, when someone enters your private life, e.g. where is your wife working, where your children go to school, etc. These are things that are completely irrelevant for the public, of course unless there is a direct conflict of interest. If I arrange a job for my wife using state money and I hold a position, then this should be spoken about with full right. But private things, such as who is friends with whom, are attempts to reach the public in a below-the-belt way.”* Where the borderline between these two spheres lies depends on the journalist. This is why examples of violating another person are present. Examples of “public media trials” are especially common, in which a person is declared a criminal before this is proven in court. If the “attacked” person reacts, a denial or apology is issued. However, a denial never has such public strength as the initial journalistic report. According to interviewed journalists’ allegations, there have been cases of journalistic being fired for attacking the “wrong” person, although there have also been cases of editors, for their own political or economic interest, consciously pushing journalists to act this way. Print media are more inclined to publish such ethically disputed contents because they are not controlled by CRA and they also have a bigger opportunity to manipulate information. On the other hand, if a guest or interviewed person makes accusations against another person, journalists generally do not consider themselves responsible because they are not the authors of the content.

One of the once most disputed matters in B&H journalism from an ethical perspective was the case of newspaper *Front Slobode* publishing private correspondence between the head of the Tuzla Municipality public relations department, Fatmir Alispahic, and his colleague in Holland. Hackers broke into his mail and all his private letters were published. However an interviewed journalist from a Tuzla radio maintains: *“It was not private correspondence because it was done during work hours,*

and a state owned computer was used. One cannot refer to privacy if he/she is using state facilities. He had complained to certain associations, but to my recollection no one agreed with him. Although some colleagues felt it was unethical, I think it's unethical to do private work during work hours." Still, is it not unethical to publish in the media something private and irrelevant to public interest, even if it was sent from a computer at work?

Secret filming is a relatively common, even to some extent considered normal practice in all B&H media, especially broadcasters, although print media are not immune to it either. *"We had a case when we were supposed to take pictures of an illegally constructed building 'guarded' by the boss's boys night and day. Naturally we could not appear with a camera on the site in the middle of the day; it would be a suicide. These kinds of pictures are taken secretly. Such things, in my opinion, are not unethical; they are essential to avoid unpleasant consequences for the journalist or photographer."* (Banja Luka, print media)

"It's a possible situation that a journalist has been pulling someone by the sleeve for days to give him/her a statement. If an opportunity arises during a telephone conversation to get certain information from this person, it is easy to just turn on the recording on the telephone." (Banja Luka, radio)

Lack of professionalism, ethics and the education of journalists is the cause of frequent examples of human rights violations. In search of sensations, and sometimes also out of revenge or ignorance, journalists publish information about suspects, arrested people or others, thus directly violating human rights. Even though CRA and the Press Council regulations are strict, they are violated more or less consciously. There are many examples and we will present here some of the most striking ones.

"It always happens in reports about The Hague indictees, for example if a report is being done about their arrest. Indictees are immediately sentenced, although we know that no one is guilty until proven so." (Banja Luka, radio)

"Muamer Topalovic (who murdered a Croat family in Konjic) and his family did not get off our waves for months! The editor staged a public trial on our radio." (Mostar, radio)

"We had a 400 mark fine for coverage of the Herak case. The commentary was not separated from the article. It's our mistake, actually our ignorance; we mixed up commentary and fact and thus, according to the CRA decision, we jeopardized the integrity of a person appearing before the court. We suggested the court verdict to the audience in our comments. Actually, we had commented on who would pay damages to victims for inflicted mental anguish. It would have been all right to air all that if we had just separated it from the item." ((Sarajevo, private TV)

"Some say that the rights of the accused are violated if we bring into the studio a woman who will speak about how she and her 10-year-old daughter were raped in Foca by Serb soldiers led by the commander of some RS Army unit, who is now in The Hague awaiting trial by the Tribunal?! What about these women's rights?! I've really had it with all that! I don't care if her testimony will hurt a Serb commander from Foca or Visegrad who is now in The Hague." (Sarajevo, radio)

Generally speaking, journalists are very sensitive towards victims of crime. Therefore the "public hearing" staged for Topalovic, who killed an entire Croat family on Christmas, or ruthlessness towards those accused of mass rape, should not be surprising. However, journalists have to suppress their emotions and apply ethical principles and professional rules.

Making profit using someone's tragedy

Here are a few more examples.

"The case of the Ukrainian prostitute Elena Popik was covered in a very unethical, harsh and sensational way, although she is an unfortunate woman who died at the age of 21. I remember articles in Slobodna Bosna about Dragan Cavic (RS president), about his underage son being a drug addict and drug dealer. I don't think a boy, just because he is a president's son, should be dragged through the papers that way." (Bijeljina, radio)

"The full name of a girl who allegedly had AIDS and lived in Mostar was published in a newspaper. The girl was linked to the name of the Ukrainian Elena Popik and was placed in a very negative context. After a while, it turned out that the girl did not have AIDS, but pneumonia." (daily newspaper) *"Just think of those two girls from Croatia whose lives were ruined because the media disclosed their full identity, the only reason being that they were born with AIDS."* (Mostar, print media)

"On its front page, Dnevni Avaz featured a photograph with the body of an 11-year-old boy killed by electricity at a railway station. That was classical abuse of a child's accident for commercial purposes. Just like the publishing of information about the kidnapping of Mak Varesanovic (son of the director of the football team Sarajevo), which directly jeopardized the victim's life." (Sarajevo, print media)

"I was astounded two or three months ago when Glas Srpske brought a story about the rape of a 16-year-old girl from Prnjavor. The journalist was so meticulous that he described everything: that she was a problematic girl, what kind of family the girl was from, what grade she was in, who was her homeroom teacher, who was her uncle,. They did not publish her first and last name, but they did not have to. They painted her picture.

The case of a wild boy from near Modrica, shown on RTRS: the boy was running, and the cameraman was chasing him. The identity, picture and name of the boy were revealed; he was found in very unfortunate circumstance, living with his alcoholic uncle, with dogs, without even learning to speak properly by the age of seven. Newspapers and public television treated this as a sensation. Prosecutor's offices adopted an especially retrograde practice a year ago. It does not release the names of suspects and accused; They rather, for example, say that a person whose initials are T. K., killed his ex lover, followed by her first and last name. She is branded lover, she is dead, and now she is being killed again by having her full name released, while the one who killed her remains protected by initials. This lack of balance in relation to the victim is an everyday occurrence and such examples can be found in newspapers every day." (Bijeljina, radio)

In cases of media reports about minors involved in crime, it is customary practice not to disclose their first and last name, but only their initials and age. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule once again, usually in the print media. Dnevni Avaz is mentioned most often in this context, as well as some other outlets.

"There is an online outlet in Mostar, which always discloses complete names even when minors are involved." (Mostar, print media)

Making jokes on someone's physical or mental disorder

Physical or mental handicaps are sometimes used in B&H journalism with the aim to create sensations, violate reputation, or just ridicule a person. Journalists think that this is highly unethical and unprofessional and they mention a number of outlets where this happens relatively often, such as, for example, the newspapers Dnevni Avaz, Slobodna Bosna, Dani, and Front Slobode, as well as FTV.

"I remember a case when some poor guy was protesting outside the building of Oslobodjenje or Avaz, I don't remember which one any more. It was obvious that he was a mental patient, but in each issue Dnevni Avaz treated this as an extraordinary event and one day a photograph showing his genitals even appeared, which was a precedent. I remember that I was reserved towards Adi Sarajlic's project 'Streets of fire,' which was about a specific type of mental patients. I may be wrong, perhaps my ideas of vanguard and new forms in journalism are not right, but when you treat persons who simply can not be held responsible for their behavior in the program, I think that it clashes with professional standards." (Sarajevo, private radio)

"Many media ridicule Sulejman Tihic's ears (B&H Presidency member), and Avaz ridicules the physical appearance of Senad Avdic (well-known journalist), using a technically modified photograph to make him look as ugly as possible and thus create public repulsion against him." (Sarajevo, weekly newspaper)

Decrease in number of cases when religious, ethnic, sexual or other background or orientation of those involved in criminal acts is mentioned points to the fact that ethics in B&H journalism is slowly rising to the level of professionalism. Namely, until recently it was most important in all criminal acts to indicate the perpetrator's religion. Thanks to the CRA pressure, media professionalization, and a change in the overall climate in the country, the quality of B&H journalism in this field has improved. There are still delays, but to a considerably lesser degree. The most common examples are emphasizing that a Roma had taken part in a theft or that a public figure is a homosexual. These delays are still present because the public is interested in these essentially unimportant details of crimes, but the task and goal of any serious outlet and journalist is to abandon this practice because it builds a negative perception of members of individual populations.

Media in B&H relatively rarely use children or mentally handicapped persons as a source of information for their coverage, but there are some examples. In the majority of cases, children are interviewed when reportage is made about a children's institution or if a campaign to improve their status is supposed to be launched. A few journalists believe that in such situations children are the only relevant sources, and that it is not unethical to use their statements or pictures if it is for their own good. The line between what is ethical and what is to the benefit of a child is very evasive and journalists draw it by their own instinct. Drastic use of their statements with the aim of abuse, mockery or threatening children's safety is very rare and everyone unanimously condemns it. *"I know of a case that happened in Bijeljina when an under-age girl was involved in a human trafficking scandal. It seems that journalists were trying to get information on human trafficking routes through her."* (Banja Luka, private TV).

Journalists usually confide who their sources are to their editors, and sometimes also newsroom colleagues. Pressure to reveal sources outside the newsroom is present and comes from courts, formal or informal groups, as well as other newsrooms. However, journalists agree that sources should not be revealed because that is not in line with the journalistic code. One of the interviewed journalists made an interesting and witty comparison: *"God is sacred to a religious person, a source is to a journalist."* A concession can be made, said one of the interviewees, only to colleagues from the same outlet, but not even them if the issue is sensitive because there is a risk that the other journalist would leave the outlet or profession and abuse the information.

Convicted criminals are frequently given an opportunity by the media for a public confession. Interviewed journalists cited a number of examples, such as an interview with Biljana Plavsic (former RS president convicted for war crimes) on *Alternativna TV* or Ismet Bajramovic Celo's confession in Slobodna Bosna, where the convicted criminal was described as a sick man. Journalists justify such media conduct by the fact that everyone has a right to express their opinion, or that it sells papers, or that it even has an educational character. They are skeptical with regard to how strong an influence these stories have on their public perception, except in major cases. On the other hand, there is an interesting situation in B&H: *"One doesn't know any more who is a criminal; in some places they are criminals and in others these same people are heroes and defenders."* It is evident that journalists do not have highly developed ethical barriers against criminals, but they differ in how they report about them. Print media such as Dnevni Avaz, Slobodna Bosna, Dani, Patriot, Trn and others are more inclined to glorify and justify criminals, but broadcasters are not immune against this ailment of B&H journalism either.

Reinforcing professionalism, education, and sensitivity to current events

The journalistic profession reflects the overall social and political situation in B&H. The habitual weaknesses of B&H journalism today are low salaries, exposure of journalists to continuous political and economic pressure coming from media editors and owners, strong self-censorship among editors and journalists caused by ethnic and political frustrations and fears, disunity of journalist associations, lack of a strong journalist syndicate. Although modern media legislation exists, some solutions are hard to implement. Lack of strong police and judicial authorities affects journalists' safety. There is strong competition within B&H*, but competition also comes from media from Croatia and Serbia & Montenegro, which are available in B&H through press distribution and cable TV operators.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is the first country in the region to decriminalize defamation and libel. Journalists can no longer be imprisoned for defamation or libel, but they are threatened with high fines in civil suits, which has a negative reflection on understanding of journalistic and media freedom. It is paradoxical that it is mostly journalists that sue one another, as a result of numerous animosities, political and ethnic friction, and unfair battle for the market and donations. B&H is the first country in the region to pass a law on free access to information, which enables journalists to collect data much more easily. However, the results and effects of the implementation of the law are weaker than expected. Journalists are to blame such situation because they have not realized the advantages and benefits of the law yet, especially in the context of investigative journalism. On the other hand, relevant institutions have been adhering to the law, but the process is relatively slow. Information is issued at journalists' request, but procedure is long and the information is provided only when certain news is no longer current.

Still, the situation in B&H journalism has considerably improved over the last years. Media transition, as transition of society in general, is slow, but it is moving in a positive direction, primarily thanks to the international community's engagement, as well as passage of time since the war, which enables a more rational approach to problems to be taken. Those which are partly to thank for media professionalization are journalism schools, workshops and other educational projects, which are placing more and more emphasis on educating young journalists on the issue of media ethics.

Analysis has confirmed that the process of transition of B&H media is going in the right direction, although it is relatively slow. Extreme examples of violation of professional ethics still exist and usually culminate during election campaigns and turbulent political happenings. It is therefore necessary to continue activities aimed at professionalization of media by reinforcing ethical standards.

*According to latest CRA data, a total of 189 broadcasters operate in B&H, 147 of them being radio stations and 42 TV stations. Although the figure is much lower than it used to be before the Independent Media Commission (IMC), the predecessor of today's CRA, was set up in the summer of 1998, there is still a big disproportion in B&H between the number of media outlets and the population size (3.8 million).

(The most specific and most characteristic answers, collected during the research, are included in the report)

2.4 Bulgaria

2.4.1 From "strongly dependent" to "absolutely free"

Is the Bulgarian press free? Or, to avoid any overgeneralization and idealization ("complete" freedom only exists in theory) - are Bulgarian media relatively free to do their job professionally and in a reasonably unbiased manner to carry out their important social function? Free from what? Free to what extent? Are journalists themselves ready to deal with such freedom and can they really tell if it is there or not there? Is the Ethical Code of Bulgarian Media (officially signed by almost all media nearly one year ago) well known and widely adopted? These are the questions that the present analysis will attempt to answer.

It is based on a questionnaire consisting of 33 questions that was completed by 30 journalists from leading national and regional media. Media Development Center, Sofia (MDC) made an analysis on the media environment in Bulgaria in order to be able to select carefully the towns and the concrete media which representatives are to be interviewed. In view of the great number of the local print outlets, cable televisions and radio stations on the one hand and the limited number of the collocutors on the other hand, MDC decided to focus its efforts in selecting media only within the biggest cities in Bulgaria because the media represented there have the largest quantity of readers/listeners/viewers and most of them also have a national coverage. The approach of selecting some of the most powerful media in the country envisaged also the necessary combination of all type of media within the number of 30: public and private (for the broadcast media), dailies and weeklies (for the print media), national and local. The selected 30 media were from the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Stara Zagora under the following disposition:

Sofia - 10 national newspapers (8 dailies and 2 weeklies), 3 TV stations, 2 radio stations: Trud Daily, 24 Chasa Daily, Novinar Daily, Standart Daily, Sega Daily, Minitor Daily, Telegraf Daily, Dnevnik Daily, Capital Weekly, 168 Chasa Weekly, Bulgarian National Radio, Darik Radio, bTV, Bulgarian National TV, Nova TV.

Plovdiv - 1 local daily newspaper, 3 TV stations, 1 radio station: Maritsa Daily, TV Evropa, The Public TV of Plovdiv, Evrokom Bulgaria TV, Radio Plovdiv

Varna - 2 local newspapers (2 dailies), 1 TV station, 2 radio stations: Cherno More Daily, Pozvunete Novini Daily, Radio Varna, Alfa Radio, MSAT TV

Stara Zagora - 2 local newspapers (1 daily and 1 weekly), 1 TV station, 2 radio stations: Darik Radio, Radio Stara Zagora, Starozagorski Novini Daily, Nacionalna Business Poshta Weekly, Vereya TV

It must be pointed out that there are many other significant local media that were not represented in the research due to the preliminary appointed number of the collocutors. MDC decided not to include Internet editions because their audience is still a smaller portion of the general public when compared to the 'traditional media'

audience size. The decision was made also in order to fulfill the project idea of covering the most powerful and widespread media among which the Internet editions are still not.

The journalists who were interviewed were representatives both of the management (editors) and the journalists' level (reporters, columnists, commentators). All of them are covering topics in the field of economics, politics and social issues. According to their sex, the disposition was extremely balanced: 15 of them are women and 15 are men.

The questions are roughly separated by topic into three groups – political pressure, economic pressure and adherence to basic ethical norms in the profession.

Politicians often use specialized reporters as consultants

From the answers to questions seeking to reveal the extent of political intervention in the Bulgarian journalists' work, as well as the extent to which journalists' personal political affiliations influence their professional performance, it turns out that Bulgarian media stand somewhere in the "golden middle" vis-à-vis the weight of general political pressure (both internal and external).

To the question: "*Have you held any other position in addition to that of a journalist (in the government or economy, non-governmental or public sectors, election headquarters, etc.*", 9 of the 30 interviewees (30%) replied that they did indeed hold such positions, and 2 of them added that they know of other similar cases involving their colleagues. 21 of collocutors (70%) replied that they had never held positions other than their journalistic jobs but 7 added that they had knowledge of such cases. As a whole, journalists' attitude to involvement in projects of the non-governmental sector, election headquarters etc. is not negative and is seen as a natural phenomenon justified by the modest salaries journalists are given and the need for additional income.

- "I know of colleagues who are active in the public sector or in non-governmental organizations for instance those dealing with Roma issues."
- "I never took any position.... But I know of cases where other colleagues occupied such positions and I see this as something completely normal because naturally we as journalists are very knowledgeable about politics and election campaigns. These colleagues took a leave from their jobs. I believe they succeeded in preserving their impartiality. "
- "I have been active in PR and advertising. I usually work at more than one place, because journalistic work is not particularly well-paid. In extremely rare occasions maybe I did use such position as a source of information for news stories. "

Two of the replies lead one to believe that the essence of this question was not completely understood. In the first case the journalist obviously could not distinguish between the media coverage of the election campaign and his/her personal involvement in the campaign as a person actively engaged in it:» To call me a member of the election headquarters, that would be an overstatement, but I did cover the election campaign of a candidate mayor or of one political force in the general elections which also to a certain degree is a position in an election headquarters. "

In another case the journalist gave a "No" answer but the actual wording of the answer clearly shows it is just the opposite: "No. However, I head a non-profit association /in private benefit/. Through the association we challenged in court the public posting of lists of monthly bills."

