

BUILDING A SAFETY NET FOR EUROPEAN JOURNALISTS

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The present report is published within the EU-funded project "Safety Net for European Journalists", with which a European transnational partnership coordinated by the Italian think tank Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC) has dedicated the year 2014 to studying the state of press freedom in Italy, South-East Europe and Turkey.

Among the many actions, partners fostered knowledge-sharing within a very fragmented media freedom community; monitored, documented and informed on violations of press freedom in 11 European countries; crowd-sourced and mapped online hundreds of media freedom violations across Europe; offered concrete support to threatened reporters and media professionals; and raised public awareness on a problem that is shared from east to west.

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About this Report

This report constitutes part of the project “Safety Net for European Journalists. A Transnational Support Network for Media Freedom in Italy and South-East Europe”, led by Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (OBC), in cooperation with the South-East Europe Media Organisation - International Press Institute, Ossigeno per l'Informazione and Eugenia Siapera, Dublin City University.

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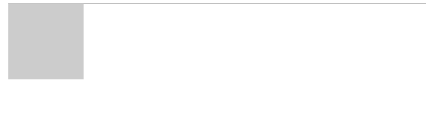


Executive Summary

This report is part of the broader project Safety Net for European Journalists. The project is concerned with identifying the problems faced by journalists in eleven countries including South-East Europe, Italy and Turkey, and is especially focusing on safety issues and impediments to media professionals. The countries in our sample include Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey. The report is based on a series of in-depth interviews in the spring-summer of 2014, with broadcast, print and online journalists, including freelancers, those working in the private sector and in the public service media; small media owners/publishers, editors and union representatives, while we also strove for gender balance. Most of the media professionals interviewed had experienced threats and other obstacles to practising journalism. The objective of this report is to identify the needs of journalists and to suggest possible remedial measures. We hope that this report will form the beginning of a broader public discussion on the state of journalism in South-East Europe and Italy, as any hope to improve the situation of journalists in these countries must also seek to form alliances with the public and the society that journalism is ultimately serving.

The Introduction grounds the report in terms of the Safety Net for European Journalists, the broader project of which it forms part, and explains the sample and the methodology used.

Part I presents a brief summary of the media landscape of each of the countries involved. Part II focuses on the problems and threats from the perspective of the journalists themselves. It reports and analyses the kinds of threats encountered, the sources of the threats and the structural parameters surrounding them. In short, the report found that journalists are subjected to a number of threats, some of them direct, for example, through beatings and detentions but most of them indirect. The broader environment within which journalism takes place is described by a number of journalists as toxic. Some of the problems are already known; for example, the vulnerability of journalists to political pressures; threats from criminal organisations; and the creation of media oligopolies. However, we have also found here an increasingly dominant trend for a relatively new class of media owners, whose main business interests are elsewhere, and who form alliances with politicians, using the media as political and business leverage. This 'non-native' class of media owners is oblivious to journalistic ethics and exerts direct influence upon editorial lines.



Part III focuses on safety needs as articulated by journalists. These are divided into immediate, pressing needs, such as the need for physical safety and the management of the threat, psychological support and solidarity, legal help, and longer term needs, which address the environment within which journalists and other media professionals operate. These include legal and regulatory adjustments, a renewal of the code of ethics, educating the public on the importance of journalism, and addressing journalists' working conditions.


The report concludes with a series of policy recommendations that it is hoped will kick-start a broader debate on the need to safeguard journalism for healthy societies and democracies.



Introduction

The atrocity at Charlie Hebdo in January 2015 highlighted in the most terrible manner that journalism can be a dangerous profession. The unequivocal condemnation of the murders shows that most people are aware of the significance of freedom of information and freedom of speech for democratic societies. However, while thankfully this kind of atrocity is still quite rare, there is, in at least a certain part of Europe, an ongoing war of attrition against journalism, that ends up all but compromising media freedom. Specifically, at a time of an unprecedented circulation of information through a variety of media, it may appear that media and journalistic freedom are guaranteed. After all, anyone can publish at any time whatever they want on the web. However, in this study we report that contrary to expectations, the opportunity to publish is not related to journalistic freedom, which is under threat. Moreover, the old certainties, where they existed, including unions, steady employment and income through advertising and subscriptions, legal and regulatory mechanisms ensuring editorial independence, strong professional norms and ethics, are either gone or seriously weakened, removing the safety net that protected journalists and allowed them to practice their profession freely. What is necessary now in order to create a new safety net? What works, what doesn't and what do journalists themselves think about threats, violations and their own safety? This report seeks to address these questions, relying on a series of qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists who were themselves victims of threats or violations.

The report itself is part of a broader project, Safety Net for European Journalists, which seeks to monitor, record, and report on violations of media freedom and of the safety of journalists in Italy and South-East Europe, including Turkey. The specific objective of the report is to record and provide in depth information on the safety needs of journalists in this region. The design of the study is based on getting in depth information by journalists, based on personal experiences and/or knowledge and inside information obtained on the basis of their position. Specifically, while there are broad indications and occasional reports of infringements of journalistic/media freedom and the personal safety of journalists, these tend to be sporadic and lacking in detail. While monitoring organisations, where they exist, do a good job in recording and listing violations, more in depth and nuanced information coming from journalists may offer better insights of the kinds, impacts and resolutions of such incidents. Furthermore, such in depth information enables a better understanding of the kinds of situations that leave journalists more vulnerable to vi-