“I have made the campaign exactly as I liked it to be”

The question *“Have you had an opportunity to advise or influence in any other way the decision-making of some of the political parties or public institutions in the form of informal consultations, incidental advice, atmosphere creation or in some other way?”* was answered affirmatively by 11 of the collocutors (37%). Interestingly, those who gave a negative reply tend to also add that they were sorry their advice was not put to use. The replies of journalists, who believe that they did succeed in influencing political decision-making, outline the general conclusion that media representatives are much sought-after and very valuable consultants, especially at times of “crisis”.

- “Yes. I know of other such cases at my own and other media. Politicians often use specialized reporters as consultants not only during campaigns, but also in situations of “crisis”. The most common ones are the so called “sleaze crisis” when a politician or statesman is seeking the advice of media people on how to get out of a bad situation and what exactly to say.”
- “Yes, it did happen. Because I majored in journalism at the Sofia University and there was very strong emphasis on PR there, I sometimes helped, as a friend, to press officers or others working with the media. I have given them advice on the better performance of their candidate at elections.”
- “Yes, by giving advice to a minister for parliamentary debates on a very important economic issue.”

One of the more extreme examples in the replies is noteworthy because of the fact that the collocutor (who replied negatively to a previous question on participation in election campaigns) now reveals that he/she had influence “to such an extent that during local elections I made the campaign exactly as I liked it to be”. There are no hints in the reply that the journalist felt he/she was in a situation of conflict of interest or in breach of the rules of professional ethics: “I had influence to the extent that during local elections I made the campaign exactly as I liked it to be. As a result a certain party later reported it managed to place 5 of its people in the municipal council thanks to the media where I work; they had a good pre-election platform anyway so it was just a matter of PR to benefit from it the most. I believe I helped them in this area, but as an advisor, meaning I gave them the general direction of what the tone and timing of articles should be and what they should include so that the media materials would be good”.

Four of the positive answers reveal that the collocutors possibly underestimated the importance of the clarification “in the form of informal consultations, incidental advice etc.” and are therefore prone to discussing the impact they had through their journalistic work.

The role of intermediary is obviously not particularly popular among journalists - as few as 3 (10%) of the 30 collocutors responded that acted as intermediaries between political figures representing different political parties.

Gentle manipulation

On one of the key issues in the “journalists and politics” series the replies of collocutors are split almost in half. Asked *“Do political, economic or some other directives of your editor or owner of your media effect the method you are going to use to treat some topic “*, 14 collocutors (46.7%) replied positively, with 5 of them adding that they know of such cases also in other media. 16 journalists (53.3%) answered “No”, and one of them added he/she knew of other similar cases. A noteworthy trend in the

replies is that those who answered "yes" usually proceed to give generalized conclusions like "it is widely known that...", "behind every media there are the interests of..." while those who gave "no" replies mostly speak for themselves and their particular media. One of the replies is worth noting as it reveals an interesting way of looking at journalistic freedom as a personal privilege and not as a necessary condition for the profession as a whole: "When speaking of privately owned media, I think it is normal for such a tendency to exist. I believe that our media is the only free one, especially for me, for the other colleagues I cannot vouch. I am allowed by the TV station owner to decide on the topics of my shows and on whom I would invite in the studio"

Without outlining a trend, yet another reply sounds interesting: "On one side, radio XXX provides freedom in establishing, making and presenting news stories, but the other side I would not like to comment, it is not good!"

Some of the more characteristic positive replies:

- "Yes, they do have effect. Both in my own and in the other media, but I will decline any further comment"
- "Yes, we do not use stories that refer to our advertisers negatively"
- "Who knows... Each media has its own line of policy, but in my view there is not a single independent media in Bulgaria, and not in the political but in the economic sense, so I was surely influenced at one time or another. But not in hiding flagrant facts - rather in "softening" them, in other words, gentle manipulation."
- "Yes. They have effect and, in my view, there is not a single free media in Varna."
- "I believe they do have effect. All media are economically dependent on the ruling party in particular and all political forces in general. The news stories that are published balance these interests."

To the question "*Has anyone suggested (who) that you do not write (speak) about some issue right now?*" - possibly because of the more delicate wording of the question, answers are mostly positive - 19 of the 30 collocutors responded "yes", or 63.3%. Such "suggestions" come from various sources - politicians, government officials, colleagues and editors. Only 4 of those who gave affirmative replies went on to clarify that they did not take these "suggestions" into consideration.

- "I've had such experience. When it is an editorial decision, I do change the subject. If they say: "It is not a priority to deal with Sofiyanski again" or "There will be no interviews with Sofiyanski ". It happened to me - because it's not a priority, it is not important, or someone isn't exactly fond of Sofiyanski - say, the Editor in charge who says: "I'm sick and tired of this mayor stuff! I've had enough. Quit PR-ing in his favor". Meanwhile some news editions contain less important stories. This footage I'd prepared was more important than " Granny grows a 2-kilo tomato in Sevlievo"
- "Yes, it did happen to my stories or ideas to be discarded as inappropriate at a particular point in time. As a whole, such decisions are made by the budget meeting, which is the collective decision-making body. I can say that in most cases it was not so much about censorship as spontaneous decisions by certain people at a certain time. That is, in such situations the self-preservation instinct of certain media managers is to a greater degree responsible for the decision rather than some purposeful editorial censorship - I believe there is no such

thing. To prove this I could tell you that most of the stories and ideas that were initially discarded were later published at another, "more appropriate" time."

- "Generally speaking - no, there is no such case. The only issue that made us self-conscious was the Libya case or a similar sensitive issue which is really important and things must not be overdone."

One of the replies reveals a contradiction with the reply given to another question (whether stories were withdrawn for election purposes) to which the collocutor answered "no". However, to the question of whether he/she was ever offered "suggestions", the journalist replied: "...we were told about a construction site developed by the private construction company of Evgeni Zhekov who topped the Bulgarian National Union ticket. The construction is in total disregard of any requirements for minimum distance between neighboring buildings but we got these facts right in the middle of the election campaign and have not yet aired the information; we decided to wait until after the elections since the construction would not be finished yet."

As to the next question, now speaking not of a subtle "suggestion" but of a direct attempt at intervention: "*Do you know of any case that someone on the side – from a political party, from the government, from a non-governmental organization or from the business field – intervened that some data are published or not published or that someone intervened after the text publishing he is not satisfied with? What was such a reaction like?*" 21 of the journalists (70%) gave a positive reply and 5 of these went on to say that they knew of such cases in other media, too. Intervention was in the form of telephone calls, visits to the editorial office, threats concerning the personal safety of the journalist, economic sanctions (no advertising) etc. These processes seem to peak during election campaigns.

- "Yes. There still are, although rarely, politicians, mostly local ones, who do not measure their own words and behavior and are then unhappy with how they look on screen/in the newspaper. It is quite common to have telephone calls from "angry politicians", attempts at "editing" already authorized interviews and trying to adjust words and pictures to the politicians' own taste and interest."
- "We had this company 2 years ago that came and asked how much our silence would cost (we had prepared an unflattering TV footage), they had coffee and we sent them on their way very politely - the company is popular and I would rather not reveal the name now, it's from the petrol trading business, but the footage was aired anyway"
- "A MRF activist tried once, threatening he'd sue us, to stop a news story about a school master related to his party, but the story was published in the end".
- "Such cases are not isolated particularly with our media. Interventions take the form of threats or hints that they would contract you for 3 months of advertising if only you left alone this company or that politician or a particular town. If threats have no effect, they go looking for other ways. I have been threatened following the airing of shows on health issues or waste disposal. When I get a call like that, this is what I tell them: Once upon a time, when I was young and single I was scared I'd die young and won't have the chance to marry. Now I have two sons and when someone threatens me, I say - In the name of my children I'll move forward and I'm not afraid!"
- "Yes, there have been numerous attempts to influence my work on the part of political parties and companies who contacted the editorial management in

connection with my work. To be more specific - Members of Parliament and representatives of governments (all governments) as well as Bulgarian and foreign businessmen have pressed my Editor-in-Chief, Mrs. Venelina Gocheva, to impose sanctions on me and even fire me. She never yielded to that pressure, not once, and that is why I continue to do my work to the present. ...I am positively certain that the attitude of Mrs. Gocheva is the same towards other colleagues at the newspaper; she never allowed anyone of us to be disgraced or punished due to external pressure”.

- “Yes, the latest example I can recall was last year. The Regional Governor tried to press the radio for an interview on a certain topic. I called him to enquire about an issue involving the funding of a project in the Old Town and he explained that I could have the interview -however, not on the issue I wanted but on one of his own liking. He proposed that we change the subject to European integration. I refused and after that he threatened he would call the Editor-in-Chief and the Director. He did call, too, but if truth is to be told, they did not dispatch me to do that forced interview.”

Publishing without verifying first

The question related to journalistic impartiality during elections: “7. *Did you know of any facts during the pre-election campaign but did not report on them? If so, what facts did you know about?*”, resulted in the following findings: 12 journalists (40%) gave a positive reply and 18 (60%) answered “no”. Intertwined in the replies are some “hot” topics related to the recently adopted Ethical Code of Bulgarian media. Moving away from the “pre-election” group of issues, one of the collocutors says “At the Regional Hospital in Plovdiv doctors took care of a child for nine months. Its parents had abandoned it and doctors took care of it. When I was covering this case, they asked me not to reveal the child’s name in order to avoid any conflict with the parents. I then made a promise to the doctors and did not disclose the name.” The journalist discusses this as some sort of a special situation in which he/she personally made the right decision, which shows that he/she is not familiar with the Code (which, by the way, consists of only five pages) where an entire section is devoted solely to children. It contains this text: “2.4.4 *we shall protect the identity of children involved in or affected by tragedy or criminal activity*”.

Another typical example of Ethical Code violations is demonstrated by one of the following answers: “I can now recall one round of local elections and the case of the “secret police informer’s dossier” of one of the candidates, Aleksandar Dolev. We all aired and published the information without checking it first.” This is a gross violation of the first and, one might add, fundamental principle mentioned even in the first article of the Ethical Code: “1.1.1 *We shall supply the public with accurate and verified information and we shall not deliberately suppress or distort facts.*”

Later on in the replies one stumbles upon obvious contradictions with the information, the same collocutor gave to an earlier question in the survey: “I’ve had such experience and I’d say I tried to quench internal party squabbles because the way I see it there is nothing more annoying to the voter than seeing people within the political party, of his/her liking, at each other’s throats so these are things that I personally try to give a beautifying touch during a campaign”. To an earlier question on whether this collocutor ever served as an intermediary between politicians the answer was negative. Giving stories a “beautifying touch” or making them “sound sharper” is equal to

manipulation of facts and in this respect reveals a journalist's bias rather than his/her impartiality.

Another answer stands out as it shows a dangerous mix-up of the meaning of "allegation /suspicion" and "fact": "Yes, I did happen to know of such facts. A journalist always knows more than what is actually published and is aware of certain facts, but does not disclose them for objective reasons, for instance, because he/she does not have proof that information is truthful." An assumption may not be promoted to a "fact" before it is duly justified and proven. Among those who responded negatively to this question, most replies assert that the respective media have clearly established rules on publishing pre-election materials, including paid-for articles, and the responsibility lies with the respective political organization that submitted the text for publication.

"I have no guts to refuse because I could lose my job"

We may draw the conclusion that Bulgarian media are more inclined, for various reasons, to sweep a fact under the carpet in pre-election times rather than use such "sleaze" material collected over time exactly before the elections. This also transpires from responses given to the next question: *"Did you know of some facts before but used them only during the election campaign?"* To this question, 5 interviewees (16.7%) gave positive replies while 25 media people (83.3%) answered negatively. One of the most interesting positive answers: "I had such an experience. I was writing such articles for money, precisely during a pre-election campaign. A certain political party paid me to write these articles - this is called a "sleaze story", but that time the article also coincided with my own views. At the same time the report was politically motivated, to reveal negative aspects about one of the opposing party's candidates. Additionally it was coordinated with the owner, and hence the money was in play." There has been a total confusion of different terms – the "sleaze story" which turns out to be a "paid article" is at the same time called a "report" (an account of events, usually events that the reporter witnessed in person) which "coincided with the views" of the author. The four sentences of this reply present in essence violations of at least four basic principles in the Ethical Code – separating advertising from editorial materials, independence of editorial from commercial policy of the media, separating commentary from news accounts and resistance to political or economic pressure.

The very first of the affirmative replies is very characteristic and quite sufficient to paint a telling picture:

- "Yes. That happens all the time. Other media do it too. The most common form of publicizing such facts is an under-the-counter advertising deal."

Negative answers are quite diverse but statements to the effect that "this is not right, my media does not allow for such practices" seem to prevail.

The replies to the next question in the survey are extremely interesting: *"What do you do if your political or ideological preferences do not agree with those prevailing in your media?"* To this question, 28 (93.3%) of the respondents (!) replied that they have no ideological and political preferences at all and absolutely deny that they are lead by such preferences in doing their job. Some of the more characteristic answers "I try to avoid parties/movements which I personally like", "I am not influenced by such preferences", "I try to coordinate things to achieve some harmony", "I do not

demonstrate any political preferences when on air", "I have no political affiliations", "my preferences are the same as those of my media".

The two openly "negative" replies are as follows: "I say all the swear words in my mind!" and "I try not to feel frustrated. My political affiliations are currently different from these of my media's management."

Very interesting and telling is also this answer: "I try not to fall into major conflict with my personal ideological concepts. However, if your employer assigns you with a certain task, for instance to make the campaign for a hopeless political force, you do it. I have no guts to refuse, because I could lose my job." The answer to this question is "in line" with other replies the same journalist gave to other question in the survey - on pressure from the owner etc.

The answers to the question: "*Have all the protagonists in your media had the same opportunities that their points of view are available to the public?*" undoubtedly reveal that freedom of opinion does exist in Bulgarian media. 24 collocutors (80%) replied affirmatively to this question, while there were only 3 negative answers (10%). Three journalists did not respond directly to this question and are therefore not included in the count.

Some of the more characteristic positive replies:

- "Yes. These opportunities with our media are the commentary genres. But each of us follows the principle that he or she is not a political campaigner or a manipulator of public opinion."
- "Yes, beyond any doubt!"
- "I believe that my co-workers have the opportunity to express alternative points of view as long as they are capable of substantiating them."

Among the negative answers:

- "Despite that it makes me sick, in the name of the paycheck I have to "go along". I did try to raise my voice several times, but then I was forcefully made to "go along".
- "Not always. In this country journalists must conform to the interests of the media's owners."

Three of the replies show that question was, obviously, not correctly understood. "The point of view is just one and it is to provide objective information to our viewers-through all opinions on a given issue. This is what we work for." In this case the journalist is obviously mixing up the term "point of view (opinion)" with the professional duty to provide information.

As to the question "*Have there been any cases that you, or other journalists, made clear you do not share the opinions expressed in your media?*" replies are split almost in half – 15 to 14 (one collocutor did not reply to this question).

Among the affirmative answers:

- "Yes. This is common practice and is tolerated in our media in order to respect the principle of diversity of opinions and positions and the freedom of speech."
- "Yes of course! Everyone is free to say whatever they want as long as they can prove it. You could claim Botev was a drunk - if you can prove it, no problem, this will be published in our paper".
- "We have had many such cases when some of our colleagues are of the completely opposite opinion from that of others. There are many examples: the war on Iraq, "yeas and nays" on sending troops there, on closing down the Kozloduy NPP".

Negative answers are very laconic and provide no explanations.

To the question *"If you convey party statements or statements by the politicians, do you check the truthfulness of the news, information and facts or do you think the one that issues them is the responsible?"* 21 of the respondents said they do check the information (70%) while 9 reply that they leave the responsibility to the person making the statement (30%). It must be noted that most of those who said they "do not check" obviously work for electronic media and actually mean to say that they prefer to use authentic recordings and footage of the statement than to re-word and comment on it. Several examples of replies from journalists who leave politicians to "speak in their own voice": "

- "Well you see, it is the politician who says it, so when you have it tape-recorded or if he said it before witnesses and put his reputation behind that statement, what is there to check? Emiliya Maslarova maintains that a shock raise of wages is possible, I am not a macro-economist able to check if this shock raise is possible, although every Bulgarian mocked her later for such talk."
- "I believe that everyone is responsible for what they say and what they do. When I'm covering an event, I air the interview with the respective person."

When asked *"Do you remember some interview or some statement published in your media that have not been justified by their public importance and the principle of being interesting, but presented a form of hidden advertising?"* the journalists are again divided in halves, with 50% replying that yes, they do remember such occasions while the other half don't. Nevertheless it must be noted that 5 of those who gave affirmative replies also added that they know of such cases in other media while 3 from the 15 "no" answers went on to say that they know of such things in other media. So when put on the scales, it rather seems that in Bulgarian media sometimes an interview or statement sees the light of day not because of its importance but as a form of hidden advertising.

While it is true that not all replies to question from 1-13 were "yes" or "no" without any "shades" between them and that such an approach is to a certain extent equal to oversimplifying the matter, perhaps it would be good to conclude that 41.7 per cent of journalists hint or directly reply that in their professional lives they are subjected to political pressure in one degree or another. 57.3 percent reply that political affiliations and pressure play no role in their professional lives. This would rank Bulgarian media among the "mostly free from political pressure" in a possible scale from "strongly dependent" to "absolutely free from political pressure".

Journalists and Money: Journalists participate in advertising

The next group of question deals with the relationship between "journalists and money" - or the extent to which the media are used as a tool to service certain business interests. Another point of interest is also the degree to which journalists are dependent on their media's advertising policy.