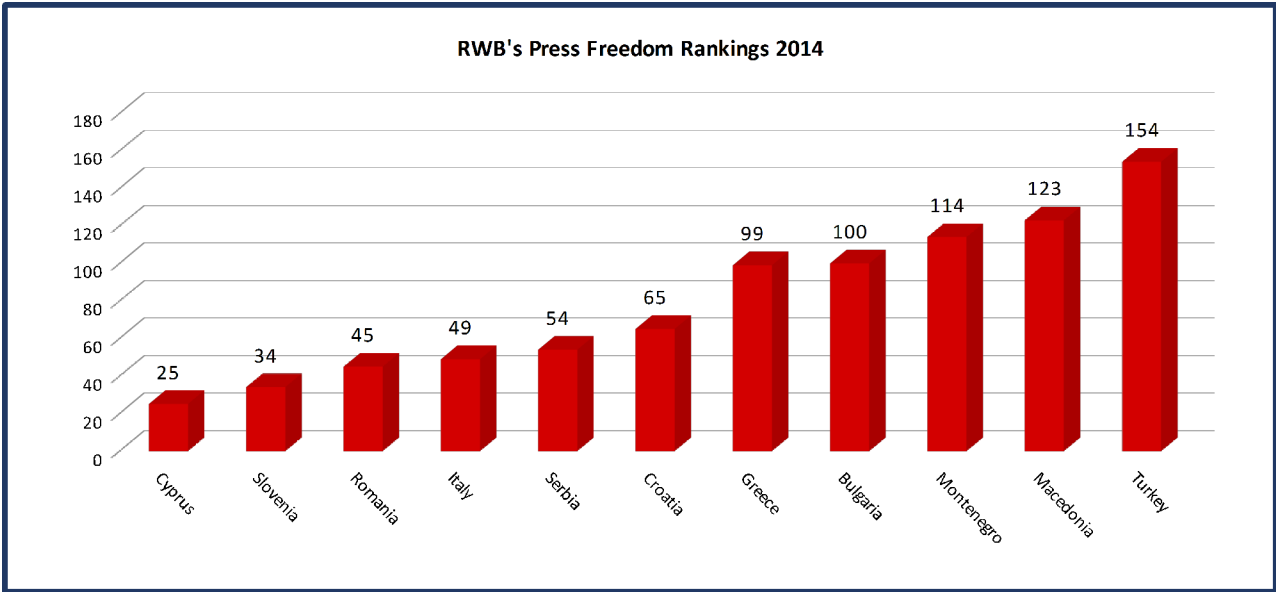
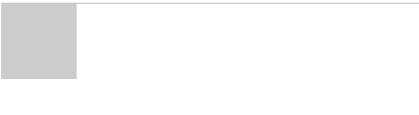
olations thereby allowing for more appropriate remedial measures. Finally, what is lacking in discussions of violations and obstacle to media freedom and journalistic safety is journalists' own interpretation and assessment of their safety needs. This study seeks to address this via in-depth, qualitative interviews with ten journalists from each of the following countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey. The sample includes seven EU member states and the four candidate countries of South-East Europe¹. The sample includes several countries with remarkable weaknesses in term of media freedom and journalist protection in the EU. As emerged in the contribution of the Association of European Journalists to the HLG report: 'The state of media freedom inside the EU is less healthy and more dangerous to democratic processes than has been yet recognized by the HLG, by the Commission or member state governments'².

The level of media freedom in the 11 countries in the sample varies significantly, with Cyprus and Slovenia faring best in Reporters Without Borders' (RWB) latest Press Freedom Index, at the 25th and 34th position, respectively, among 179 countries surveyed. At the other end are Montenegro (114th), Macedonia (123th) and Turkey (154th). According to RWB's annual rankings, media freedom in these three nations, as well as in Bulgaria and Greece, has been deteriorating steadily for several years. The same trend was observed in Italy in RWB's annual indexes in 2007 through 2012, before the country moved up in the global table in 2014. Cyprus and Slovenia are also the only ones in the project's 11 countries that were rated as 'Free' in Freedom House's Freedom of the Press 2014 report, while all others remain, or have returned in recent years, to the group of 'Partly Free' countries³. It is important therefore to conduct in depth research in these countries in order to find out in more detail what exactly is happening in terms of media freedom and the safety of journalists. Table 1 offers a snapshot of the ranking of these countries in the RWB's 2014 report, while Table 2 traces the rankings of these countries in the last four years. Table 3 presents the Freedom House rankings.

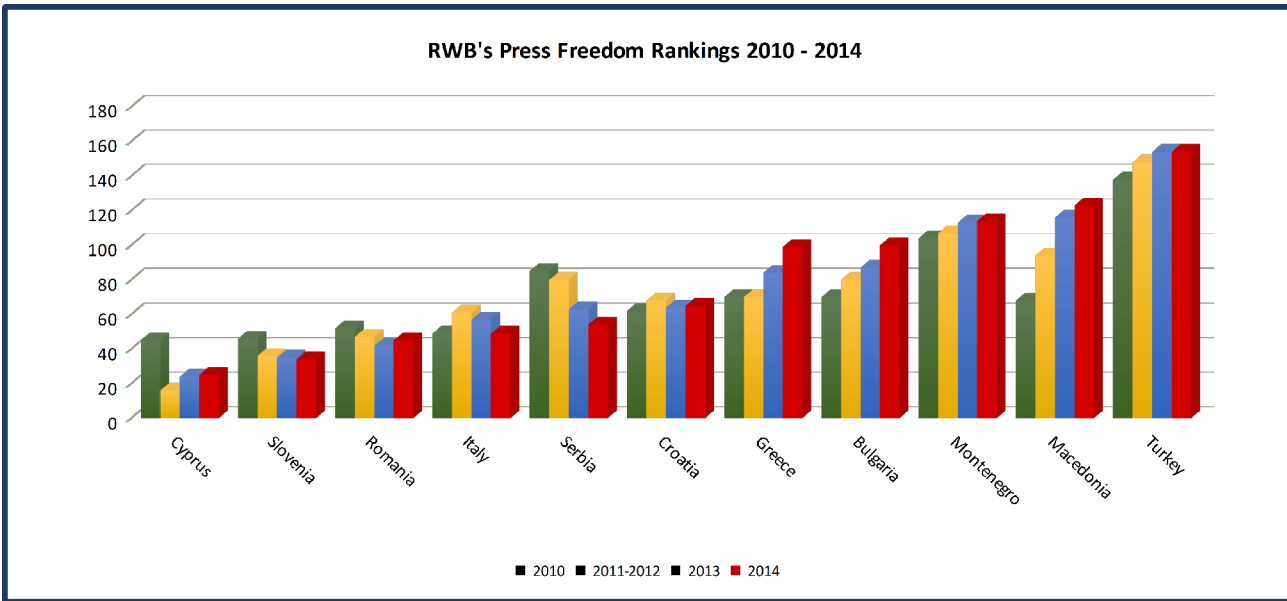
1 Albania had not yet obtained the candidate status at the time this research started