To the first question from this series: *"Has the owner of your media asked to promote his private economic, political or other interests or to support some of the participants in the election process or in the public life?"* 12 of the journalists (42.8% of those who responded) gave affirmative replies, with 3 of them also saying that they heard of other such cases. 16 people (57.2%) replied this never happened at their media but 2 go on to say that they had heard of such situations in other media. Two of

the respondents declined to reply to this question saying "No comment". It is characteristic that several of the affirmative replies are accompanied by generalizations:

- "Yes. There is almost no media in Bulgaria that does not follow the economic or political interests of its owner; furthermore, owners are not infrequently seeking political representation and through lobbying for this politician or another they "promote" their interest."
- "Yes, it happens often – not only at our newspaper but at all the others, too"
- "What do you mean 'asked to promote' - the owner of our media writes articles and controls the situation as he likes. So, anyone's interests even without being his own, if the company or political party pays for it - that's it, there's nothing you can do"
- "This is part of the owner's business. Support through publications in our media"

Negative answers are no less categorical:

- "No, he never tried to promote his own personal interests"
- "I never registered anything like that at our media"
- "Never. Such things are not allowed. WAZ has economic interests only in the publishing business but they never took the liberty to publicize or protect these interests on the pages of their newspapers."

To the next question which deals with journalists' participation in advertising: "*Have you written in any commercial supplement, prepared a feature for a leased time slot or taken part in some other form of promotion of private business, governmental or non-governmental activity? Have you been forced to do so?*" only 7 (23%) of journalists gave an affirmative reply. Not a single journalist said he/she had been forced to do such a thing and the majority seems to believe that there is nothing wrong about it:

- "Yes I did work during a pre-election campaign for local elections for a political coalition and my consultant work included writing such materials"
- "I did indeed work in this field but not because I was forced and with the consent of the media I worked for. My work involved assistance to non-governmental organizations that are active in fields of real importance to society"
- Yes. I was not forced. I'm talking about the „Bulgaria From the Inside" supplements which are a form of advertising of regional markets
- "I have written things for advertising supplements but I was not forced to do it. I don't think it is inappropriate".

There is also one answer "in principle" that can be counted as neither positive nor negative: "In principle, I try to avoid advertising contracts because they are binding and if later you have to write about the company or person you can't do it".

To the question "*Has there always been a visible difference between the editorial contents and an ad in your media?*" 25 "yes" of the respondents (83.3%) gave a positive reply. This reveals a very high degree of distinction vis-à-vis advertising and editorial content. Some typical answers:

- "This differentiation is very strict"
- "Always, WAZ is famous in this respect"
- "One can do without one advertiser but without its audience the radio won't have even a single advertiser. That's why we work for our listeners and not for are advertisers."

The five negative answers show that in some media it's not prohibited to publish advertising texts in the form of a journalistic story.

This leads us to the next question: *“Do you know of any case that advertising material has been launched in your media in a classic journalistic form?”* The answers are again split in half – 50% of respondents said such things did happen at their media while the other half responded negatively. The answers themselves reveal that it is hard for journalists to establish the thin line between advertising and information:

- “Yes, if we were to assume that the anniversary of a public person, a social activist or an artist could constitute advertising. I’m thinking now of Bojana Apostolova’s anniversary - a poetess and publisher, she made it to the news last week and her printing house was also mentioned. We’re threading on slippery ground here - is this advertising or is it just a form of showing respect to a person who deserves public attention.”
- “Yes, it happens in all the media, all the time. What comes to my mind now are the various forthcoming concerts and shows, the presentations of new car models and the like”

To the question *“Have you been engaged in the collection of ads or in their creation, or in some other marketing activities of hidden advertising?”* only 5 (16.7%) of interviewees responded affirmatively. From the answers however it transpires that some did not pay the necessary attention to the word "hidden" used in the question, because three of the affirmative responses describe practices of the usual collection of advertising and work on advertising supplements and not "hidden advertising".

“Treat one a cup of coffee”

The replies and the conclusion that can be drawn from the next question are very interesting indeed: *“Have you received any present (lunches, journeys, usual advertising matter of small value, signs of small appreciation) or been sent on a trip with your expenses covered by an organization other than your own media? Did it effect your reporting?”* 23 of the 30 journalists (76.7%) replied that they had received small presents and tokens of appreciation or they traveled at someone else’s expense; of these, however, only one admitted that it influenced in the positive direction the news story he/she wrote/broadcasted. It is obvious that these types of gifts are not considered to be a violation of Art. 3.4 of the Ethical Code "We shall not accept any personal, political or financial inducements that may impact our ability to provide the public with accurate information."

In one of the replies the journalist said that "western" Codes of Ethics did not allow for a reporter to be "treated to so much as a cup of coffee" by their source: "but with us things are not exactly like that, in light of the fact that you can't even organize a cocktail party without journalists showing up, so we need not go deeper, you see. In which developed country an official reception given by a governmental or non-governmental organization is honored by the presence of 20 to 30 journalists?"

Another reply however speaks in defense of this "treat one a cup of coffee" situation as being a Bulgarian trait which must be tolerated: "Let me stress one more time that these accepted cups of something or small gestures most often come from people to whose call you reacted. They have a problem, the state paid them no attention, you gave them the attention they needed and these people want to thank you the way they know how. We know that the mindset and culture of a Bulgarian is such that he would want at least to treat you to a cup of coffee. If this is to be considered some sort of bribe or corruption- then every journalist fell in this trap at one time or another."

One of the respondents offers a very truthful-sounding account of how she painfully arrived at the truth that gifts are binding: “It was years ago when the word “gift” was even dirtier than it is today in our trade. I was then eager to investigate an official at the town administration. I went to “grill” him with questions but I realized I had no pen. He gave me a Parker, as a gift! In the early 90s that was a rare thing indeed! So I took the pen and tore the sheet I’d drafted the story on. I would not do it again. First, I would not be tempted, and second, it’s always on my mind that if I take from someone even the cheapest of pens, it will be binding. “

The last question from the “Journalists and Money” series – “*Have you used the so-called PR matter, facts, photographs, etc. in your reporting?*” drew 20 positive replies (66.7%), with more than half of these however stating that they use mostly picture materials or materials for paid advertising during pre-election campaigns:

- “During campaigns the image-makers of most political parties prefer to give us photographs of their candidates that were taken at a studio, they have their hair done, noses powdered so that they look better,... – those are the things we use.”
- “Naturally, when this is a reasonable thing to do. PR materials are a good thing as a starting point for a given topic, but I don’t take them for granted.”
- “Only in cases where official data are announced and can be verified through another independent source. However I have noticed that colleagues outside our media outlet publish such materials just as they receive them.”
- “I’ve used them sometimes when there are no other photographs, it’s unavoidable.”

To summarize for this group of questions we could say that advertising content in Bulgarian media is mostly clearly distinguished; journalists are rarely engaged in preparing promotional material, but it often happens (50%) for advertising publications to appear “masked” as regular reporting. Journalists often (nearly 77% of them) receive small gifts, treats and tokens of appreciation, but nevertheless they claim *en masse* that this has no influence on their reporting and the majority believe that such small gifts are natural and traditionally accepted as part of the Bulgarian lifestyle. Various PR materials are used relatively often (67%), but mostly for the pictures and facts verified by a second source.

Common sense and personal beliefs

The group of questions generally concerning the ethical rules that journalists adhere to seem to most clearly disclose the knowledge (or lack of it) of the Ethical Code. It transpires from the answers that this important document is not part of the journalists’ everyday work: people in the trade don’t refer to the Code, they don’t discuss or argue with it – to put it in simple words, the Ethical Code seems not to have any practical meaning for Bulgarian journalists. It is also obvious that the Code is not hung on editorial offices’ walls printed in large bold letters: it was only registered as a piece of passing news and then forgotten.

Instead of using the Ethical Code, journalists go by their common sense and personal beliefs in dealing with sensitive issues.

To the first question: “*Have you published unconfirmed reports, rumors or assumptions and have you identified them as such?*” the answers are split in two halves - 50% of respondents say that they did publish/broadcast such information while the other half say that such conduct never happened in their careers. However, nearly 80% of those who gave affirmative replies claim that they have been clearly stating in the

publication that they were using unconfirmed or unofficial information. In most cases however we are talking of facts from the "grapevine" that are about to be officially announced and the journalists gave such facts publicity for the purpose of beating the competition and keeping their audience better informed. Some of the more characteristic positive replies:

- "Yes, I did publish such information. If it was of particular significance and if time pressure did not allow for verification, I absolutely always stated it was from sources that declined to be revealed."
- "Yes, but we always make a special note that this is unconfirmed information or a rumor"
- "Yes. It sometimes happens, for instance, that a rumor is insistently buzzing around, and I don't mean tabloid information on who got married or divorced but things about political scene. For example, there are rumors that someone will be fired from his or her position - so I did happen to mention it but I always add "according to unconfirmed information" or "as rumors have it ..." – using such clarifications"
- "Yes, and I was always sorry. It is obligatory to check facts and rumors"

When asked: *"Do you remember any statement or an interview where it is obviously clear the quoted one is lying and the collocutor does not confront him?"* Seventeen journalists (56.7%) gave a positive reply. In most cases this is justified with the insufficient information a journalist has on a given topic or the journalist's desire to leave the viewers/ readers to decide for themselves whether the person interviewed is telling the truth.

- "If that ever happened, it was not because of the lack of desire to respond adequately but due to lack of information. Sometimes there are issues on which not every journalist is very competent."
- "Quite often one can encounter such interviews in all Bulgarian media – particularly when the collocutor is of a dubious reputation".
- "There are many such cases but it all depends - when the journalist does not react it is not always because he or she wants to sweep it under the carpet. It might be that they just don't know the truth."
- "Without exception all interviews with mafia people".

To the question *"Have your sources given you wrong information, especially those relating to an individual? Did you write any correction because of that, a denial or did you launch the true facts in some other way?"*. Sixteen interviewees (53.3%) gave an affirmative reply. All of them however responded to the situation - 8 of them withdrew the incorrect information while another 8 checked facts in advance and did not even reach the stage of publishing untruthful information. This shows a relatively high degree of correctness in serving as an information channel.

- "I think I've had such experience but in the process of checking I always ignored the suspicious information"
- There have been times when someone would give me a misleading or untruthful information but thanks to the rule that there should always be a second source such information was never aired.
- "Yes, but I never published the untruthful information"
- "It happened during my career to publish information which later turned out not to be true, or to infringe someone's interests or dignity, but in such occasions I would always publish a correction afterwards."

Using blackmail

The next question, *“Has there been in your media any articles, reports or other stories that affect someone personally?”* received 23 affirmative replies (76.7%). The result can be mostly accounted for by the widely accepted opinion that actually all media publications and broadcasts affect someone personally - but not in the sense of "violating their privacy".

- “Yes. Every day. And it can’t be any other way as we are writing about living people”
- “Yes I’ve had such cases. For instance when Mr. Anton Andronov, the Chairman of the Municipal Council in Stara Zagora, was arrested, we published a story about it. But his side of the story was also correctly published”.
- “Yes, but when that happens, it is obligatory to follow the principle of giving the other side the right to response”
- “Definitely, many times. For instance recently the owner of the Samara Company illegality fired an employee without paying her the required compensation - I did a story about it and he was fuming over the phone, threatening me etc. but he ended up paying the full amount to the fired employee”
- “Yes, it happened, both at our medium and all others. This is part of the job, I don’t think it’s not normal, what really matters is to get the facts right”

With regard to unethical methods of info collection, responses are again halved – 15 to 15. The opinion is that when it is in the public interest, affecting someone "personally" is permissible. There were two very intriguing cases mentioned:

- "Not so long ago a newspaper had sent a female reporter to Parliament dressed very frivolously, I would even say, scarcely. She was supposed to interview male Members of Parliament and see their reaction to her. The purpose was not so much the content of the interview but rather to check their reaction - how they "give her the eye", what they tell her, whether they are flirting with her. I think they published a story on this later.”
- “I know that colleagues from the press collect information using, let’s use the real word here, blackmail. They do it for money- they tell someone that if he pays they won’t spill the goods. However, for the time being, these are just rumors ”.

Headlines sell the paper - *Under aged Girl Raped by a Gypsy*

Asked *“Do you remember any example of infringement of personal rights in case it is written about the imprisoned, persons at court, etc.? Has it happened for the reasons of sensation, for revenge or for some other reason?”*. Nine of the interviewees gave a positive reply. According to one of the responses the blame was also with law enforcement bodies, which sometimes “rather enhance this process of undeserved, unflattering qualifications and rarely protect human rights on such occasions. The Ministry of Interior frequently releases unofficial information on other previous cases involving a given that have no direct connection with the present case”. The majority of journalists however (70%) replied they do not know of human rights violations by their colleagues.

Very telling are the replies to the next question in the survey: *“Do you remember any example that the victims of accidents or crimes are exposed to the public without any special protection? Do you know of any cases of unnecessary identification of the*

victim, under aged, etc.? To this question, 18 of the respondents (60%) gave an affirmative reply. This involves the public disclosure of information about under aged victims of crimes, the violation of people's right not to be disturbed in grief, disclosure of the identity of witnesses to crimes etc. This shows particularly well that journalists are not lead by any written code and clear editorial rules, but rather apply their own common sense and compassion when judging on such matters. It is worth noting however that although these occasions are not quoted as violations of the Ethical Code (as a whole it transpires that this document is not at all known to the trade) journalists are capable of pinpointing the actual violations very clearly.

- I recall the case where the identities of relatives of a victim /no protection/ were disclosed by a reporter. A lawsuit was filed against the reporter who disclosed their identity.
- If I'm not mistaken, there was a case like that with little Pepi from Sofia and his mother, and also with little Denitsa. Both children were brutally murdered. There was also the case of a girl of 14, a rape victim, shown on TV and there were ghastly details about how exactly she was raped and how many of the rapists took turns.
- "Noshten Trud" publishes photographs of people hurt during road accidents, dead people etc. without blurring their faces almost every day.
- Sometimes we are tempted to go along with all the media to pursue interviews with the parents or relatives of victims - soldiers in Iraq for instance, or as was the case with Kepov and Lazov. But I can remember the latest case - I personally stopped the colleague from Blagoevgrad from traveling. He told me that all the other media were going. What would the relatives tell us? I absolutely hate the question: "How are you feeling now?" - asked at a time when someone lost their nearest and dearest. How in God's name can one feel?! This brings no new information. We have to pursue the answers to questions such as compensations, whether the institutions acted when they were supposed to act, or a "personal touch" in a story or recollection of the fallen soldier. But we should be patient. You can't do that on the day or the day after the tragic event.
- The case with the under aged murderers in Stara Zagora was precisely like that.
- Yes, it happens in all the Bulgarian media, all the time. They don't even make it their goal to protect anyone's identity.
- Yes. I do remember a case of that kind. A man was accused by the media in Varna to be involved in an illegal automobile business. His workshop was blown up. Later it turned out that his business had nothing to do with that or any other criminal activity, but it was all a case of unfair competition.

Since the question *"Have you given to anyone any data about people (addresses, hospital, and medical documentation) collected during the journalistic research? Does your media publish the names of under aged involved in crime?"* in effect consists of two separate questions - a few respondents replied not to both questions but to only one which complicates the analysis to a certain extent. However, according to answers collected only 6 journalists said that they did reveal to third parties information collected as part of their investigation. Such information is only shared with colleagues or very close people "for whom I can guarantee they will not use it for other purposes". Only three of the interviewees who replied to the second part of the question - concerning the names of under aged, replied that there were isolated cases of such conduct at their media. The others reply that they only use the initials of under aged individuals.

To the question: *“Do you know of any case that someone’s physical or mental disorders are mentioned in the text?”* positive replies were given by 9 journalists; according to one of them this is “common practice”, because “this way or the other we have not adopted an ethical rule regarding this issue and such disabilities are seen as sensations”. This, once again, proves that the Ethical Code is completely unknown to journalists. The Code explicitly states that when they are not related to the article, no facts will be revealed about the "physical and mental condition" of people described in the article/broadcast. We disregarded affirmative answers that regard mentioning the physical condition with the disabled person’s consent or as a "call for help".

From responses given to the next question: *“Are religious, national, sexual or some other (minority) affiliations mentioned if reporting on crime?”* it transpires that the majority (60%) do mention such facts, and above all the ethnic background of the perpetrator. Interestingly, the term "national affiliation" is not understood in its literal meaning and all journalists went on to interpret it as a synonym of "ethnic background". Eleven of the 18 journalists who gave positive replies, go in detail to explain that they mention the ethnic or other affiliation only if it is relevant to the story.

- “Yes, I did mention the sexual affiliation if the story requires so. For example the pedophile teachers in Plovdiv. However ethnic background is not mentioned - a crime could be committed by anyone - Bulgarian, Gypsy, Armenian, Turk – i.e. it is irrelevant to me.”
- “When the perpetrators are Roma, we do mention their ethnic background - we say “Roma” or "Gypsy".
- “There’s nothing bad about mentioning it. We went into another extreme, God forbid we should make them feel insulted. Well what can we do if the majority of these petty crimes are committed by people coming from ethnic minority’s communities. Shall we cry for them, oh poor souls? Is it a fact? Yes, it is.”
- “This is not my field, but I believe colleagues mention such characteristics because of the sensation. Headlines sell the paper - Under aged Girl Raped by a Gypsy -not due to ethnic intolerance, but simply for the sensational part”
- “When gypsies commit a crime, their ethnic origin, especially in our newspaper, is always mentioned, which according to some people is not right, but in my view - why shouldn’t it be right, if they are Gypsies?”
- “I mention the nationality whenever I know it and if it is related to a criminal act,. But religious and sexual affiliations - no. I believe these are not of particular significance. To me criminals are all the same, irrespective of their affiliations - apart from the national background”

Sexual and religious affiliations are way behind by significance – these are only mentioned when they are really relevant to the story - for instance a crime of passion or a ritual suicide associated with a cult. Mentioning the ethnic background however is obviously a common thing because many of the respondents believe that extreme tolerance to the Roma is meaningless and does not help. Like many other studies of the inter-ethnic relations in Bulgaria, the very phrase "ethnic background of the criminal" is automatically associated with the word "Roma" and never with the many other ethnic groups living in Bulgaria.