2 The full document is found here: <http://bit.ly/1J3oQEA>

3 See the full report for more details: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2014#.VL_ZZEeG8lk



*Table 1 Rank of sample countries in RWB's Press Freedom Index 2014⁴.
Table prepared by Svetla Dimitrova.*



*Table 2 Rank of sample countries in RWB's Press Freedom Index 2010-2014.
Table prepared by Svetla Dimitrova.*

4 See the full report here: <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-eu.php>

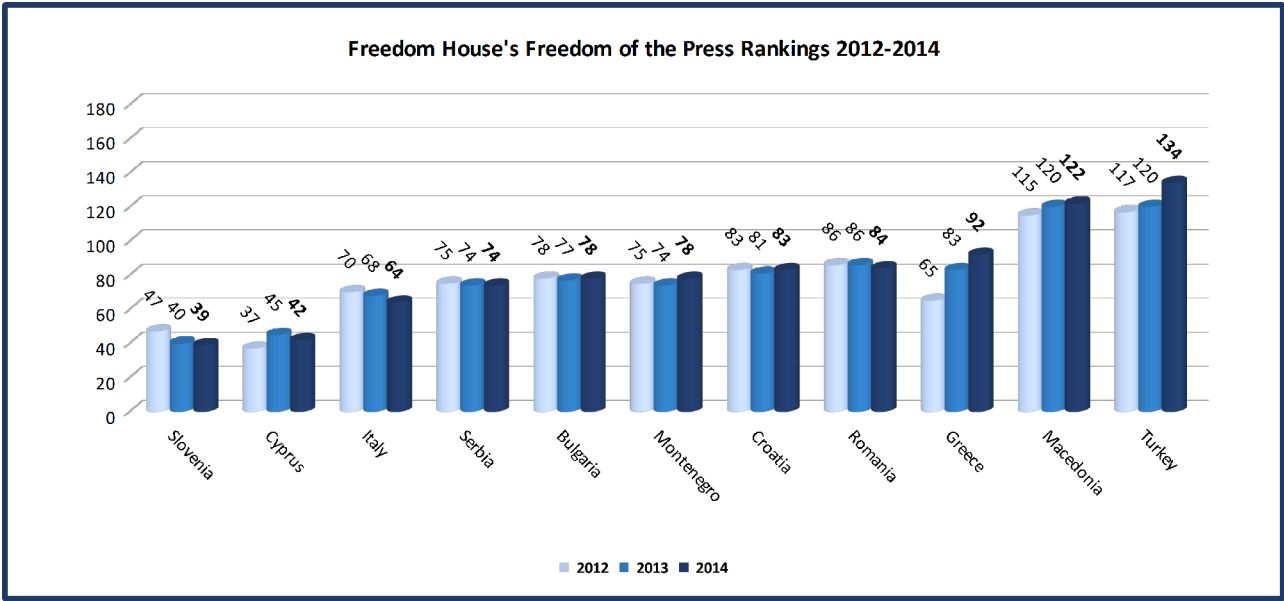



Table 3 Freedom House rankings 2012-2014. Table prepared by Svetla Dimitrova.



The interview sample was planned with the idea of getting as varied experiences as possible. The interviewees therefore included: small media owners, editors, freelancers, journalists employed in private media, journalists employed in public service media, and union representatives. Two elements that were addressed concerned firstly, the different experiences of journalists in different employment statuses and situations, and secondly, the different experiences of journalists of different genders and career stages. The main consideration was to find out if journalists employed by different kinds of media, public service or private, broadcast online or print have different experiences and consequently different safety needs. Similarly, whether women or men, inexperienced or experienced, full time employed or freelance journalists have different experiences of violations and hence different safety needs. In total, we conducted 110 interviews, 10 from each country in the sample, always striving for a gender balance. The interviews were in-depth discussions based on a series of themes. These included a biographical sketch, and some context, their specific experiences with threats, violations and obstacles, their views on the causes of this, their specific needs and more broadly their proposed solutions for safety in journalism. All interviews took place in spring/summer 2014.

An important element in the study was the protection of the journalists interviewed. Most of them spoke on the condition that they would remain anonymous. Some had repeated experiences of threats and other violations and did not want to become further exposed. In other instances, the situation had reached some kind of resolution and journalists did not want to stoke it up. In yet other cases, journalists wanted to offer more controversial information that may expose them to further threats. Finally, some said that they would speak more freely if they remained anonymous. Whatever their motives, this report respects their wishes and does not include their names. The report will therefore refer to position and country of origin, when this is not clearly identifying a journalist, and will only use names when the journalists involved requested publicity.

The structure of this report is based on the idea that to understand the safety needs of journalists we need to begin with the sources of violations and threats as well as with the mechanisms used and the specific form taken by these threats. The first part of the report is therefore concerned with showing the broader picture and context within which violations and threats occur. Who are those who pose the most important threats to the safety of journalists? This is the first question to be addressed in this report. The solutions and remedial measures proposed by journalists will be integrated here to show the ways in which journalists themselves understand the situation. This will be followed by a discussion of the mechanisms used and forms taken by the threats and violations. A discussion of the structural di-



mension, or the conditions of possibility for the threats, will conclude this part. Part II focuses on the safety needs of journalists in more detail, showing some of the problems of existing safety provisions, and discusses safety needs in terms of immediate and pressing needs, and longer term structural changes.



PART I - COUNTRY THUMBNAI LS

While the countries in our sample share important commonalities, as Parts II and III of this report will show, it is important to highlight the specific country context. These brief sketches offer a picture of the local media landscape and its specificities.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria's very low rank in the RWB's index is an indicator that something is seriously wrong with Bulgarian media and journalism. The Media Sustainability Report by IREX⁵ in 2014 gives Bulgarian media another low score, 1.89 out of 5. Bulgaria has been hit hard by the economic crisis and this shows in its media. A series of protests in 2013 and in early 2014 showed deepening dissatisfaction towards the political and media establishment. In the summer of 2013, people protested against the appointment of Delyan Peevski, a media mogul, as head of the State Agency for National Security. While he resigned, he still has political office as an MP.

As the IREX report points out⁶, the main problems for the Bulgarian media system include a lack of transparency in media ownership and the large concentration of media in the hand of a few media conglomerates. These tend to "promote the government agenda in exchange for legislative and financial support from the state." (IREX, 2014a). Additionally, professional standards and trust in the media as a whole are very low. The Eurobarometer (2012)⁷ report shows that 29% of Bulgarian citizens tend not to trust television, and there is even less trust in print media, with 46% tending not to trust them.

There have been some high profile attacks on journalists in Bulgaria, most notably against Genka Shikerova, an investigative journalist for *bTV*, whose car was set on fire in 2013, while there was another arson attack against her company car in April 2014.

5 This Index is based on five parameters: freedom of speech, professional journalism, plurality of news, business management, and supporting institutions. For more information on the methodology applied see <http://www.irex.org/resource/media-sustainability-index-msi-methodology>

6 IREX (2014a), Europe & Eurasia. Media Sustainability Index 2014: Bulgaria, available at: http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2014_Bulgaria.pdf

7 Eurobarometer, 2012, Media Use in the European Union, No. 78, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf

Croatia

Croatia became the newest member of the EU in 2013. Croatia's accession required the adoption of a clear legislative framework vis-a-vis the media, which brought in on a par with other EU members. However, as Popović (2014) points out⁸ this legislation lacks implementation at all levels.

The Media Sustainability Report of 2014⁹ gives Croatia a reasonable score of 2.42, at the 'near sustainability' level, which requires an overall score of 3 and above. As the report points out the Croatian media system is facing important challenges. Croatia is going through its fifth year of recession, and income from advertising and circulation is still declining, pushing down wages and leading to a number of lay-offs. This contributes to weakening of professional standards. According to the 2012 Eurobarometer, a massive 67% of Croatian citizens tend not to trust the press, while 57% tend not to trust television.

According to the South-East Europe Media Observatory report 'Media Integrity Matters' report on Croatia (Popović, 2014), the main problems for Croatian journalism include the domination of economic/commercial interests often in conjunction with petty political interests. This is to a degree counter-balanced by the public service broadcaster, however, according to the Reporters Without Borders 2014 Press Freedom report¹⁰, "the state radio and TV broadcaster HRT has been criticised for a lack of independence after reforms carried out under centre-left Prime Minister Zoran Milanović. The head of HRT, the members of its supervisory board and its administrators are now appointed by parliament. This gives the ruling party political control over broadcast content" (p. 26). At the same time, commercial media are subjected to brutal cost-cutting practices that have left a number of journalists in a precarious position. As Popović put it (2014: 223) 'the public role of media cannot be fulfilled if the media content is treated as a commodity and journalists as producers of commodities ready for an exchange on the market'.


Cyprus

Cyprus's Press Freedom rank is 25, on a par with Northern European countries. This accurately reflects Cyprus's good record of media and press freedom. Cyprus

8 Popović H., 2014, Country Report: Croatia, in South-East Europe Media Observatory report (2014), Media Integrity Matters, available at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/radar/media-integrity-matters-%E2%80%93-new-book-see-media-observatory>

9 IREX (2014b), Europe & Eurasia. Media Sustainability Index 2014: Croatia, available at: http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2014_Croatia.pdf

10 RWB, 2014, World Press Freedom Index, available at: <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-eu.php>



is faring relatively well in terms of trust and credibility, with 49% not trusting the press and 47% not trusting television.

On the other hand, the media market in Cyprus has experienced a massive decline, as newspapers lost 40% of their circulation between 2009 to 2013 and an additional 12% until mid-2014, while magazines lost a massive 74% in the same period (Miloni et al., forthcoming)¹¹. The Cypriot media market is small and competition is intense, while as Milioni et al. point out the role of the state is still important, with most media outlets refraining from criticising state policies. Caught between commercial and state interests, journalistic autonomy in Cyprus is compromised (Miloni et al., forthcoming).

As Cyprus becomes more and more embroiled in the financial crisis it is likely that the situation will deteriorate further. precariousness and very low wages are already a characteristic of media work in Cyprus and it is likely that the worst is yet to come.

Greece


Greece is in the throes of a deep and intense economic, political and cultural crisis, which has left nothing intact, and which has hit the media especially hard. The most astonishing fact about Greece's media landscape has to be its dramatic fall in the world Press Freedom Index: according to the report, Greece has fallen by 50 places in the last five years.

Clientelism, concentration of media ownership, and intense competition over diminishing advertising revenues are some of the characteristic of the current media landscape, representing a continuation and an intensification of trends that have been already there (see Papathanassopoulos, 2001)¹². Historic newspaper titles, such as *Eleutherotypia* have closed, while unemployment among journalists is over 30% (Siapera et al., 2014)¹³. One of the most dramatic moments in the Greek media history was the overnight closure of the public service broadcaster *ERT*, ostensibly as part of reforms and cost-cutting measures. Media concentration is acute, despite relevant legislation, and most media are controlled by a handful of very powerful media owners. Credibility and trust in the media are at an all-time low, with the Eurobarometer showing that 85% of Greeks do not trust television news and

11 Milioni, D., Spyridou, L. & Koumis, . (forthcoming), Cyprus: Behind Closed (journalistic) Doors. In Susanne Fengler, Tobias Eberwein & Matthias Karmasin (eds). *European Handbook of Media Accountability*, Ashgate Publishing.

12 Papathanassopoulos, S. (2001). Media commercialization and journalism in Greece. *European Journal of Communication*, 16(4), 505-521.