Almost equally divided are answers to the question *“Do you know of any case that in some journalistic form children, under aged or week-minded persons were used as the source during journalistic reporting?”* to which 14 respondents gave positive replies and 16 responded negatively. It is interesting to note that three of the positive answers quote the same weekly show - "Vsiaka nedelia" and specifically the interviews

of Martin Karbovski who invited psychologically unstable people to the studio. Another reply mentions the admission campaigns for high schools and universities that are maybe not fully relevant to the context of the question, because these are not "problem" stories. Two of the replies defend and justify using children as sources of information - in the first case because the information was used for the protection of the children themselves at an orphanage where the psychologist was testing tranquilizers on the children (this is not a case of violation but rather of strict adherence to the Ethical Code where item 2.4.1 says "We shall demonstrate special responsibility in respecting the rights of children, including their right to be heard) and in the second case because the witnesses of a ghastly suicide/homicide were only children: "I have interviewed children who were the witnesses of a car accident. There was also this case where a mother in Lozenetz jumped with her two children from the fifth floor. There was a playground just below. There were no other witnesses apart from a dozen children who told all about what they'd seen. We were trying to reconcile the different accounts. One child said that the mother first pushed the children out and then jumped. Other said she jumped while holding her two children by the hands. Not so long ago there was this hot water boiler explosion again in Lozenetz and the key witnesses were again children who were the first to see the damage and the first burnt people. But otherwise - to manipulate or exploit them - we'd never do that."

Regarding the degree to which journalists are put under pressure to disclose their sources of information, only 12 of them (40%) said they were ever under such pressure; however none of these journalists were requested to reveal their sources by government or court authorities. All 12 respondents go on to say that they did not reveal any information about their sources regardless of the pressure. The categorical answers used by respondents to absolutely rule out the possibility of revealing their sources are remarkable:

- "No one asked me to reveal such information. I would never give it..."
- "No, never, and also I would never reveal my sources"
- "It happened to me, but I never reveal my sources - how can I do it, a person trusts you with the information, and you go ahead and betray them!?"
- "I am regularly under pressure to reveal them, but I never did"
- "No, I'm very careful and I protect my sources. Even to the prosecutor and the media owner."

The responses to the last question: "*Has your media quoted the memoirs or the confession by some criminal? Do you think it improved the picture of him/her? Were there any political implications in that text (mentioning politicians, state institutions, etc.)?*" are once again split in half – 16 of the respondents gave a positive reply and 14 answered negatively. The political aspect of the question is not present at all – in all of the replies journalists only mention purely criminal actions. Not all of them seem to agree that criminals should be "given the floor" to state their opinion in public, or, if this happens, it is justified as an opportunity for edification.

- "I can remember one of the editions of Slavi's Show. His guest was a man sentenced to life in prison...This interview might have given people an idea of the criminal's personality but I am not at all interested in criminals' personalities and I don't think they should artificially be made to "sound more human".
- "We have had very interesting interviews with prisoners and I believe that if such interviews are aired, not very often, mind you, this would be good for society"

- I believe in this way we can have a better idea of what they areas people because when everyone quotes prosecutors and judges so one must also let the criminal say his word - this is part of the whole story irrespective of what the criminal will say. This is part of the puzzle that has to be put in place.

(The most specific and most characteristic answers, collected during the research, are included in the report)

2.5 Macedonia

2.5.1 Journalism influenced by politics and business

Informal contacts between journalists, politicians and businesspeople

There is a considerable number of journalists in Macedonia who perform some other function on top of their journalistic one, but that fact is usually kept as a secret! Of the journalists surveyed, only a few said that they had performed other “additional” functions, primarily in the NGO sector. Also, some of them went on admitting that they had indirectly used those other functions for reporting purposes, namely to establish contacts with relevant sources both for themselves as well as for their colleagues. However, it is widely known that in practice, even in their own newsrooms, there are numerous examples of journalists being engaged not only in the NGO sector but also in political parties, campaign staffs (during elections) or public relations offices, and even so-called consulting roles for journalists in the political parties. Officially, no journalist is engaged in such a way, but unofficially –even though it’s kept silent - the names are well known in journalistic circles. There are journalists who publicly declare themselves as such and admit that besides their, say, TV job they also work as a spokesperson for some institution. The latest example would be Brane Stefanovski, a TV 4 editor, who is also a spokesperson for the Electric Power Company; the names of the two editors-in-chief of TV Sitel and TV Kanal 5 are also often mentioned to have very close relations with certain political structures.

The word among journalists is that there are so-called part-time contracts or agreements for short-term services; that there are lists of journalists who receive money from various government ministries; that there are journalists who are on official spokespersons lists but are at the same time connected to private companies; that there are journalists and editors-in-chief who are working in the interest of certain political structures. Journalists take on such positions either for money or prestige, without any emotions or political sympathies, or in order to use the newly acquired position as a source of information both for themselves as well as for the media outlet they’re working for. The exceptions to that – i.e. for a person to be a journalist and to simultaneously have some other occupation as well, and to be completely professional in both of them - are few and incidental.

Informal contacts between journalists on one hand and politicians and businesspeople on the other are commonplace in Macedonian journalism. Each journalist has his/her own sources within the political parties or public institutions, which he/she uses and influences professionally or informally (friendship). But by large their opinion and advice is used as a general survey of the public opinion on certain issues and problems. Some do that on a friendly basis, some because they belong to a certain party or for money, while others still do it just to make a good impression. There’re also those who do not only give advice or estimates on certain situations but also get directly involved in the work of the political parties. Still, the influence that journalists have through their stories published in the media is much greater, and they consider it to be the right way to strengthen the role of the media in creating public opinion and as a reflection of the behavior of political subjects.

In practice, journalists more often than not act as mediators between the political subjects, especially when it comes to coalitions of political parties during election campaigns. The journalists surveyed elaborated: Macedonian political parties have no ideology, so journalists are not mediating for ideological reasons but rather because they want to feel powerful. They do it out of their personal interest or for the money. They enjoy being in the highest political circles and influencing decision-making. In essence, they're used to convey messages and to feel the pulse of the other political side."

Putting media in order: pressures, instructions, blackmails...

The media in Macedonia are operating under the direct influence of political, economic and other interests. Behind nearly every single media outlet stands an economic-political group and interest that dictates the way issues are covered. Some are trying to conceal themselves behind objective journalism, while others are open about it. The most obvious example would be A1 Television, which in the course of a single year lost its editor-in-chief and several journalists-editors, due to the direct influence its owner had on the editorial policy. The owners of Kanal 5 and TV Sitel are political party leaders, and even ordinary citizens can easily spot the influence they exert not only on the editorial policy but also directly on the way in which certain current political affairs are being covered. Irrespective of how much one insists on professional standards as the sole criteria in the journalistic part of the job, in practice, numerous issues cannot avoid censorship (especially when it comes to economy and political issues) and even "commercial prohibition" and limitations on the freedom of information. That is to say, in order for the media to be able to survive financially, they have to be very careful not to criticize advertisers in a direct and open way.

How to discipline the media? The decision whether certain issues will be covered and how it will be done depends either on the political and economic interests of the owner of the media outlet or on the editor-in-chief of the particular media. More often than not it is a precondition that gets imposed on journalists when they first start working for a media outlet (especially TV), as well as later on, when whole sentences are added to their stories or when they are asked to sign already-made or ordered stories. Furthermore, journalists are directly or indirectly suggested to either cover or not cover a certain story. They receive friendly advice and are subject of persuasion coming both from the editor and party officials. They are usually suggested that it would be a good thing if the criticism aimed at certain party was milder, that this is not the right time to do such a story because it would produce negative effects. There are a number of instances when serious stories have been hushed up due to pressure coming from powerful political and business circles, while certain companies are not covered or criticized due to the fact that they advertise in that particular media outlet. Such practices later take form of self-censorship. The number of journalists who have not experienced such pressure is neglectable, especially among younger journalists who, due to their inexperience, cannot defend themselves from the editor's influence or the "advice" from their senior colleagues. Owners react in order to protect their interests, and if journalists fail to meet their demands they often lose their post or - if they have the chance - leave to another media outlet.

The owner's interest is of the prime importance when deciding whether an issue will be covered or not and from what angle it will be covered. Both the owner and the journalists regularly face different reactions, interventions and pressures to publish or not to publish a certain story. Everybody reacts: politicians, businesspeople, and public

figures from all walks of life, not only politics and the economy, but also culture, music, sports. Even ordinary citizens react regardless of the fact whether they're right or wrong – simply don't accept other people's argumentation. They all react in different ways: sometimes their reaction is polite and tactful, with remarks as to the level of professionalism displayed in the journalist's work, but most often it's tempestuous, aggressive and furious, with threats and litigations, and more often than not followed by an offer for a bribe. How do journalists react to that? They react in different ways, depending on their personal and professional integrity, work experience, and economic situation.

Are journalists involved in political showdowns?

This is especially present in election time. One can easily spot stories that are tendentiously done precisely during the election campaign, with the time of publication that leaves no room for adequate reaction, which is of great importance when it comes to devaluating and scandalizing the political opponent. The media and the journalists alike are involved in the game, primarily because of the media outlet's business and political interests. The decision or to publish something or not depends on the political affiliation of the media outlet, how close it is to one political option or another, as well as on the financial ties between the media owner and the political party. In some places it is done unconsciously (this is especially true for younger journalists) but their newsroom is aware of that, while other newsrooms are part of the campaign staff of some political parties. During election campaigns, journalists usually get information "under the counter", from all political subjects participating in the campaign. However, there are also media outlets that tendentiously compile (dirty) material to be used afterwards in the course of the campaign in order to discredit certain political opponents, which is in a way directed by some political structure that uses or abuses certain journalists/media.

How are differences between various positions and political affiliations settled?

The experience in this respect varies. Some say that there are no conflicting opinions in the media they work for, others claim that when there are opposing positions they speak their mind but keep the debate within the media itself, while others maintain that their media functions as a forum for different opinions regarding different issues and that all of these are presented to the public through the published stories. There are also a number of those who are very bitter about this issue and think that in their media outlet there is a lot of misunderstanding and not enough freedom to speak one's mind, which consequently is reflected in the quality of their work.

Those who openly confront the media's standpoint on a certain issue often find their stories (commentaries) not published and replaced by stories made by their colleagues that are more "in line" with the editorial policy. Thus, some journalists become privileged over others, especially the "obedient" or deserving ones (those who're close to certain political structures) which are being properly rewarded. Still, it is the personal interest of the media owner has the major weight in deciding whether or not something should be published. That is, if the journalist's paycheck depends on certain stories/packages then the selection and censorship becomes much easier.

If one wants to be a good journalist, it's necessary not to allow one's personal convictions or sympathies for some political party or option to influence the journalistic work. The worst case scenario is when journalists are being imposed opinions from a higher level; it always results in a conflict. In some cases, the editor-in-chief imposes

his/her own opinion onto the whole newsroom, so that everybody feels that they're doing the right thing, when in fact the journalists are being manipulated. Finally, it is up to the journalist himself/herself whether to be persistent in defending his/her position or to bend under the editor's pressure. The reactions to such pressures usually come since it strengthens in-media democracy.

But, information cannot be hidden. If it is not published in one media outlet, it'll surface in another. That's the good thing about competition in the media space. It is maybe due to this fact that all journalists react when their political or ideological preferences don't match up with those prevalent in the media they work for. Finally, today in a democratic society everybody is entitled to publicly express their opinion, no matter how different it may be; it is a contest of ideas. Some just express their own opinion, while others try to convince their colleagues. Some journalists adhere strictly to the professional standards, while others start a debate over the opposing issues and problems with their colleagues, while others still express their opinion and act tempestuously. However, there is number of journalists who have left their media outlets because of the pressure to promote just one political option.

Political affiliation at the expense of facts?

In Macedonian journalism it is common practice not to verify press releases issued by political parties (containing a signature and the party seal) as well as statements made at press-conferences; journalists feel it is the responsibility of the party itself. If some other person is being accused or offended, then the other side is asked for opinion, whereas off the record information pertaining to another person is always subject to verification. If the journalist quotes more than one source for a particular piece of information, then it is understood that the information has been verified. This is a matter of a professional attitude towards one's work, but it also speaks volumes about the media's credibility. Journalists contend that information must always be verified, regardless of the source. The responsibility is twofold: both on behalf of the person giving the information and the person publishing it.

Journalists agree that there is so-called hidden propaganda in the media, which can easily be discerned in the ordered interviews or quotes. When it comes to the media outlets they themselves work for, the journalists surveyed underscore that that's not the case there, that their media outlet has never published or aired an interview for interview's sake or because it was ordered. However, generally speaking it is common practice in Macedonia, performed out of various interests, be it political or economic, and is present everywhere, both in broadcasting and in print media. Information which is not newsworthy still gets published, often at the expense of other information. The wider interest depends on the media's owner and its editorial board, that is to say all affairs are in somebody's interest. This is also present among those who have marketing deals with the media outlet, the advertisers. These companies receive affirmative coverage. Such forms of hidden propaganda are mainly produced because of the media's economic interests.

Journalists and money: Owner's desires

However unacceptable it may seem, journalists are often requested to promote a certain economic or political interest. This occurs in all private media owned by businesspeople or political party leaders. The dependence is so strong that, according to the journalists surveyed, as much as 90% of all journalists call their boss before they

publish the information. The media owner's interest always comes first. If he owns another business venture as well, he will use the media outlet to promote that business too, as a chance to increase profits. Journalists are aware of such business demands and know that there must always be room for the realization of that editorial concept. Those who cannot agree to that and feel that is not journalism but racketeering end up leaving the media outlet.

At the same time, on top of their journalistic work, journalists perform all sorts of other commercial activities: in various newsletters of private companies (mostly economic), in NGO projects, government campaigns (e.g. decentralization, interethnic relations, etc.), or in humanitarian actions. Journalists and owners share a common interest – money. The former see it as an opportunity to improve their salaries, while for the latter it represents a chance to obtain additional advertising money. In a number of media outlets, it is the journalists that bring in advertising on commission, and not the marketing department. No one even wants to consider the notion how much this restricts the freedom of journalists and journalism in general.

Furthermore, various PR materials, facts and photographs are being used for journalistic purposes, primarily in order to improve the quality of the publicized information. Nowadays every serious company has its own website, which is primarily used for self-promotion, whereas the journalists use the facts presented on the website. Regardless of the campaign or action in question, or where it comes from (a private company or a government institution), the materials are verified prior to publication. However, there are PR agencies in Macedonia, with their own networks of journalists that they pay money to in order for certain information favorable for their clients to be aired or published.

Hidden advertising

It is insisted that the difference between editorial content and commercials in Macedonian media are clearly marked. Commercial content is separated and marked as such, although in some cases commercial information is very skillfully "tailored" to a point that it becomes hard to differentiate it from the editorial content.

There is hardly any propaganda material which is not introduced in a typical journalistic form, as well. Journalists are so well versed that they are capable of turning any ad into a complete small-scale research. Theme wise, such items include various affirmative stories, starting from stories on the work of a tourist agency to articles on a private company backed by a certain political party or a company that is a business partner of the media outlet. The smaller the media outlet is, the greater the risk of crossing the line between advertising and information.

Journalists and the media offer themselves to politicians and businesspeople alike. This comes in different shapes and sizes: sometimes openly and directly, other times subtly and overtly. Those who are openly promoting the programs of political or business structure are doing it under the guise of pluralism of opposing democratic views and opinions. Others use extortion, such as "we won't publish that information unless we get a commercial from you".

Most of the time, it is done in cooperation between the marketing department, the editor, and the manager of the media outlet. The procedure is as follows: if the journalist cuts a deal with a company for it to advertise in the media he works for, he informs the marketing department and makes the agreement. The journalist in question, depending on the media, gets 10-15% for finding the client,. There is hardly any media outlet where the journalists and the editors are not directly involved in collecting advertisements. Even

in the public broadcasting service, the Macedonian Radio and Television, journalists do it, thus directly undermining journalistic independence and professionalism.

Lunchtime briefing over the table

A considerable number of journalists have received a gift during their career. Nowadays the most popular item on the gift list is a cell phone. The supply is endless and varied. Journalists are aware that this puts their professional identity to a test, but quite a few of them are willing to accept the “challenge”.

Some state that they have taken a number of paid business trips, accompanying government delegations. Others have attended business lunches organized by government officials or taken various trips organized by nongovernmental organizations. They do not perceive it as a corruption attempt, and they do not think it influences their reporting; for them this is simply one of the forms of briefing journalists. According to the majority of the journalists surveyed, journalists are generally honest and only a few can “handle” bigger gifts, such as SUVs, apartments, money or favorable loans. Such “gifts” are easy to notice since the standard of living of journalists and what their salaries are like is widely known. Furthermore, the effect of such “gifts” on their work is noticeable as well, especially when it includes caution and self-censorship when reporting about the “donor”.

Elementary ethical rules: much better than in the early transition period

“I know it sounds pessimistic, but I’m really frustrated by the fact that everybody’s offering all sorts of standards, whereas all those standards deal with is whether or not to wear a suit. Not even a word about basic human standards”. (A TV reporter, 8 years of experience, recipient of national journalism awards)

“We don’t publish the names of underage criminals. Things are much better now in that respect, and more attention is being paid to the standards of journalism, i.e. the journalists’ code of conduct” (Editor-in-chief, media owner, weekly magazine, 19 years of experience)

The position of journalists in Macedonia lies somewhere between these two statements, regardless of the media they work for, their status in the newsroom hierarchy or their ethnicity. It is alarming, and it still fails to meet the highest ethical principles and standards on an adequate level, but it is improving nonetheless. It is much better than during the early transition period. However, if we wish to determine it more precisely, it would be fair and realistic to say that the percentage of negative phenomena (mentioned in the first commentary at the beginning of this text) has increased.

The analysis shows, probably without much surprise, that the causes of such situation are both objective (i.e. exterior to journalism) and subjective (interior to journalism and the standards followed by journalists in the Republic of Macedonia).

“It’s hard to find an honest man who wouldn’t lie to you”

Objectively speaking, Macedonian journalists are still dealing with a public which is not refined or responsible enough. This primarily refers to that part of the public produced by and comprised of politicians, businesspeople and all others that hold some kind of power. Such power in collusion with the journalists and the media (regardless of the fact whether the latter are doing it consciously or not) manifests itself as diseases

that plague transition societies, such as abuse of any kind, cronyism, financial and political profit.

How is this manifested through the media and journalists? As far as objective reasons are concerned, one radio journalist with 8 years of work experience makes a characteristic statement. He says: "It's hard to find an honest man who wouldn't lie to you". Politicians, businesspeople and others in power are not the only ones responsible for this moral erosion. They benefit from the media as collectives, as well as from journalists as individuals.

The survey has shown that media and journalists in Macedonia still don't want to or cannot step out of the shadow of those in power. We still witness media products in which the journalists and mass media are being used to promote lies and positions of questionable moral content. Here are some views on the issue:

"The interviews on MRTV are epic... Journalists have nothing to say so they just keep nodding their heads." (Editor, daily paper, 6 years of experience)

"I've seen interviews in which it was obvious that the questions were favorable for the interviewee. The interviewee was given a chance to score." (Deputy editor-in-chief, TV, 15 years of experience)

What can be taken as an improvement in the quality of journalism is the somewhat increased awareness for one's own work. Ten years ago, that was not in the nature of Macedonian journalism. Back then journalists used to think that everything was allowed. Nowadays, especially due to the several cases going to court, but also because of the improvement in the field of professionalism, journalists in Macedonia are cautious when it comes to the responsibility for publicly expressed information. Here's one such "confession":

"There is a stain on my career, and that is when Lazar Elenonski wished to issue a denial of a non-existent denial. Nowadays, if I do not have documents I don't publish any information. I've seen other media publish incorrect information. A1, for instance, in the Jovan Andreski case (an incorrect information that he was a "mole" in the Security Council was made public; he took the journalist to court and won the case). That's the worst thing that could happen to a journalist." (editor, daily paper, 8 years of experience, recipient of an investigative journalism award)

Journalists are increasingly of the opinion that they should not publish any information unless it is confirmed by at least two sources. The percentage is still small, but there are some journalists who say that they will not publish any information unless the source is quoted. The level of awareness is indeed rising, even though it has taken some journalists 31 years to achieve this level: "I no longer publish information without quoting the source. They used to issue denials about my stories at least three times a year, and now I get a denial once every three years." (journalist, daily paper, 31 years of experience)

The survey has shown that the problem requiring closer attention is the relation between journalists and editors/media owners. Editors or media owners make alliances, out of various reasons, which are later on sustained by manipulating subordinate journalists.

Using blackmail to get exclusivity

Also questioned is the phenomenon of journalists getting so-called exclusive statements which are later on denied due to "party pressure". But, isn't the damage already done? Or, from the viewpoint of the politicians or businesspeople that play these kinds of games, haven't they actually accomplished their goal? Can the issuing of

denials repair the damage that has already been done? Are the media, the editors and the journalists capable of recognizing these finesses?

Attempts have been made to recognize these subtle forms of manipulation and to redirect them into objective reports. Unfortunately there are still no visible exceptions which prove the opposite.

Another dire phenomenon still present in journalistic practice in Macedonia is using the media outlet to attack people on a personal level. Usually, the claim is that the attacks are targeted at the offices and the work of those people, mostly politicians, but the sheer scale of these “attacks” and their frequency transpires something else. A portion of the media is said to display a discernible tendency to use its position and influence to harm certain people holding political posts.

“No such thing is present at the BBC, but it used to happen at A1 TV. They literally used to send out WANTED circulars.” (Journalist, foreign correspondent, 15 years of experience)

Another child disease of Macedonian journalism is not distinguishing the line between what is allowed and what is not: should one or should how not and how to cooperate with the police, fraudulently taken statements, and the most worrisome phenomenon of all – using blackmail to get exclusivity.

“The Ministry of Interior wants us to provide data on the media events we attended. I’m not sure as to how all of this is regulated, but in the present media outlet that I work for as well as in the former when Mol requested something they always got the tapes.” (deputy editor-in-chief, TV, 15 years of experience)

“I don’t know whether it’s dishonest, but I secretly taped Grilakis (an unofficial mediator, lobbyist for the Greek side in the talks held behind closed doors about the name of the Republic of Macedonia) when he came to Skopje to negotiate about the name. I tape-recorded him in order to protect myself, for I knew that when I publish the information they would deny the whole thing. I taped him secretly, of course.” (journalist, foreign correspondent, 15 years of experience)

If the previous assertion seems naive, the following statement is really worrisome: “I know of colleagues who have used blackmail: ‘Come to an interview or I’ll publish the materials that I have on you.’ They even openly admit to using such methods. Yes, it’s mostly information that is harmful for some person.” (editor, TV, 15 years of experience)

An even greater cause for concern are journalists’ actions that are in fact racketeering. This is an issue that has been openly talked about in journalistic circles in Macedonia for years. So far, there has been no real and clear evidence as to the existence of this phenomenon, and it is usually expressed in statements such as this one: “I’m aware that there’re journalists who, when they acquire certain information, go to a politician or a businessman and blackmail them. They tell them: If you don’t buy advertising in our media outlet or contact ‘whoever’ to buy advertising from us, we’ll run this story.” (editor-in-chief, weekly magazine, 19 years of experience)

“Everybody’s doing it” – as an alibi

The media in Macedonia have quickly accepted the “rules of the game” that apply everywhere when it comes to profits or influence. Those rules include striving for higher circulation, higher ratings, and that in turn results in constant search for news, i.e. sensations. The sensations in question are usually equated with bad news, that is news which are a result of socio-political deviations, social tensions and criminal acts. This type of news is something transition societies produce in abundance. In the flood of

news of that type, the most important thing is to be the first to publish it, with as much detail and pungency as possible. The struggle for front-pages has lowered even the criteria regarding basic human rights.

It can be said that journalists in Macedonia follow the rules when it comes to the treatment of suspects, arrestees and prisoners in custody. These rules are broken when these people are clearly identified in the police news releases. Sometimes, even though the suspect is identified in the news release by its initials, it also includes the person's current or former office. In that case it's not hard to guess who the person is. In such cases the media just transmits the information. Drastic exceptions from this are when the journalists are at the scene of the event, or when they meet the suspects or the victims in person.

The most tragic thing of all is the alibi used to justify the actions: "Everybody else is doing it, so why can't we." The most drastic example is when the two Romanian women testified in court against the drug boss Dilaver Bojku. "Despite the fact that they were under witness protection, all media outlets published their pictures. They weren't given adequate protection." (editor, daily paper, 15 years of experience)

The interethnic conflict in Macedonia of 2001 still has its aftereffects. Crime reports in newspapers still include information about the ethnicity of the perpetrators or the victims. "We can't seem to get unstuck from that." (Editor, TV, 15 years of experience)

The excuse used to justify this is that "in a country like this one, that's an important thing. It would not be important in a civilized society. When ethnicity is an important factor when passing laws in the Parliament or getting a job in government institutions, why shouldn't it be important in those cases, too. I think that it's important to the viewers and the readers, too." (Editor, weekly magazine, 20 years of experience)

Those were the main points to be drawn out from the survey on "Journalists and elementary ethical rules". Finally, let us just repeat what we stated in the very beginning. Standards and practice still do not meet the high ethical criteria, but things are changing for the better. It is much better than in the early transition period.

2.5.2 A selected choice of characteristic answers

"I don't want to be anybody's servant"

Do you perform any other job/office (government, ministries, non-governmental sector, campaign staff) besides your journalistic tasks, and do you use these opportunities as a source of information or for reporting purposes?

As a journalist I belong to the public and I don't want to be anybody's servant. I had been offered a position of a party's spokesperson but I refused.
(Radio journalist with 31 years of work experience)

Those two things usually do not go together. Generally speaking, a proper journalist should stick only to journalism, and if he/she performs the role of a spokesperson for the government, a ministry or some other institution, he/she should do that openly and stop with all journalistic activities.
(Radio journalist with 28 years of work experience)

Have you ever been in a situation to affect decision-making in a political party or a public institution with your advice or in any other way (by means of informal consultations, adequate advice, creating an atmosphere or in any other way)?

Some just want to be influential and to participate in policy-making. Journalists should perform this role through the media, or become party members and create policy from within the party. Some may give advice for money, some for ideology, and some just because of the adrenalin rush they get when they're at the place where the decisions are being made. (Journalist, Editor of a weekly, 20 years of work experience)

Why should a physician, a professor, a lawyer, or people of other professions be allowed to be politicians in addition to their occupation, whereas the journalist should be denied this right? I thus believe it shouldn't be a big deal if the journalist expresses his/her opinion outside of work hours. (Radio journalist with 28 years of work experience)

Do the political, economic or other interests of your editor or media owner influence the way you cover certain issues?

They cannot have a direct influence, but in general the owners create an atmosphere in which they expect, above all, their business interest to be protected, and in those media whose owners are party members you're expected to protect their party interests. This has become regular practice and it is the case with all media in Macedonia, starting with the biggest. (TV editor – 12 years of work experience)

I am known as a difficult journalist because I don't accommodate to other people's taste. However, on number of occasions I've experienced pressure of that kind: I've been taken off the air, I've experienced programmed embargoes. I've been told not to write. At the beginning it was frustrating, but now it is not. However, 90% of the journalists in Macedonia are highly conforming. (Radio journalist, 31 years of work experience)

Has anyone ever suggested to you not to write (speak) about a particular issue? Example: "you don't have to write about that at this particular time."

All media are financed by commercials and if the owner asks a journalist in a polite way not to write about someone, then the journalist will have guilty conscience and he/she won't cover the story. It happens everywhere. When I ask my colleagues why they don't confront this, they respond that we are all caught in the vicious circle. (Journalist-editor, 20 years of work experience, weekly)

I have to stay neutral around the clock

One of the most effective ways to silence journalists is to withdraw the advertisement, especially an annual one that brings a lot of money. (Journalist – editor, 15 years of work experience, daily paper)

Are you aware of a case when somebody outside the media outlet (a political party, Government, NGO, businesspeople...) has intervened to publish/not to publish a certain story, or has intervened about an already published story because of dissatisfaction with the way it was done? What was their reaction like?

At the TV station where I used to work everyone could call the owner and complain about a package they didn't like. Political parties were the ones that complained the most. The parties in power exerted a lot of pressure, sometimes even with unwanted consequences. (Journalist, 8 years of work experience, radio and TV)

It cannot be explained why media do not cover big affairs and scandals, and yet they do cover small and insignificant issues. This cannot be explained by their editorial

policy. It can only be a result of some intervention or some other business and political agreements. (Journalist-editor, 20 years of work experience, weekly)

Have you ever had information for quite some time about some issue, but chose to publish it during the election campaign?

Editorial boards make a selection of a few “acceptable” journalists who are sure to cover certain topics in a certain way. What is important here is the personal attitude of the journalist and the editorial policy of the media, and when they match you have information which you can disseminate. (Radio journalist, 28 years of work experience)

What is your reaction as a journalist when your political or ideological preferences don't coincide with the dominant or widely accepted ones in your media?

I do my best to do what I think is right. I do not include any political or ideological preferences in my stories. It is the very thing that gives me the right to insist on my propositions. (Radio journalist, 15 years of work experience)

As a professional I have to respect the criteria and the editorial policy of my media. If I disagree with certain policy, that is my personal problem, and it should stay that way. (Radio journalist, 28 years of work experience)

As a journalist I have to stay neutral around the clock. Had I wanted to become a politician, I would have been a member of a political party. My definition of a journalist is that he/she should represent a mild opposition to the party in power and should observe their steps. (TV journalist 11 years of work experience)

Lunch with the Prime Minister or a businessman it is not necessarily a bribe

Are all employees in your media outlet given an equal opportunity to tell the latest information and make it accessible to the public? Are you aware of any different cases?

The editor and the owner have a decisive role. If they say there is no interest to publish something it will not be published. Have no doubt, when the editor says that some information is irrelevant then we keep silent about it. This is the case everywhere. (Journalist-editor of a daily newspaper with 20 years of work experience)

Have you and other journalists in your media ever openly disagreed with your media outlet's opinion?

I talk, I am not silent. I would rather leave journalism than be silent. I used to keep quite thinking things will sort out on their own, I thought it may be a misunderstanding of some sort, and not an editorial policy. But as time goes by there is no improvement. (Journalist-TV reporter with 8 years of work experience)

When I would disapprove of the editorial policy of the media I worked for I would simply leave the media. It is at least strange to continue working in a certain media, and to discredit it in public and speak that you do not agree with its policy. (Radio journalist with 15 years of work experience)

When you publish party press releases or statements given by politicians, do you verify the news, information, or facts, or do you think that the person providing the information is responsible for that?

Most often the ones providing the information are responsible for that. Unfortunately, in our country information is rarely verified. This is one of the flaws of Macedonian journalism, often there is not enough time, the media outlet is small or

there are not enough journalists. (Journalist – editor of a TV station with 15 years of work experience)

When it comes to press-conferences, press releases, our function is to be transmitters of the words of political players. Once the information is released, it is up to us to decide how to treat it. (Journalist – editor in a daily newspaper with 15 years of work experience)

Are you aware of any interview or statement published in your media that wasn't justified in terms of being "newsworthy information" of general interest, but were more a form of hidden propaganda?

Yes, there is, and the public notices it. In this county the media are installations of the political structures and the government controls them in many ways. The propaganda ties depend on who you're siding with. (Journalist- editor of a weekly with 20 years of work experience)

Our media are divided into two groups: those controlled by the government and those controlled by their owners. Journalists in public media do propaganda for the government, while journalists in so-called independent media do propaganda in the interest of their owner. (Radio – journalist with 31 years of work experience)

Has the editor-in-chief/media owner asked of you to promote his private economic, political or other interest, or support any participant in the election process or a public figure?

Yes, and it has always been like that. In this country all media have political affiliation. Anyone can easily determine who supports whom. If the owner or the main donor is involved in some political battle it is only natural that they will use the media. Journalists that cover those events cannot object for that would mean losing their job. (TV journalist with 11 years of work experience)

Has there always been a visible difference between editorial content and commercial ads in your media?

A good journalist can transform any story and turn what is typically commercial into something informative and, if it is your sponsor who pays for your salary than it is acceptable. There is a problem if you are told how to present this, and not being left to do it on your own. (Journalist – TV reporter with 8 years of work experience)

Have you ever been involved in soliciting commercials or their creation, or in some other marketing actions (hidden advertising)?

I have colleagues who're making a profit from commercials. We're all working for money and when as a journalist you get in touch with this kind of people, businessmen, companies, you say to yourself: 'why should I leave the money to someone else'. This is the motive that guides you. (Journalist editor of a daily newspaper with 20 years of work experience)

As a manager I was in charge of the economic policy, but I was never a racketeer, I never used blackmail, I never begged. 90% of the journalists do these two things at the same time. (Journalist in a daily newspaper with 31 years of work experience)

Have you ever received a gift or been offered a paid trip (lunches, travels, gifts...)? Does that influence your reporting?

If you have lunch with a Minister, the Prime Minister, an opposition leader or a businessman, it is not necessarily a bribe. Some things can be learned only on such occasions and it depends on the person whether or not he/she will allow to be bought. (Journalist - editor of a weekly magazine with 19 years of work experience)

I have been offered, but have never accepted gifts not because I am with high moral standards, but mainly because I am cautious. I've been offered trips to write particular texts or to reveal a source, but it did not happen. Such situations increase your sense of ethics.

(Journalist – editor of a daily newspaper with 6 years of work experience)

Have you ever published unverified information, facts, rumors and assumptions and marked them as such?

We did a story on the City Hospital, claiming it was not a public but a family institution, that the manager issued orders and his spouse, who works as an accountant, signs them. The manager came in to deny this. It turned out, his spouse worked at the accounting department as a clerk without the authorization to sign anything. She has worked there for 6 years, and he's been a manager for 1.5 years now. He came to the City Hospital after her. It was a classical disinformation directed against him.” (TV reporter, 8 years of work experience, recipient of national journalism awards)

We do publish unverified information every day, but we mark them as such – as unofficial. (Journalist, print and radio, 6 years of work experience)

Most of the media in this country publish such rumors. It is not something new or unheard of in the Macedonian media space. (Journalist, foreign correspondent, 15 years of work experience)

Can you recall a statement or an interview in which it was obvious that the interviewee is lying, and the interviewer does not confront him/her?

Yes, on MTV! All the time. The interviews on MRTV are epic. You could die laughing. The boss makes no sense, but the journalist has nothing to say to that so he/she just keeps nodding his/her head.” (Editor, daily paper, 6 years of experience)

I recall an interview with Ljubco Georgievski (Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, 1998-2002) for Sitel TV in which he lied, i.e. he made up a story that if a checkpoint was moved off a road in Tetovo the occupation of Skopje is to follow. That wouldn't have happened for sure, and yet the guy made that up and scored a point. They had previously agreed with the journalist to let him say that. (Journalist, newspaper, 15 years of experience)

I've personally attended an interview in which we told the late Stevo Crvenkovski (former Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1994-1998); just a few days before he changed the national flag, that Macedonia would probably change the flag. He made fun of us and insisted that those were mere speculations and that we should be ashamed for saying that.” (Journalist, radio, 15 years of experience)

Has any source retracted the information it gave you or misinformed you, especially when it comes to an attack on a person? Have you written a correction for that, a denial, or disseminated the true facts in another way?

I no longer publish information without quoting the source. That's why I'm avoided by a lot of people. I don't want to yap in somebody's interest. They used to issue denials about my stories at least three times a year, and now I get a denial once every three years. (Journalist, daily paper, 31 years of experience)

I know of a case (not my personal experience) when a colleague of mine mistakenly thought that the initials listed in the police news release were of a particular person even though it wasn't verified so; he published them as such. The person attacked was forced to deny such allegations and threatened to sue him. (Journalist, TV, 5 years of experience)

Once, because of an article I did, I ended up in court. The story was based on things said by people who were from the same party as the person my story caused damages to. During the court hearings, the people who gave me the information kept avoiding me and refused my phone-calls. Ultimately, they once again offered to help me, but the editor was not willing to protect me and coldly refused me, even though it was the passage that he added to my story that was the biggest problem in court. (Journalist, TV, 11 years of experience)

The spokesperson for the Prime minister, Gjurovski, holds briefings with journalists, and later on retracts. Says he was misunderstood. I think he's trying to pull something off, create and direct public opinion... (Journalist, TV, 6 years)

Has your media ever published articles, stories, reports, or other content in which a person was attacked directly?