13 Siapera, E., Papadopoulou, L., & Archontakis, F. (2014). Post-Crisis Journalism: Critique and renewal in Greek journalism. *Journalism Studies*, (ahead-of-print), 1-17.



77% do not trust the press¹⁴. As a result, journalists often find themselves at the receiving end of attacks, physical, verbal and symbolic by everyone: they are under pressure by political interests, they are often assaulted by the police in demonstrations¹⁵, while they are also attacked by the public who perceive them as corrupt.

Italy

A consolidated democracy and founding member of the European Union, Italy has a long tradition in matters of freedom of speech. In terms of trust Italy is close to the EU average, as 54% of Italians do not trust television and another 54% do not trust the press (Eurobarometer, 2012).

Nevertheless, several indicators point to a media system in trouble. Its World Media Freedom rank is 49% - 'partly free' - reflecting continuing issues with the media environment and legislative framework. In a 2012 report, Ossigeno per l'Informazione¹⁶ explains that the problems of media freedom in Italy can be accounted for in terms of three main factors: (1) the media landscape is characterised by a concentration of media and advertising ownership while the media are not sufficiently separated from politics and government, as shown by the example of Silvio Berlusconi. (2) the legislation regulating the press needs updating, but there is tendency to regulate against rather than in favour of media freedom. (3) there is a high number of journalists under threat or under police protection while such threats tend to occur with relative impunity. As Ossigeno per l'Informazione remarks, "In Italy, freedom of the press and freedom of expression are weak because the law allows censorship easily, cases of intimidation are difficult to punish, libel lawsuits are threatened to intimidate journalists, and defamation in the press is a crime punishable by imprisonment".


Macedonia

The problems of media freedom in Macedonia are manifold. The country ranks low in most indices: its rank is 123 in the RWB index, and its media sustainability score is 1.40. While Macedonia has attempted to introduce reforms in order to guarantee media freedom, it has failed to consistently and rigorously implement these. The recent study by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom on

14 Eurobarometer, 2012, Media Use in the European Union, No. 78, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf

15 The most recent attack was as recently as December 2014, as recorded by the Media Freedom Ushahidi Platform, <http://mediafreedom.ushahidi.com/reports/view/598>

16 Ossigeno per l' Informazione, 2012, Why in Italy Press is Partly Free and There are too Many Threats, 27/10, available at: <http://notiziario.ossigeno.info/2012/10/why-in-italy-press-is-partly-free-and-there-are-too-many-threats-15092/>



Freedom of the Media in the Western Balkans (2014)¹⁷ reports that freedom of speech and free access to information, as well as an explicit ban on censorship are enshrined in the Macedonian constitution. Additionally, the constitution protects the rights of ethnic minorities to freely express themselves and publish. However, the day-to-day reality of the media and journalism are far from ideal. In terms of credibility and trust, 55% of Macedonians tend not to trust the press and 49% tend not to trust television (Eurobarometer, 2012).

Both the CMPF report and the Media Integrity Matters country report on Macedonia highlight important and serious problems. Trpevska and Micevski (2014)¹⁸, based on the Hallin and Mancini (2011)¹⁹ media system model, characterise the Macedonian media system as Polarized Hegemonic Pluralism, and argue that this includes a legal framework that has been poorly implemented; an ownership structure that has seen the rise of media moguls who switch political alliances as it suits them; a corrupt or at least non-transparent means of financing, which includes public funding; and a clientelistic culture that marginalizes critical and independent journalism.

In recent years, the media landscape of Macedonia has seen a deterioration, with journalists prosecuted and imprisoned. Such is the deterioration that the media sustainability panelists who report for IREX (2014c)²⁰ requested that they remain anonymous, because of the abuse they received for commenting on the state of media freedom in Macedonia. The most widely known case is that of journalist Tomislav Kezarovski who was sentenced to four and a half years in prison in October 2013 for revealing the name of a protected witness in a murder case, although later this was changed to house arrest under international pressure. In another incident reported by RWB, the investigative journalist Zoran Bozinovski, was arrested in Serbia on an Interpol warrant for spying.

Montenegro


As with Macedonia, the formal regulatory and legal framework for the media is well structured, and the level of media protection quite high (CMPF, 2014). However, as the report indicates, the proper implementation of this framework is ques-

17 CMPF, 2014, Freedom of the Media in the Western Balkans, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EXPO_STU%282014%29534982

18 Trpevska S., and Micevski, I. (2014), Macedonia, in SEEMO (2014) Media Integrity Matters, available at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/sites/default/files/macedonia.pdf>

19 Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (Eds.). (2011). Comparing media systems beyond the Western world. Cambridge University Press.

20 IREX (2014c), Europe & Eurasia. Media Sustainability Index 2014: Macedonia, available at: http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2014_Macedonia.pdf



tionable. Additionally, other factors add up to the problems of journalism and media freedom in Montenegro, resulting in a low rank in the RWB report (114) and a low media sustainability score (2.06). According to the Eurobarometer (2012), about 40% of Montenegrin citizens tend not to trust television and 41% tend not to trust the press.

The problems of the Montenegrin media landscape are similar to those in its neighbouring countries, including non-transparent media ownership, an unequal distribution of state advertising income, and intense competition in a small media market. Both the CMPF and the IREX (2014c)²¹ reports describe important problems of the financial viability of the media in Montenegro, and as a result of this economic pressure, critical and independent journalism suffers.

Moreover, the safety of journalists in Montenegro is severely compromised as shown by a wave of attacks in 2013 and the impunity with which they were undertaken. These attacks included the detonation of an explosive device by the window of the *Vijesti* editor-in-chief in Podgorica in December 2013, an attack against the *Vijesti* newsroom in November 2013, and an explosion at the home of a *Vijesti* journalist in August 2013 (IREX, 2014d). None of the perpetrators of these attacks has been caught or charged.