Ha! Of course, every single day. Whole bunch of them. Both tendentiously and intentionally and accidentally. The same goes for other media, too. (Journalist, TV, 8 years of experience)

No such thing occurred at my present media, but it used to happen at A1 TV. They literally used to send out WANTED circulars. (Journalist, radio, 15 years of experience)

Are you aware of any examples when dishonest methods were used to obtain information (secret taping, constructed event)?

Once, a reporter of ours taped the spokeswoman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs twice, without her knowledge. (Editor, TV, 12 years of experience)

I am not sure whether it's dishonest, but I secretly taped Grilakis (an unofficial mediator, lobbyist for the Greek side in the talks held behind closed doors about the name of the Republic of Macedonia) when he came to Skopje to negotiate the issue. He came incognito. I tape-recorded him in order to protect myself, for I knew that when I publish the information they would deny the whole thing. (Journalist, radio, 15 years of experience)

Yes, the information was published, and even blackmail was used. I know of colleagues who have used blackmail: 'Come to an interview or I'll publish the materials that I have.' They even openly admit to using such methods. (Editor, TV, 15 years of experience)

When it comes to dishonest affairs, you have to be dishonest in order to obtain information. (Journalist, daily newspaper, 15 years of experience)

By coincidence

Are you aware of any examples when the rights of people regarding covering arrests and indictments were violated? Was this done out of a need for sensations, vengeance or some other reason?

When SDSM came to power, pro-government media introduced the practice (of which Utrinski Vesnik daily was the most ardent follower) to lynch people on the

grounds of alleged criminal activities. After that, the spokesperson for the government would organize a press conference to say that so-and-so was a criminal, and 2-3 days later the police would bring charges against that person to the district attorney.

(Journalist, radio, 15 years of experience)

Presumption of innocence is not fully observed in the media. People's first and last names are published even when there are just criminal charges against them, even in my own medium (editor, TV, 15 years of experience)

Are you aware of any examples of victims of an accident or a crime being exposed in public without any special protection?

They were trying to persuade me that I had to say where, according to "our information", the fugitives from Shutka (a prison in Skopje) were hiding... (Editor-in-chief, weekly magazine, 19 years of experience)

The most drastic example was when the two Romanian women testified in court against the drug boss Dilaver Bojku. Despite the fact that they were under witness protection, all media outlets published their pictures. They weren't given adequate protection. Now that's a problem for the authorities. (Editor, daily paper, 15 years of experience)

Do crime reports in the news include information about the religious affiliation of the people involved, their nationality, sexual orientation or any other affiliation?

Religious affiliation on a regular basis, we can't seem to get off it. Sometimes the ethnicity is mentioned, too. (Editor, TV, 15 years of experience)

Even though we try very hard to avoid emphasizing that in the headline, in order for the story not to get a wrong connotation, sometimes such information slips through our hands. For instance: "Four Albanians beat up a Macedonian" – or something like that. (Editor, daily paper, 15 years of experience)

Yes, when it concerns ethnically mixed regions, religious affiliation and ethnicity is compulsory. In a country like this one, that's an important thing. It wouldn't be important in a civil society. When ethnicity is an important factor when it comes to passing laws in the Parliament or getting a job in government institutions, why shouldn't it be important in those cases, too. (Editor, weekly magazine, 20 years of experience)

Are you aware of any cases when children, minors or people with development problems were used as sources for journalistic research? Are you familiar with such cases in your media or in any other?

I did a story about a little girl from Kumanovo who was raped. By coincidence, when I got there the little girl's mother appeared, holding her by the hand, so I shot them on camera and aired the package. It was a huge mistake, a catastrophic one. (Journalist, TV, 8 years)

Has anyone ever asked of you to reveal your source of information? Does anybody in your newsroom know the identity of your sources?

They've asked me many times, but I never reveal my source. They've asked me in court, too, and I paid the fine but didn't reveal the source. Most of the time I tell the identity of the source to my editor in order to persuade him to run the story, to convince him that I'm not making it up. So far everything has been good; he protects the source, too.

(Journalist, radio, 31 years of experience)

Yes. Not very often though, but I have been asked. However, I've never revealed a source that wished to remain anonymous. (Editor, daily newspaper, 6 years of experience)

2.6 Serbia

2.6.1 Journalism in Serbia – degraded, humiliated...

Underpaid, forced to do additional jobs, even to work for politicians

In Serbia, each of the 30 journalists who participated in our survey used almost exactly the same words to describe the state of journalism today as once used during the research conducted during 2003. The prevalent emotions were negative and epithets like bad, disastrous, degraded, humiliated, worse than ever were used.

Encumbered by extremely bad material situation and unsatisfying status in society, most interviewees are seemingly indifferent, but actually indignant towards visible negative manifestations in Serbian journalism during transition. “Main problems are subjectivity, political partisanship, buying and selling for small change or flat let. Journalists sell themselves for a small change and small ideas – immorality and short-sightedness”, says a journalist from a weekly magazine with 10 years of experience.

Not one of these 30 journalists, among them many inexperienced, but also many veteran journalists, gave affirmative answer to a question – is it possible to make a living as a journalist? Most of the interviewees said openly that they were forced to take additional jobs, while many of the middle-aged journalists confessed that they depended on their parents' help to survive. Journalists don't think of themselves as respected category of population – journalism is an insecure, publicly deprecated and underpaid profession.

When compared with the research conducted two years ago, it is indicative that journalists now speak more about insecurity, fear of losing their jobs, atmosphere of hopelessness, insecurity and defenselessness in media companies. Our interviewers had a general impression that some journalists were too scared to talk freely about their profession, especially concerning media outlets they worked in. In some editorial offices even “informants” on duty were noticed who had listened to journalists' conversations with our interviewers.

Weak and insecure position. Politicians influence the owners

Media situation in Serbia is certainly characterized by the lack of regulation, which allows operation of disproportional number of newspapers and radio and TV stations. The consequence is not only a difficult financial position of many journalists in a crowded market, but also perhaps even more pronounced negative selection of professionals. Journalists themselves don't have a very high opinion of their profession: “Selection of journalists is worse than ever. Becoming a star overnight was not possible before. Every media outlet is affiliated with a certain political option, there is no selection, training, professional standards. It was better during Sloba's rule.” (Editor, 12 years of experience, daily newspaper)

Message is: don't make waves

As a rule, media outlets find themselves in a weak and insecure position and their status often depends on the politicians' “goodwill”, so the atmosphere of non-criticism pervades, especially towards those who can influence the ownership

structure in the media outlet. The most obvious example of submission to such pressure is the testimony of an interviewed journalist with a thirteen years of radio experience: “In the period when relationships of ownership between our radio station and the city get examined and redefined, we always receive instructions “not to rock the boat”, regardless of the fact that we have always criticized city authorities, no matter who they were. Yesterday they were some other guys, today they are Radicals. We were told not to be hasty to publish any material on city authorities, because solving the ownership structure was 'a higher interest'.” This answer illustrates domination of certain parts of the political establishment who control the public media (local or national) or their owners.

Some answers indicate that political parties hire journalists to “work for them”. “The party I worked for had one journalist whose duty was to do TV reporting. They've always hired journalists, not just for their campaigns. For example, I know which journalists now work for them.” (Journalist, 10 years experience, radio)

Editors are not willing to defend his/her colleagues

Several examples were mentioned illustrating the fact that media owners often personally insist on promoting their own interest and smearing their opponents in the media, or instruct journalists to repeatedly ask certain questions thus forcing certain officials to take hands off their company. It was mentioned that campaigns against certain ministers could have been orchestrated on behalf of media owners' interests. On the other side, several cases of excessive servility of the media towards government because of unfinished privatization, taxes, inspections etc. were pointed out.

The relationship between journalists and owners constitutes a special segment of the media environment in Serbia. Although journalists mostly perceive owners' views as dictate and pressure, it is evident that they are more tolerant towards that kind of pressure than towards the pressure coming from politicians. They justify this position citing difficult financial situation and the desire to survive in the marketplace. With such an attitude, journalists ignore or are unaware of the principle that publishers should not have the right to use their own media outlet for promotion of their private economic, political or any other interests, nor to use their content to promote their interests or views.

“... he shouted and cursed my mother...”

Two kinds of political pressures were defined in the survey. One of them were direct calls and in several cases even undisguised threats to journalists from dissatisfied politicians who had various and numerous complaints – from certain headings they didn't like to the very issues the media reported on. There are also more subtle pressures, such as when media editors and owners get a hint that a certain statement or public position may be used or misused, depending on the treatment of a specific issue in a media outlet. “At least once a week Minister of Finance Mladjan Dinkic demands a certain story not to be published. He completely stopped one of my articles. Some businessman wanted us to drop some story. Dinkic called the editor in chief, shouted, demanded my resignation and cursed my mother. The businessman was angry, but he didn't threaten me.” (Journalist, 3 years experience, private TV station)

“They often do that. Former Minister of Police Dusan Mihajlovic intervened because I had asked the other guest, Boris Tadic, if Mihajlovic should resign after the assassination of Zoran Djindjic. Miroljub Labus wanted me to be professionally and

morally stigmatized because I asked him about his role in advertising and promotion of private banks and commercial chains. Goran Vesic was angry after the *Bodrum* affair had been disclosed and published”, said a journalist from a daily newspaper while one of his colleagues cites the following example: “Nobody ever suggested to me not to report on something, but some of my articles were never published although I had written them. I would later find out that some politician called and asked for my story not to be published.” (Journalist, 13 years of journalistic experience, daily newspaper)

Pointing out existing pressures is important for description of the circumstances, but two other aspects are crucial from the ethical viewpoint – a) whether editors and journalists resist those pressures, and b) whether media outlets protect journalists. It seems this is where the sense of helplessness prevails.

More than anything else, media environment is dominated by political pressures and dependence on financial centres of power, either media owners or their sponsors. The survey transpires visible lack of resistance to pressures (which is required by the journalistic code), and compliance with the “rules of the game”. One of the interviewees made a vivid description: “Nobody has to tell you anything. It is like – today we support Partizan, although yesterday we supported Zvezda. Some things go without saying.” One of the journalists brought up the most painful subject: “What bothers me the most is the fact that there are no editors who will support their journalists and say – 'excuse me, the journalist has professionally done his/her job and it is the correct information'. Something like that happened just two days ago. We've published bare information, correct and without any comments. We got a call from the Cabinet. We don't have an editor who is willing to defend his/her journalists and guarantee their professionalism.”

Irresponsibility - There are too many 'contractors' who just carry tape-recorders

Some of the answers reflect the working habits embodied in the principles – 'nothing depends on me anyway, the editors make all the decisions' and 'why should we care if we can't make a living out of it'. Some interviewees said that they had left their jobs in the media because of such an attitude. Others said they would like to do so. One interviewee just kept grumbling because he had in mind a talented colleague who quit his job because he had not approved of the editorial policy and is now unemployed. Some journalists think that journalism in Serbia goes backwards, not only because of journalists' flaws, but because editors and owners are not aware of their power and their role. They also believe that negative selection prevails in journalism – the overcrowded media market caused the “inflation of journalists”. Many of them expressed profound dissatisfaction with the journalists' status in the society.

Political bias of certain media outlets is visible – journalists claim that they can clearly see the political orientation of their editor or the owner (to be exact, most of these diagnoses refer to their competition, but some journalists had their own editors in mind).

“State of the media is so dreadful that it's actually worse than during Milosevic's era. There is no repression as before, but after October 5th the media went to the other extreme: we now have the most liberal media scene where no one can be held accountable for the published information. Responsibility depends on the goodwill of editors and owners. Nobody fears legal repercussions and it is erroneous because, in other words, there is no responsibility for published material. That's why it is even worse now.” (Journalist, two years experience, daily newspaper)

Unfortunately, professional introspection reveals many examples of journalists' "indifference, lack of professionalism, ignorance, lack of ambition, corruption, fatigue and laziness, 'here today, gone tomorrow' attitude" – "there are many 'contractors' – people who carry tape recorders, run from press conference to press conference, record something, go back to their office and make some news. Such people make 95% of journalists. They don't bother for 15.000 dinars or less a month. Some of them work for years without being officially full-time employed and feel that anyone can harass and oppress them..." (Editor, eight years experience, weekly magazine)

Compared to the survey conducted in 2003, the most visible change is more open expression of disappointment in journalistic profession, general situation in the media, social environment, politicians and their own personal and professional status.

Political cleavages within editorial offices are visible and, according to our interviewees, heated discussions occur between journalists and editors as well as journalists themselves, although that's often a part of professional dynamics. It is frequently known, or can be assumed with a great degree of certainty, which part of political establishment controls which media outlets.

It seems that most often discussed issue in media outlets is their political orientation, not elementary violations of professional ethics. It appears that there is certain confusion regarding the controversy over the journalists' right to have a political opinion and their obligation to report without bias and be impartial. What is missing is a structure of rules of conduct.

No initiative, no courage, no ambitions. You can smell the corruption

Politicians often call editors and interfere. Political pressure is seemingly all-pervasive, but ethics should constrain politicians and restrain them from influencing the media: „Today everything is about PR agencies and media advisers who call editorial staff. Our profession comes down to holding microphones; there are no ideas or ambitions: “They go from press conference to press conference, record something, go back to office and then make some news...”

It appears that journalists are often engaged in political parties, councils etc, which proves that people do not consider it necessary to separate functions and avoid conflict of interest. It is obvious that everybody is aware of and talks critically about it. They often claim they are not involved in such practice, but are pointing to others instead. Several interviewees said that they took unpaid leave or ceased reporting about a campaign to avoid conflict of interest. Some journalists who used to take unpaid leave during electoral campaigns to work in electoral offices said that it had enabled them to earn “two and a half monthly salaries for a 15-day work” or “to open perspectives for the future”. In that way it is maybe possible to avoid direct and common definition conflict of interest, but not really to eliminate it. Some of them admitted that during such engagement they had actually “invested”, i.e. made contacts to use them later.

Significant number of interviewees views with suspicion journalists who report on economy. They cite examples that point to corruption. Some answers indicate that political parties and companies take journalists on tours and it seems to be a common practice. Small bribes are considered normal. People mentioned gifts, jotters, cell phones, paid travels, etc. One of them even said he was offered an apartment.

It seems that journalists often work on gathering and design of advertisements. Some stories and articles presented as usual editorial content are in fact disguised advertisements.

Journalism between servile flattering and affairs

This year's survey not only reveals that investigative journalism is on the edge of extinction, but also that some fundamental professional standards are being abandoned: nobody checks correctness of information, journalists avoid resistance, journalism is very often reduced to mere transmitting of politicians' and official statements, especially those made by police and even some suspicious characters hanging around editorial offices offering their services. It should also be noted that political infighting often leads to simulated investigative journalism ("affairs breaking out", "satanization"). On the other side, calling attention to political fights often makes results of investigative journalism relative. In some media investigative journalism is often combined with sensationalism, vulgar words and insults. There are many ongoing libel lawsuits in Serbia. Journalistic associations are on a defence, but the lack of solidarity will probably lead to courts being overcrowded with journalistic cases.

Wide range of answers to important question on information verification suggests that apathy and nihilism prevails: "I bet that nobody abides by the rule of confirmation from two independent sources" - says the editor with ten years of radio experience. We must acknowledge the argument that journalists can't get relevant information and write objectively because the implementation of Free Access to Information (FAI) Law has not yet come fully into force. It has to be noted that some people wrongly believe that one office (FAI Commissioner's Office) can replace tedious checking and confirmation of information.

Fake "nutcrackers" in service of fighting political opponents

Politicians make a significant contribution to dreadful condition in the media. They love to make wild accusations against their political opponents and try, often with considerable success, to use the media for their purposes. Behind news according to "well informed sources" just ruthless political skirmishing is hidden. We need not stress that certain professional practices were never adopted. Wrongful information is rarely corrected; mistakes are often covered up by meaningless corrections or justified by technical errors.

It is obvious that journalists either lack necessary cautiousness or the courage to hold people with power accountable for their actions or characteristics. Journalism in Serbia wavers between sycophancy and affairs.

Some interviewees talked about the widespread belief that the public's right to know overpowers politicians' right to privacy and protection of personality. One of them explained how he discovered that former president of the parliament had an affair. The other one mentioned mental disabilities of a public official.

Common people have more right to keep information about themselves secret than do officials and others who are fighting to gain power and influence and attract attention. However, such position implies that judging about ethical dilemmas is left to journalists or editors and that the moral arbiter (journalist, editor) must decide in each case which one of those ethical interests prevails, the public's right to know or the right to protection of personal integrity.

On the other side, it is obvious from many answers that the fear of politicians often prevails: for example, a journalist keeps quiet while Minister Ilic lies obviously, but sharply questions Natasa Kandic (humanitarian activist), says editor with 12 years experience.

“The heroes of investigative journalism are tired”

Journalists are very critical about their colleagues: even some well known journalists, very highly regarded for their professional achievements until recently, are criticized for lowering their standards below acceptable levels, especially when facing politicians, powerful people and businessmen. It is increasingly common that journalists do not want to confront politicians and powerful people nor mention anything in their reports even when they lie brazenly. “Politicians lie by default”, says a journalist with six years of experience in a daily newspaper.

Some journalists admit openly and with resignation, that journalists often don't know enough about the subject at hand or lack the courage to ask questions when the person they are questioning lies or tries to avoid certain issues. One thing is evident: according to many, there are a lot of young, ignorant and inexperienced journalists who were forcefully elevated to high positions (most often on TV).

At the top of the list of the Code rules is the principle that authors, editors and the editor in chief must respect truth and human rights, and the principle of timely informing of the public. It is obvious that not many journalists respect the rule of confirmation of validity of the information before publishing. This is the rule that seems to be most often neglected. There are many indications that it is done with an unacceptable ease. Responsibility for validity of the claims is often laid on those who provide it (politicians, parties). Some of the journalists obviously think that once they publish the opinion of the side which was attacked by the politician their job is done. It seems that this kind of shallowness is considerable – a certain journalist got someone's phone number using service 988 and published his statement. It turned out later that the person he interviewed just happened to have the same name as the one who was competent on the subject! In several cases journalists were angry because people did not wish to comment on accusations against themselves, finding these accusations to be unsubstantial or wishing not to get involved in a campaign started by someone else.

It is especially disturbing that some media are apparently owned by people with criminal records trying to whitewash their biography and their money and position themselves in the political establishment.

Most interviewees think that the fight for survival in the marketplace is unscrupulous. Sensationalism in newspapers is considered necessary to sell the product, but condemned for all the moral reasons. It is obvious that the answer depends on the character of the media someone works in. Generally speaking, we can notice trends towards tabloidization, use of scandals and necrophilic voyeurism (“readers love blood”).

Too much bad taste. Suspicious values. Criminals are portrayed as angels

Most of the journalists believe that fundamental professional principles have been violated and that people with suspicious biographies (let us use euphemisms) are often presented like modern heroes: “Tabloids are full of fairy tales with criminals described as angels”, says a journalist with 12 years experience on a private TV station. But: “Unlike in the nineties, the media now publish much less of that stuff”, says a journalist with five years experience in a weekly magazine.

Almost everyone believes that this kind of content had political implications. "There is no adherence to any ethical and moral rules of conduct. It's a disaster! I've read recently: Pavarotti is coming: hotel has ordered a toilet bowl of such and such size, and the heading says – Three meters of ass." (Journalist, nine years experience, daily newspaper)

A female journalist who worked in many media outlets says that she is aware of the fact that a single mistaken word can be costly. "Everyone who had a chance had already left this profession." She misses "the good old days of honest journalism".

A crisis of the professional authority of established journalists is evident. Interviewees have often criticized the conduct of renowned or highly regarded journalists. For example, several journalists pointed out that Aleksandar Tijanic's (director of national TV) columns are the embodiment of unacceptable hate speech in the media and public scene because they violate the rule that physical and mental shortcomings should be treated as a personal matter. In his columns Tijanic describes the people he disagrees with using terms like sperm, jerk, whores, mongoloids, mafia's wet nurse, Monica Lewinsky, herpes on the face of Serbia, convalescents from recurrent case of smallpox. Almost all of the journalists agree that Tijanic violated some of the fundamental professional principles: he attacks his opponent ad hominem, caricatures and ridicules their physical shortcomings and shows disrespect for their family privacy.

One journalist (editor, 12 years experience, daily newspaper) objected to Milomir Maric's (former editor, BK TV) public boasting about how he expressed his condolences to Ruzica Djindjic (wife of the assassinated Prime Minister). He later published that conversation in his newspaper, presenting it like an interview.

Interviewees cited many specific examples of flagrant violations of professional ethical principles. In all the media, victims are most often the impoverished and minors, children from children's homes and children with AIDS. Minors who commit suicide have their names published in the press. Journalists were once decent enough not to mention the names of those unfortunate people who committed suicide. Now they publish all the details: names, surnames, photographs taken "on the spot".

We asked them if they remembered stories when victims of crime or accidents were publicly exposed or unnecessarily identified, especially if they were minors. We received many answers indicative of the state of journalism. Most of them mentioned the incident when a minor was thrown from the Branko's Bridge by his peers. His nationality was accentuated without any reason or justification. They also pointed out the pompous TV appearance of Dr. Stajkovic who announced a story about sexual abuse of a baby, which was not true, but parents' names were mentioned anyway. Name of a child infected by AIDS in hospital has been published. Some interviewees pointed out the appearing of photographs of soldiers killed in Topcider. Some of them mentioned the misuse of a car accident when the Minister of Agriculture's vehicle killed a girl. Only one person has put this problem into wider perspective: "Let us not forget victims from Srebrenica – they recalculate, add, subtract, it's not 7000, it's 2500... It is disgraceful, almost inhuman..." (Journalist, 10 years experience, weekly magazine)

Most of the interviewees believe that this situation is caused by the rush for bigger press circulation: "I think it's a result of competition. They're trying to attract more readers. Serbs are the kind of people that need only food and games to have fun in this crisis situation, the social and economic crisis." (Female journalist, eight years experience, news agency)

Contrary to the principle that reporting (especially reporting on legal proceedings) must be unbiased, Serbian media have for years violated presumption of innocence.

Suspects are indicted, the indicted are convicted and the convicted are – protected (because the media often glorify criminals...). Such conduct was more pronounced during and after the so-called operation Sablja (state of emergency and mass raid against criminals after the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic) and the trials that followed.

In this important and delicate segment, almost all of the journalists admitted that they were guilty themselves. Ignorance was the most often cited excuse, as were sensationalism and unreliability of official sources.

Just like in Germany, 30 years ago

We asked our interviewees if they have ever mentioned religion, nationality or sexual orientation when reporting on crime. At first sight it seems that everybody are politically correct on the issue, but the media are filled with unacceptable ethnic references which border insulting, unusual or criminal behaviour. As expected, they admitted to have been using these references when reporting on others. “When someone is not Serbian, his nationality is always emphasized – for example, an Albanian or Hungarian has killed a Serb. They always insist on that. His/her religion and sexual orientation are always accentuated. It happens in all the media.” (Journalist, two years experience, daily newspaper)

Roma minority is most often discriminated against: their ethnicity is always mentioned when reporting on conflicts, even when they are underage. “For example, if you're reporting on a fight with skinheads, you must mention if you're talking about Roma, because that was the reason for conflict.” (Journalist, 10 years experience, radio) This answer indicates that we must make a choice between different interests when evaluating ethical questions. Unfortunately, it is increasingly obvious that such subtlety is lacking. The media are flooded with criminals' memoirs and narrations or, in the best case, analytic articles.

While doing research for the 2003 survey, in many media we've heard heroic stories of investigative journalism, of taking a firm stand. Now it's obvious that “heroes” are tired or that the crisis is now more distinct. One of them said: “I think this is the Serbia's journalism lowest point. It is a consolation that journalism was in exactly the same situation 30 years ago in Germany. It can be seen in the film 'The Lost Honour of Katharine Blum' (film made in 1984, based on the Heinrich Bell's novel about the bank employee who meets an anarchistic bank robber and becomes a victim of a frenzied media investigation) and the Spiegel affair – this weekly paper used to publish the kind of stories which are prevalent now in our media. After these affairs, media laws in Germany were changed. We are now in that phase.”

2.6.2 A selected choice of characteristic answers

“Each newsroom has its own patron”

Have you worked in any other areas besides journalism (government, economy, NGOs or public sector, electoral offices etc) and have you ever used these jobs as a source of information or opportunity to make a story?

“That has become almost usual. During the last presidential elections, several journalists from my office took days off to work in electoral offices. They were mostly

working for the Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Serbia, Otpor and Serbian Radical Party.” (Editor, 31 year of journalistic experience, private TV station)

“I know that certain journalists work for party newsletters. It's an additional source of income for them. It may be that they're using that opportunity to find contacts...” (Journalist, 9 years experience, daily newspaper)

Does political, economic or some other instructions from your editor or the owner influence the way you deal with a subject?

“Yes, very often. We are economically independent and sometimes a financial help, from Delta Bank for example, may influence our reporting on their friends. There is self-censorship. I know who the friends of my paper are and whom I must not attack because it won't go... Every media has its benefactor, be it a private company, NGO or a lobby.” (Journalist, 6 years experience, daily newspaper)

“I know of some cases where instructions came not only from the owner, but also from his wife, lawyer and the rest of his family.” (Editor, 31 year of journalistic experience, private TV station)

Before, politicians intervened more than businessmen – now it's reversed

Do you know of any cases when a third party – from a political party, the government, NGO or business sphere – had intervened and asked something to be published or not published or intervened after the publication of a certain article?

“Yes. I know of almost no party or government structure that hasn't asked for something like that... It is most difficult when someone is trying to blackmail the owner, because it makes it hard for you to resist. You've got to comply.” (Journalist, 12 years experience, private TV)

“PR and marketing agencies call us all the time and complain. They believe you work for them and always want something to be published or protest about something that's already printed... (Journalist, 9 years experience, daily newspaper)

“At least once a week Minister of Finance Mladjan Dinkic has some subject he doesn't want published. He stopped one of my stories. I had a case when a businessman demanded one story to be withheld. Dinkic called the editor in chief, shouted at him, asked him to fire me and cursed my mother. The businessman was angry, but he didn't threaten anybody.” (Journalist, 3 years experience, private TV station)

“It happens every day. Before, politicians intervened more than businessmen. Today it's the other way around, but it's questionable if they are only businessmen because they're involved in politics too.” (Journalist, 14 years experience, weekly magazine)

“They've been interfering with our paper since I've started to work there. They will do it as long as there is journalism in Serbia. We knew exactly which newspapers are controlled by Beba Popovic, Ceda or Vesic. Today it's all about PR agencies and media advisers who call us all the time. They call me every day from Tadic's office and complain about something. It is no secret that they are pissed of with B92 and G17 Plus because they gave them money and now believe they can do whatever they like.” (Editor, 12 years as a journalist, daily newspaper)

When you report on statements of political parties or politicians, do you check validity of news, information and facts or do you believe that responsibility lies on the person who made the statement?

“I do check, but I think it's their responsibility too.” (Journalist, 12 years experience, private TV station)

“I can't imagine how a journalist can be held accountable for reporting on something some politician said. If he/she had lied, it is not the journalist's fault. Of course, we should not publish statements that incite hatred or lynch. I try to avoid that, but it does happen in the media.” (Journalist, 13 years experience, private TV station)

Do you remember any interview or a statement published in your media outlet which was not justified by public significance or a principle of attractiveness to audience, but fall under disguised propaganda?

“There has been some open propaganda and we were criticized by a press council, the one that works within Media Center, I think. On two occasions we had published open or covert advertisement and paid commercials which were not labelled as such. It's mostly from economic sector. We don't fare well.” (Journalist, working as journalist from 1996, daily newspaper)

“I Even myself wrote an article which I've been ashamed of later. I wrote it unintentionally about Tadic. When I slept over it I was ashamed of writing it. There's a wide-range political propaganda in journalism.” (Journalist, 2 years experience, daily newspaper)

“My paper published an interview with a bank director and I couldn't exactly understand why we published it. I think it was covert propaganda. In other words, that was our advertiser...” (Journalist, 5 years in journalism, weekly newspaper)

“No, but sometimes a company wants some PR material to be published. It seems like a part of our content, but in fact it's a story about their project or something like that...” (Editor, 15 years in journalism, weekly newspaper)

“It happens. I did an interview with someone from the medical field without any particular reason except that he was a friend of the editor. He just wanted his viewpoints to be published.” (Journalist, 10 years experience, weekly magazine)

Why haven't you published the article even though we gave you a present?

Have you ever accepted a gift or a paid tour (lunches, travels, usual marketing accessories of small values, modest gifts)?

“I get small gifts all the time. On several occasions I got a bottle of whiskey, attended lunches and dinners. I've always refused anything bigger than that, and they tried to bribe me a few times to get better coverage. They've offered me a flat, better job, job for my wife, directorial position, but I've always turned them down, although it was sometimes very hard for me to do so.” (Journalist, 14 years experience, weekly magazine)

“No. I have never received anything of substantial value – T-shirts, hats. I know that journalists who report on economy always carry bags with them. I worked on economy for a while, but it hadn't affected my work. Once I attended the opening of a floor panel shop. I don't know why I was sent to do that or why would anyone do it. I thought it must be some advertisement. I wrote an article which was not published. They were calling me for five days to ask me why it hadn't been published even though they gave me a present. I was embarrassed a little, but I couldn't write these were the best floor panels because I didn't even know if they were.” (Journalist, 2 years experience, daily newspaper)

Have you ever published unconfirmed reports, rumours or assumptions and have you labelled them as such?

“Yes, something like “as we have learned from sources close to the government”. I bet that nobody abides by the rule of two independent sources. Everyone wants to publish information as soon as possible and they are all fighting for the audience... The market is hungry, crazed for information, scandals and gossip and journalists deliver it. Journalists are mostly uneducated and don't even know what questions they should ask and how many sources they should use to make a story...” (Editor, 10 years experience, radio)

Have you ever been fed wrong information, especially those concerning someone? Have you ever published a correction or a denial? Have you ever published true facts in some other way?

“Probably, but it has never been proved. I have Beba (former government official) and Ljiljana Nedeljkovic (former adviser to the President of FRY) on mind; they were my picks in political reporting... I haven't even published some lunatic stuff – I just pretended I didn't hear them... The media usually play dumb when it comes to publishing corrections, denials and such.” (Journalist, 10 years of experience, weekly magazine)

“Here we have another problem. We publish information we got officially from the police or courts and then people deny it. I wrote an apology once, although I still believe I was right.” (Journalist, 14 years of experience, weekly magazine)

Insulting each other: 'Your brother is disabled' - 'You've got a fat neck'

Have you ever published articles, reports or other content aimed at someone?”

“No, not here. *Pink TV* attacked Cedomir Cupic who is a great man and his students describe him as totally objective and uncompromised. Their story was really weird. He denied it later, but it was a weak story. *Pink* attacked him because he had said their building should be pulled down and that their parcel of land hadn't been bought properly. I think that *BK TV* has also attacked some people in that way.” (Editor, ten years of experience, radio)

“For example, I remember that the media made a big deal out of the fact that Goran Svilanovic's mother is Albanian. That's maybe true, but so what? Things like that have happened so many times that I can't even come up with another example...” (Journalist, 5 years of experience, weekly newspaper)

“Talking about politicians, they are not affected by anything personally, but politically. I've done a story about Dragan Marsicanin (President of the Parliament) and his mistress. I published her name and the hotel bill. I've found out later that the story caused great problems in his family, that his son, then a teenager, had some psychological crisis, but I don't think of it as a personal attack. He's a politician and he must be aware of the fact that he's going to be a target sooner or later. They are not ordinary people. They are politicians and as such agreed to fight in the political arena. Someone will dig out something about them. Politicians mostly believe that they are attacked personally, not realizing that they are above all politicians and that there's nothing personal about that.” (Journalist, 6 years of experience, daily newspaper)

Do you remember any instances when someone's rights were abused – people who were arrested, prosecuted etc?

“One of my colleagues wrote in the article that the father whose child had drowned was negligent. He came to her office and shouted at her. He sued us – and won.” (Journalist, 14 years of experience, weekly magazine)

“In Serbia it is common to treat suspects as indicted, the indicted as already convicted. The convicted are – paradoxically – protected.” (Editor, 31 year of experience, private TV station)

“It happens every day in the press... I remember a recent when four members of a family have been murdered in Zemun. That was a scandal. On the first day, papers published the information that the father had killed his wife and two children and then committed suicide. On the second day, they ran a story that the wife killed her husband and two children. After that, papers said that the parents in fact killed their children and then each other. Even the police reacted and asked the media not to speculate any more. Nobody paid attention to the fact that these people had families, friends. That's sensationalism. On the other side, publication of the so-called transcripts of Ceda Jovanovic's telephone conversations was done for no other reason than to discredit him.” (Journalist, 3 years of experience, radio)

Do you remember any examples when victims of crimes or accidents were exposed without caution? Do you know of any instances when victims or minors were unnecessarily identified?

“Yes, I remember doctor Stajkovac. The media picked up the story of sexual abuse of a baby. The family should have been protected. That was awful. There were pictures, names... we reported from Stajkovac's press conference...” (Journalist, 2 years of experience, news agency)

“Yes, it happens all the time, but we're doing our best to avoid it... I see it mostly in daily papers. They publish names of people, their pictures. For example, the child who got infected with AIDS in a hospital – journalists photographed him. That's not only unethical, but inhuman. And nobody reacted, not a single journalistic association, all those NGOs fighting for human rights, nobody...” (Editor, 8 years of experience, weekly newspaper)

“They are constantly identified, either their names are published or so many details that everyone can identify them, especially in small towns like Kragujevac. For example that girl who made a porn movie...” (Journalist, 6 years of experience, daily newspaper)

“Legendary *Kurir* has just published children's names after some family tragedy. I still can't understand why.” (Journalist, national radio, 10 years of experience)

“We are very careful about minors, but the police often makes mistakes, such as mentioning the father's name in their statements.” (Journalist, 13 years of experience, radio)

“Those unfortunate parents have denied many times that their son had killed himself because he was a drug addict and allegedly owed some money... As it came out, the kid had nothing to do with that.” (Editor, 12 years of experience, daily newspaper)

Have you ever revealed information about people (addresses, hospitals, medical documentation) gathered during your research?

“Yes. A local politician harassed my godparents. I gave them everything I had on him, his dirty laundry. My godmother went to him, dropped the documentation on his desk and told him: 'If you keep harassing me, it will be published'. I would do it again,

especially for them, although it isn't ethical." (Journalist, 14 years of experience, weekly magazine)

"No, it is all in my archive. Once, UBPOK (Department for Fighting Organized Crime) took my documentation from Nacional and I've never got it back." (Journalist, 6 years of experience, daily newspaper)

Do you know of any cases when someone's physical or mental shortcomings were mentioned?