Romania

The media freedom and sustainability indicators for Romania are not bad, as its rank is 45 in the RWB World Media Freedom index, and its media sustainability index is 2.20. 44% of Romanians tend not to trust the television and 52% tend not to trust the press (Eurobarometer, 2012). The main structuring factor for the media landscape in Romania is the economic crisis, which hit the sector hard. Circulations are in free fall: IREX (2014e)²² reports a fall of 17% in circulation in 2013 alone, while several media outlets are declaring bankruptcy. The increasing economic dependence of the media on shrinking advertising income compromises their independence.

IREX (2014e) reports that the most significant media case in 2013 has been the (non) coverage of the controversial Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMCG), a Canadian company exploring mineral resources in central Transylvania. Seen as an environmental disaster, the plans of the mining company were the subject of a num-

21 IREX (2014d), Europe & Eurasia. Media Sustainability Index 2014: Montenegro, available at: http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2014_Montenegro.pdf

22 IREX (2014e), Europe & Eurasia. Media Sustainability Index 2014: Romania, available at: http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2014_Romania.pdf



ber of protests across Romania. The company then used advertising in the media as a means to appease the protesters. However, the dependence of the media on this income compromised their ability to report on the protests and the plans in an independent manner. According to IREX, the case eroded public trust in the media and exposed the difficulties and challenges in maintaining a sustainable but independent media.

Serbia

Serbia's RWB rank is 54, so it is higher than Bulgaria, Croatia, and Greece, but its sustainability score is down to 1.90 indicating problems with professionalism, independence and the media economy. 58% of Serbs tend not to trust the press, and 55% tend not to trust the television. According to IREX (2014f)²³ there are 1300 media outlets seeking to survive in a small and crowded market, and in the middle of a deepening economic crisis. To survive, they often resort to sensationalism and tabloidisation, bring down professionalism and journalistic standards.

The Media Integrity Matters report on Serbia (Matić and Valić Nedeljković, 2014)²⁴ refers to several factors contributing to the current problems of the media in Serbia. These include: 'an incomplete, inconsistent and outdated' media legislation (ibid.: 328); the lack of transparency of media ownership and the associated lack of protection against monopolies; intense competition between media which compromises their profitability; and journalists' freedoms and professional rights are often restricted. Four journalists have had a 24-hour police protection for years. As the authors put it: 'News content, in-depth and investigative reporting, diversity of opinion, coverage of controversial topics and respect for ethical standards have all been on the decline'. (Matić and Valić Nedeljković, 2014: 328).


Slovenia

Slovenia's media system is doing relatively well. In terms of media freedom RWB ranks it 34th, Freedom House classifies it as free, with overall positive scores²⁵, while its legal and regulatory framework protect and safeguard freedom of expression and speech. However, media regulation and media ownership issues still per-

23 IREX (2014f), Europe & Eurasia. Media Sustainability Index 2014: Serbia, available at: http://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2014_Serbia.pdf

24 Matić J., and Valić Nedeljković D., (2014), Serbia, in SEEMO (2014) Media Integrity Matters, available at: <http://mediaobservatory.net/sites/default/files/serbia.pdf>

25 Freedom House (2014) Freedom of the Press Country Reports: Slovenia, available at: <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2014/slovenia#.VLfe8nsRIAM>



sist. As Kuhar and Ramet (2012)²⁶ report, a referendum in 2010 to offer more autonomy to Radio-Television Slovenia was defeated. Hrvatin (2013) understands these problems as the result of the relentless pursuit of neoliberal media policies against any kind of regulation that could ensure media autonomy and independence.

A recent study into the news media coverage of the economic crisis in Slovenia indicates that journalism has failed in its role of fostering an inclusive debate and in presenting all the alternatives (Vobic et al., 2014)²⁷ pointing to the erosion of professional and ethical standards.

In terms of safety, attacks are unusual, but there were two important incidents in 2013 when hackers launched a distributed denial-of-service (DDOS) attack against a number of Slovenian news websites and vandals set fire to the vehicle of Miran Šubič, a reporter for the daily *Dnevnik*. However, in 2014, a serious and ongoing case of prosecuting a journalist emerged, when Anuška Delić was indicted with publishing classified information on the basis of a charge by the Slovene Intelligence Service (Economist, 2014²⁸). At the time of writing (January 2015) the case had not been resolved, but three court dates were set for 28 January, 11 and 25 February²⁹. Anuška Delić has been interviewed by the Safety Net project and her remarks are incorporated in the following parts of the report.

26 Kuhar, R., & Ramet, S. P. (2012). Ownership and Political Influence in the Post-socialist Mediascape: the Case of Slovenia. *Südosteuropa. Zeitschrift für Politik und Gesellschaft*, (01), 2-30.

27 Vobič, I., Brlek, A. S. S., Mance, B., & Prodnik, J. A. (2014). Changing Faces of Slovenia: Political, Socio-Economic and News Media Aspects of the Crisis. *Javnost-The Public*, 21(4), 77-97.

28 The Economist (2014) Slovenia, Worries about Freedom of the Press, 1 april, available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2014/04/slovenia>

29 Email sent by Delić to Marzia Bona.

Turkey

The media situation in Turkey continues to be critical. A recent report from the Freedom House (Corke et al., 2014³⁰) has classified it as a non-free media environment, while its RWB rank is 154, the lowest in our sample. The media problems in Turkey are manifold. Freedom House lists five ways of controlling the media in Turkey, including: direct intimidation, for example when the Turkish President Recep Erdoğan criticises journalists by name; mass firings, for example, 59 journalists were fired following their coverage of the Gezi park protests; buying off or forcing out media moguls (who are critical of the government); wire-tapping of journalists' phones by the National Security Organisation; and imprisonment. In a recent development, which shows the deteriorating conditions for media freedom in Turkey, in December 2014, about 31 media professionals, journalists, editors, and media producers were arrested in early morning raids (Zaman, 2014³¹). The charges included conspiracy to run a criminal and terrorist organisation, and the detainees were arrested on suspicion of being affiliated with the Hizmet movement, led by the US-based cleric and critic of Erdoğan, Fethullah Gülen. The movement is controversial and there is an ongoing power struggle between the government and the movement³². According to one of our anonymous interviewees from Turkey, these accusations are used as amenas for slandering and discrediting journalists, by implying that they were part of an organisation known to be against the ruling AK party. This was a major setback and in contrast to the promises and undertakings to address media freedom worries, when Erdoğan and PM Ahmet Davutoğlu as well as Justice Minister Bekir Bozdağ met a delegation from the Committee to Protect Journalists³³. In a further development a Dutch journalist was detained and interrogated by the police. Frederike Geerdink, who writes on Kurdish matters, was detained and then released in Turkey on January 6th, 2015, after several police officers raided her home in Diyarbakır. Geerdink tweeted that she was being charged with writing 'propaganda for a terrorist organisation.'³⁴

30 Corke, S., Finkel, A., Kramer, D., Robbins, C., and Schenkkan, N., (2014), Democracy in Crisis: Corruption, Media and Power in Turkey, A Freedom House Special Report, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Turkey%20Report%20-%202014-3-14.pdf>

31 Zaman, 2014, Black sunday: the day turkey detained its more prominent journalists, 14 December, available at: http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_zaman-editor-in-chief-detained-in-media-operation_366944.html

32 Ozdemir C., 2015, AKP, Gülen battle takes another turn in Turkey, in Middle East Eye, 13 Jan., available at: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/akp-g-len-battle-takes-another-turn-turkey-1431083817>

33 CPJ (2014) Turkey's leaders defend press freedom record but agree to address delegation's concerns, available at: <https://cpj.org/2014/10/turkeys-leaders-defend-press-freedom-record-but-ag.php>

34 EJC (2014), Dutch journalist arrested for 'Twitter terrorism', available at: <http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2015/01/06/dutch-journalist-arrested-in-turkey-for-twitter-terrorism/>




PART II – THE BROADER PICTURE

1 Sources of Threats, Violations and Obstacles

The sources of threats as narrated by the journalists in our sample include threats coming (1) from the political establishment and the apparatus of the state; (2) from commercial and business interests; (3) from intertwined political and business interests; (4) from the underworld and criminal organisations; (5) from random and unpredictable sources. All these co-exist and occasionally combine to make the situation very difficult for media freedom and for journalists' safety. This section will discuss the threats in more detail, offering specific examples and report on journalists' own perceptions of possible remedial measures.

1.1 Threats from the political establishment

According to the journalists interviewed, threats coming from the political establishment are not uncommon. These are often indirect rather than direct, but their influence is nevertheless clearly felt. Typically, political interference does not pose a safety threat as such, but constitutes an impediment to media freedom as it imposes direct or indirect censorship. For example, journalists in Slovenia report how in 2005 the government made political appointments of editors in state controlled media, with the result of more or less directly controlling what could and could not be printed. Similarly, in Turkey, journalists reported that when AKP took over, there were a series of political appointments in public media, resulting in a control of their editorial line. In other cases, for example in Greece, in the former public service broadcaster, ERT, political pressure resulted in a clear political line that should be followed, and this also included lists of acceptable and non-accepted guests and commentators. More direct interference is also reported, where journalists' work is either not published at all, or published with significant alterations that change its meaning. For example, in a recent event in Greece, when a correspondent for the public service Athens News Agency used the term 'austerity measures' to verbatim translate the words of a German official this was subsequently changed to 'structural changes'. There are also reports of phone calls by ministers or government officials, expressing their displeasure about published materials. The result, as a Bulgarian journalist put it, is the existence of taboo topics:



«A taboo topic is any topic that would implicate the ruling class, regardless of whether the case in point concerns the judiciary, the legislative or executive power. Anything that would harm the political establishment in power [...] is prohibited».

In some cases, the threats are direct, as in the case of this Serbian journalist: "Sometimes you need to let some things pass," a senior political party official told the journalist, going further to make implicit threats against the journalist's family and advised "to be careful". "Sometimes it is better to keep silent".

While political threats tend to result to censorship or self-censorship in favour of the government, commercial interference can be potentially more far reaching because it can come from media owners and advertisers. In a number of the countries in our sample, journalists reported a clear transition from media that are politically controlled to media that are commercially controlled. In countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania and others, journalists report both direct and indirect interference of media owners and their business interests. In some of the countries of our sample, most notably in the post-communist countries the rise of commercial interference followed the lines of the political transition from a communist to a liberal representative democratic polity. This quote from a Croatian journalist offers a historical narrative of a progressively worsening situation:


«In the 1990s, obviously, the biggest problem consisted of the pressure exerted by politics. All the publishers and newsrooms were connected somehow to the authoritarian regime. Since then, things have changed: since 2000, when the political pressure started to diminish, the economic pressure have increased. This has much to do with the influence of advertisers and ads revenues».

1.2 Threats from commercial/business interests

In general, when pressure is not exerted by media owners, it is exerted by advertisers. This is how a Bulgarian journalist describes the situation:

«In Bulgaria the major advertisers, such as various large companies or banks, when they place an ad, they do not do that just for the sake of advertising, but they want to impose conditions and censorship, i.e., 'we will advertise on your site, but you won't write about us, or about the things we feel uncomfortable about or consider unacceptable».

A major issue identified by a number of our interviewees is that the new class of media owners have business interests outside the sphere of the media. In fact, a lot of our respondents assumed that, in the face of a protracted media crisis and falling circulations, business people acquire media in order to exert influence and support their wider business interests. In Turkey, this is what a journalist told us:



«We couldn't make news about Hasankeyf [dam] in the past. I even received a warning about a news story that was against the construction of the dam. That was because the owner of the media I was working for was part of the consortium which was building the dam».

Similarly, in Greece, ship owners have moved in the sphere of the media:

«For example, *Ant1* [TV channel] is owned by Kyriakou [a shipping magnate], *SKAI* [another TV channel] by Alafouzos [another shipping company owner], you will find a ship owner behind almost all large publishing groups. And it's a direct kind of influence: the editor has been given direct orders by the owner that we [the TV channel] will only feature stories that will not bother or annoy and it happens shamelessly. For example, if the ship owner has conflicting business interests with another ship owner, they give orders to the channel or radio station that we will keep playing stories against their opponent [...] ».