"Of course, but it's justified by the story. Every single journalist wrote about Slobodan Milosevic's genetic predisposition for suicide. In some cases it is justifiable – if it helps one to defend someone. It is important if a deranged person has a license to carry a firearm, or if mentally ill people perform political duties. One is obliged to publish such things because it's in public interest. If someone is insane, he/she can't be a judge or a chief of general staff, no discussion about that." (Journalist, 14 years of experience, weekly magazine)

"Except that thing when K... has been named a homosexual, I can't think of anything else." (Editor, 31 years of experience, private TV station)

"Yes. Especially if someone has a medical history or there are people who claim so. It happens all the time in other media outlets, especially in their commentaries. There is phenomenon in Serbian journalism, namely Tijanic. His rival Beba is no better. 'Your brother is disabled', 'you've got a fat neck'. Just as this guy Vucicevic (editor of tabloid *Kurir*). Even foul language is used more often than ever. It is possible to avoid this kind of writing and still be able to strongly criticize someone or something." (Editor, 8 years of experience, weekly magazine)

"For example, Dinkic (current minister of finance) in response to Batic's (former minister of justice) accusations said that his grandmother was right when she said that your nose would grow up if you lie. He pointed out Batic's physical shortcoming." (Journalist, 6 years of experience, daily newspaper)

"There's a newspaper called *Scandal* – that's their name?! What should I think when I hear my editor praising the work of such journalists..." (Journalist, 10 years of experience, weekly magazine)

"I remember some claims about someone's mental problems (politician V...) during parliamentary session. We've made up some euphemism for that, just to inform the audience about it." (Journalist, national radio, 10 years of experience)

Do you know of any examples when someone's religious denomination, nationality or sexual orientation has been mentioned while reporting on crime?

"Yes, and it really bothers me. When someone is not Serbian, his nationality is always emphasized – for example, an Albanian or Hungarian has killed a Serb. They always insist on that. His religion and sexual orientation are always accentuated. It happens in all media." (Journalist, two years experience, daily newspaper)

"Of course it is mentioned if the crime was committed because of their nationality, i.e. hatred. If their nationality is relevant for the crime they committed. Roma are often mentioned in this context... For example, if you're reporting on a fight with skinheads, you must mention if you're talking about Roma, because that was the reason for the conflict." (Journalist, 10 years experience, radio)

"I know it happened on BK TV and Studio B when a boy was thrown from a bridge by his friends. They've said that they were Roma, which was irrelevant in my opinion." (Journalist, 3 years experience, private TV station)

“Everybody emphasized the nationality of bullies who violated that poor man with a broomstick. They were Hungarians, and he was Serb, but nobody pointed out the fact that they were all drunkards. What happened later was irrelevant. In my opinion, it has been put into wider political context and misused.” (Journalist, 6 years of experience, daily newspaper)

“It may be important sometimes, as in this case in Vojvodina when several people were convicted. Their nationality was important because it can happen on a much larger scale. That was not just a fight between young people, but an ethnically motivated crime in Vojvodina, which is full of tensions. In other cases, I don't know why it would matter. In my paper we don't pay much attention to that, we usually just copy it from press statements.” (Journalist, national radio, 10 years of experience)

Do you know of any cases when children, minors or mentally disabled persons were used as sources for journalistic investigation?

“Yes, and that was really horrible, when B92 ran a story about a woman who had killed her children, down there in south Serbia, I think. They shouldn't have questioned her like that, that was horrible. It was obvious that she was mentally ill. A completely different problem is that an insane person is free to walk around, so it wasn't just about journalists and the media.” (Journalist, 6 years experience, news agency)

Do you know of any instances when memoirs or narrations of a criminal were cited in your media outlet, and has it been of any use to him? Were there any political implications (were there any politicians or state institutions mentioned)?

“Some of them presented JSO (Special Operations Unit) members as heroes. I remember this captain Dzo from *Kurir*, former Red Beret who talked about the Hague brotherhood, Djindjic, Legija. There's been a real fuss about that in the public...” (Journalist, 8 years of experience, public city TV station)

“Tabloids are full of fairy tales presenting all criminals as angels. I think these media outlets are trying to improve their public image for them. They are doing PR for them.” (Journalist, 12 years of experience, private TV station)

“Not in my office. But criminals became heroes because of such stories. There were instances when Legija (indicted for the assassination of the prime minister) and Ceda (former deputy prime minister) could be found on the same page and in the same level. Criminals are getting as much space as anybody else. One of them has published a book which could be bought together daily newspapers. What else can you do to glorify them? Some media outlets tend to worship criminals.” (Journalist, 3 years of experience, radio)

“Yes: Kristijan Golubovic, Andrija Draskovic, Cume... It may have improved their standing with young people...” (Editor, 12 years of experience, daily newspaper)

“Stories about criminals sell the papers and people read them. If you publish an interview with Kristijan, for example, every kid will buy them and say: 'Look at this!' That's not some kind of editorial policy, that's just the way it is.” (Editor, 15 years of experience, weekly newspaper)

“Some time ago Vanja Bulic had some guests who said – yes, I did it, I stole that, I did some time in prison... that is somehow OK. Now you can make a nice story about someone like C..., he was a criminal, but run for an office anyway! Who is really a criminal here?” (Journalist, national radio, 10 years of experience)

3 Metodology

3.1 *Questionnaire*

A model of comprehensive *face to face* interview has been used, with questions prepared in advance and answers envisaged to be in a free form.

The representative samples were the same in all countries (interviews with 30 journalists in each country). The interviewers were bound by the questions defined in advance, but they should show creativity within a limited space, act with the best of intentions and in an open manner, and be credible at all times. Anonymity of the people interviewed was guaranteed. Questionnaire (with small rhetoric adjustments) were identical in each country, so the answers were comparable, even though National Teams could at their own discretion add some questions or adjust the formulation to suit their own circumstances.

The following set of questions was prepared:

A: Collocutor Profile

Sex

Function (journalist, editor, etc.)

How long have you been working in journalism?

Have you worked in any other branch? If yes, in which one?

Have you ever received any awards or public recognition?

The type of media (evening, daily, weekly, private TV - public, radio, e-publishing, etc.).

Can you live on journalism? Are you financially supported by your family?

Have you got any additional jobs? Is it a job in journalism or in another field?

B: Questions about the Profession

1. Have you held any other position in addition to that of a journalist (in the government or economy, non-governmental or public sectors, election headquarters, etc.)? Have you ever used it as a source of information or for reporting? Do you know of any of such cases (the question is repeated under each number, if logic)?
2. Have you ever had an opportunity to advice or influence in any other way the decision-making with some of the political parties or public institutions in the form of informal consultations, incidental advice, atmosphere creation or in some other way? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?
3. As a reporter or an editor, have you mediated between any political protagonists? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?
4. Do political, economic or some other directives of your editor or owner of your media affect the method you use to treat a topic? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?

5. Has anyone suggested (who) that you do not write (speak) about some issue at some particular moment? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?
6. Do you know of any case that someone outside – from a political party, from the government, from a non-governmental organization or from the business field – intervened with aim to insure that certain information is published or not published or that someone intervened after the text was published, being dissatisfied with it? What was such a reaction like? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?
7. Did you know of any facts during the pre-election campaign but did not report on them? If so, what facts did you know about? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?
8. Did you know of some facts before but used them only during the election campaign? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?
9. What do you do if your political or ideological preferences do not agree with those prevailing in your media ? Do you know of any such cases in your or some other media?
10. Have all the protagonists in your media had the same opportunities to make their viewpoints available to the public? Do you know of any such cases in any other media?
11. Has there been any cases that you, or other journalists, made clear you do not share the opinions expressed in your media?
12. If you convey political party statements or statements by the politicians, do you check the truthfulness of the news, information and facts or do you think the one that issues them is the responsible?
13. Do you remember an interview or a statement published in your media that have not been justified by their public importance and the principle of being interesting, but were in fact a form of hidden advertising? Do you know of any such cases in any other media?
14. Has the owner of your media ever asked you to promote his private economic, political or other interests or to support some of the participants in the election process or in the public life? Can you remember any example? Do you know of any such cases at all?
15. Have you ever written in any commercial supplement, prepared a feature for a leased time slot or taken part in some other form of promotion of private business, governmental or non-governmental activity? Have you been forced to do so? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?
16. Has there always been a visible difference between the editorial contents and an advertisement in your media?

17. Do you know of any case of advertising material being launched in your media in a classic journalistic form? Do you know of any such cases in any other media?
18. Have you ever been engaged in the collection of ads or in their creation, or in some other marketing activities of hidden advertising? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?
19. Have you ever received any present, been to a paid visit (lunches, journeys, usual advertising matter of small value, signs of small appreciation)? Did it affect your reporting? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?
20. Have you ever used the so-called PR material, facts, photographs, etc. in your reporting? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?
21. Have you ever published unconfirmed reports, rumours or assumptions and have you identified them as such? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?
22. Do you remember any statement or an interview where it was obviously clear the quoted one is lying and the collocutor did not confront him/her? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?
23. Have your sources ever given you wrong information, especially the information related to an individual? Did you write any correction or a denial in regard to that, or did you launch the true facts in some other way? Do you know of any such cases in your or any other media?
24. Has there ever been in your media any articles, reports or other stories that affected someone personally? Do you know of any such cases in any other media?
25. Do you know of any example of the use of shameful methods to collect newspaper information (secret filming, a setup, etc.)? Have these information been published? Have they hurt any person?
26. Do you remember any example of infringement of personal rights in case it is written about the imprisoned, persons at court, etc.? Has it happened for the reasons of sensation, for revenge or for some other reason?
27. Do you remember any example of victims of accidents or crimes being exposed to the public without any special protection? Do you know of any cases of unnecessary identification of the victims, underaged, etc.?
28. Have you ever released any data about people (addresses, hospital, medical documentation) collected during the journalistic research? Does your media publish the names of minors involved in crime? Do you know of any such cases in any other media?
29. Do you know of any case of someone's physical or mental disorders being mentioned in the text?

30. Are religious, national, sexual or some other (minority) affiliations mentioned when reporting on crime?
31. Do you know of any case that in some journalistic form children, underaged or week-minded persons were used as the source during journalistic reporting?
32. Have you ever been asked by someone to relieve your journalistic source? Does anyone with your editorial office know of that source?
33. Has your media ever quoted the memoirs or the confession by a criminal? Do you think it improved the picture of him/her? Were there any political implications in that text (mentioning politicians, state institutions, etc.)? Do you know of any such case in any other media?

3.2 Professional foundation - 77 prohibitions

The list of questions has been compiled using the following recommendations from different journalistic ethical and professional codes:

1. The media shall protect the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press and the freedom of access to official documents.
2. Authors, editors and editor in chief are obliged to have respect for truth and observe human rights and principles of timely reporting.
3. The publisher must not hinder their efforts.
4. Authors, editors and editor in chief will not allow any kind of pressure from anyone who may be trying to avert or limit public debate on issues important for community.
5. No one outside the editorial office should be allowed to influence the publication of certain issues.
6. Journalists should be careful and courageous when accusing people in power.
7. Accuracy of news, information and facts must be carefully checked before publication, considering the specific circumstances.
8. Content must not be distorted by editorial modifications, headlines, page set-up or editing.
9. Unconfirmed reports, rumours or assumptions must be labelled as such.
10. Documents must be authentically reproduced.
11. Symbolic meaning of photographs must be clear and obvious.

12. Incorrect information, especially information related to people, should be corrected as soon as possible.
13. In principle, editorial staff will not respect anyone's prohibition or ban on reporting.
14. Coordination between the editorial staff and the police may be tolerated only if it is in public interest (saving lives, protection of victims etc).
15. Commitment to journalistic correctness (especially during electoral campaigns) entails equal opportunity rights and public availability of opinions and positions of political parties and individuals even if editorial staff and journalists don't share these opinions.
16. Information of public importance will be published regardless of politicians' and other participants' interests.
17. The media is obliged to shed critical light on how media themselves fulfil their role.
18. In addition to protecting their company's interests, editors should act as guardians of general social values.
19. Journalists are the authors of signed articles and nobody can force a journalist to sign an article which has been significantly changed by editor's modifications.
20. Author's consent is required for publication in each and every case.
21. The choice of sources quoted by a journalist should be justified by the subject of the article.
22. No one has the right to suggest to a journalist a "black list" of undesirable or preferable interviewees. Restrictions may only apply if the interviewee is in breach of the fundamental moral principles, incites hatred or destruction, humiliates victims, minorities, children etc.
23. Interviews should be authorized. If it is not possible due to the lack of time, it must be unambiguously clear that interviewees agree that the material can be published.
24. The choice of sources must be justified by the public interest, public significance or attractiveness of the subject and must not constitute a form of disguised propaganda.
25. Partial quoting is in the domain of journalistic correctness. Such quotes should not jeopardize legitimate interests of the source and must not be forged or edited. In that case a correction must be published and the editorial desk shall apologize.

26. If an article turns out to be completely incorrect, or if certain facts were inaccurate, the correction must refer to this article, even if the correction has been made in some other way.
27. Comment should be visually and graphically different from traditional journalistic forms such as articles, reports, extended reports or notes.
28. Comments do not represent views of the editorial desk, but of their author.
29. Journalistic sources are protected.
30. In the case that a journalist comes under pressure because of protection of his sources, the editorial desk will give him legal and professional protection.
31. If journalists, editors and others have some other positions (in government, economic sphere or public sector), they have to completely separate these functions and avoid conflict of interest.
32. Journalists must not work for secret services.
33. Interests of private businesses or commercial interests of journalists or third parties must not influence journalists and editors.
34. Publishers and editorial staff must resist any attempt of a third party to exercise an influence over editorial matters.
35. Publishers have no right to use their own media outlets to promote their private economic, political or other interests. They have no right to favour their own opinions or interests in the editorial content.
36. Distinction between editorial content and advertisements must be clear and obvious.
37. Journalists have the right to refuse editor's instructions if they may cause conflict of interest.
38. Journalists are not obliged by anyone's interests, except the public's right to information. Therefore, they should avoid any possibility of conflict of interest, no matter if it is real or perceived as such; they should not engage in activities that might compromise their integrity or credibility.
39. Journalists should restrain from taking additional jobs, avoid political engagement and official positions. They should not work in local organizations if such work can compromise their journalistic integrity; they should expose inevitable conflicts of interest; they should refuse privileged treatment of advertisers and special interests and fight off their pressure and attempts to influence reporting; they should be very careful with sources which offer information in exchange for favours or money; they should avoid paying for news.
40. Research and reporting must not depend on taking or giving such gifts.

41. Journalists must clearly state – when necessary – that small gifts can not influence their reporting. They should refuse gifts, payments, free tours or any kind of special treatment. Gifts and paid tours (lunches, travels etc) are not welcome.
42. Gifts exceeding the usual level of social communication necessary for professional work will be sanctioned. Promotional gifts of small value will not be sanctioned if they in service of enhanced communication and do not affect reporting.
43. Journalists, editors and other creative staff participating in creation of media content must not be engaged in collection of advertisements and their creation as well as any marketing action or hidden advertising.
44. Journalistic articles mentioning companies, their products or activities must not cross the line between journalistic content and advertising.
45. Advertising should never be accompanied by favours pertaining to comments, editorials or reporting. PR material, facts and photographs shall be used with extreme caution.
46. Immoral methods of research will not be used, especially in cases when individuals may be affected by such reporting.
47. If an article, report or some other content affects an individual, he/she will be allowed to examine the facts which were used for the story.
48. Everyone has the right to respond.
49. Children, minors or mentally ill persons must not be abused as sources during research. They must not be identified in published articles.
50. Journalists should be very careful when giving away information about underage suspects or underage victims of sexual abuse.
51. Names of minors involved in criminal activities will not be published.
52. Criminals' memoirs are not acceptable, especially if they violate the integrity of victims or if the description of criminal acts is sensationalist.
53. Public's right to information must always be considered in comparison with the individual rights, especially when reporting on detainees, defendants etc.
54. When reporting on crimes, trials etc. the principle of presumption of innocence must be observed.
55. Need for sensation must not be considered to be in public interest.

56. When doing journalistic research journalist must be aware of the fact that people in grief or shock are more vulnerable than the others.
57. Journalists who respect professional ethics treat their sources, people who are mentioned in their reports and their own colleagues as human beings worthy of respect and so should demonstrate compassion with the people who might be affected by the subject of their reports; they should treat children, inexperienced sources and people who are mentioned in reports with great care; they should demonstrate compassion when asking for interviews or photographs of victims of tragedies of people in grief; they should be aware of the fact that gathering of information and reporting may hurt people or put them in embarrassing situation.
58. Search for news is not a license for arrogance; journalists must be aware that private individuals have more right to keep information about themselves private than politicians and others who are trying to gain power and influence and attract attention.
59. Only information of great public importance can justify violation of someone's privacy; journalists should keep their actions within the boundaries of good taste and should not succumb to morbid curiosity.
60. Victims of crime or accidents have a right to be protected; identification of victims is not always necessary for the understanding of the crime.
61. Journalists should act reasonably when identifying suspects before they are charged; journalists should find a balance between the right of suspects to have a fair trial and the public's right to information.
62. Identification (publication of names or photographs) of people who are not connected with crime and who have been involved by accident is not allowed.
63. Identity of suspects will not be published if that is in interest of fight against crime.
64. If government officials and elected representatives are connected with crime, their names and photographs can be published.
65. The same rule applies on public persons if their connection with crime contradicts their public image.
66. Information about people (addresses, hospitals, medical documentation) collected during journalistic research must be carefully protected.
67. This kind of information can not be used in any department outside the editorial office (marketing, advertising, commercial department).
68. Personal information collected during journalistic research (names, addresses) is editorial secret. Publishers and other parties have no right to ask journalists to reveal this information.

69. Physical or mental disorders will be treated as personal matters.
70. Reporting on suicides (identification of a person, circumstances etc) will not be tolerated.
71. Exceptions may be justified only by a very strong public interest.
72. Reporting on crime shall never include mentioning of religious denomination, nationality or any other minority affiliation.
73. Reporting (especially on judicial proceedings) must be free of prejudice and preconceptions.
74. Presumption of innocence must be observed.
75. Reporting on medicine (drugs, inventions) must not give false hope to readers/listeners/viewers.
76. If it turns out that information has been collected or that articles were created or published in violation of aforementioned principles, readers must be informed.
77. Classified information will not be published and will be carefully secured. It will be published only after careful consideration and if strongly demanded by a public interest. Information (photographs etc) collected in dishonorable and unacceptable way will be destroyed.