A Bulgarian journalist explains that there is:


«direct pressure from publishers serving specific economic and political interests, by setting specific tasks or laying down conditions on what to write about, who not to write about, which topics not to cover, etc.».

This trend is a worrying development as it represents a further complication in terms of media ownership. The trend towards a new model of media ownership, where local business elites acquire stakes in the media has been identified by Stetka (2012)³⁵ in his analysis of media ownership patterns in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Stetka also observed a de-Westernisation of the media, with Western publishers disinvesting and their media operations passing into the hands of local elites. Our findings support Stetka's conclusions and show the broader diffusion of this trend in the region of South-East Europe.

1.3 Threats from intertwined political/business interests

Rarely is this commercial interference without political backing. In what is emerging here as a dominant and worrying pattern, commercial and business interests are increasingly intertwined with political interests and journalists find themselves in the middle of pressures coming from both sides. This makes it very difficult to seek protection. This entanglement between business and politics takes many forms. Politicians own media or publishers become politicians, or politicians enter into business partnerships with conglomerates that also have media concerns. Additionally, media owners with parallel business interests can bid for government tenders

35 Stetka, V. (2012). From Multinationals to Business Tycoons Media Ownership and Journalistic Autonomy in Central and Eastern Europe. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 17(4), 433-456.



knowing that if they have been supportive of the government they may be privileged. If there are laws preventing this, politicians may ostensibly step down, but still yield influence behind the scenes. By far the best known example of this is Italy, where Silvio Berlusconi has for years influenced the media sphere. However, according to one of our Italian interviewees:

«Berlusconi controlled much more than previously thought, even movies. I worked for 8 months to make a clandestine documentary film with Nanni Moretti [a renown Italian film director] on Berlusconi, but not even there we could find space because Berlusconi controlled the distribution and because Berlusconi controlled the independent producers. This system, that is so totally and absolutely controlled and based on references, has meant that no new spaces of freedom could be opened up [...]».

The example of Berlusconi is emulated by other businesspeople, who have moved into politics. In this excerpt, a Romanian journalist talks about a member of the parliament who is also in control of certain media:


«I think that we have to talk about facts and the fact is that Romanian media is more than half controlled by so-called oligarchs, by so-called media tycoons. We have at least three news TV stations controlled directly by the people who are also deeply involved in politics. We are talking here about Romania TV strongly controlled by PSD MP, Sebastian Ghiță , who is clearly interfering in the editorial work and is supporting the government and the majority in parliament, himself being an MP».

And again from another Romanian journalist:

«[...]The leader of a political party has the most important TV station, the most important media conglomerate, corporation. The owners are politicians, or have connections with the politicians. There is a way where to cover this situation - the former owner leaves the business and transfers it to his former manager. Technically he is no longer the owner, but de facto the media is completely under his control».

A similar set of circumstances is encountered in Bulgaria, where the Peevski family controls certain media, are in business with banks and are also elected politicians. This journalist relates an encounter with these owners:

«After the papers for which I was working changed hands, Irena Krasteva [the mother of Delyan Peevski, and formal owner of the media] invited me to a meeting to tell me that it would be good for me to quit, as my work as an investigative journalist does not correspond to the new editorial policy of the publications she manages. She told me this during a private conversation in her office».



This is what a Turkish journalist had to say about government tenders and the media:

«When journalists (who are generally smart people) work for a media company they can easily understand its approach. They see the relations of the company with the government, the call for tenders they apply for thanks to the news they report themselves. Sometimes they are asked from human resources or from corporates to prepare prepackaged news. So they understand what kind of relation they should have with specific firms or who they should please».


It is clear here that threats do not have to be direct, but journalists are socialized into a climate of what is allowed and what not in particular media outlets. This kind of self-censorship is not uncommon and highlights the importance of a clear set of ethical and professional guidelines for journalism. The question of journalistic ethics will be discussed in Part III of the report.

1.4 Threats from organised crime and corrupt officials

Although the pressures coming from politicians and commercial/business interests are really pernicious for journalism and media freedom, it is rare that they take the form of physical violence. Such an undercurrent of violence is common when the source of pressure is to be found in the underworld and criminal organisations. Occasionally, the criminal underworld has connections with the police and judiciary, making things even more complex. Corruption investigations leave journalists especially vulnerable. The story of this Bulgarian journalist is instructive:

«This individual serves as a prosecutor, as an administrator of justice and as a guardian of the rule of law in the country. I won't tell you his name. But I can say that this prosecutor was the subject of an investigation I was conducting into some activities that are inadmissible for a prosecutor. Viewing me as a potential direct threat, he decided to remove me physically. I filed a complaint with the police and there was an investigation that led to this prosecutor. And since the prosecution is the body that conducts the investigation, ultimately it got stuck. You get it, right? Because, see how absurd this is - I file a complaint with police, they initiate a probe under the supervision of the regional prosecutor's office of [name of city redacted]. The investigation leads up to a district prosecutor, who is a superior of the [name of city redacted] regional prosecutor, i.e., the investigation is conducted under the directions of his subordinate. This is an incredible situation that merits a movie. But that's the reality I live in».

Several journalists in Italy have been at the receiving end of mafia threats for conducting investigations in their affairs. This journalist relates an incident that oc-



curred when she was investigating a shady business that involved a criminal organisation:

«[then they] told me to “get that camera away or I’ll shoot you in the head.” So we managed to turn off the camera without stopping the film. They took me up and locked me in a room where they kidnapped me and asked me to give up doing this investigation».

1.5 Threats from random and unpredictable sources

A final source of threats is not easy to categorise. Some of our informants found themselves at the receiving end of threats coming from random sources, from people who felt offended or unfairly treated by a journalist, and decided to let them know. The difference here is that these threats do not come from an organised source and are not really systematic but they add to the overall climate of intimidation. Journalists are threatened by, among others, random people who felt offended; the police; and other journalists. Again, what is consistent in the intimidation and silencing of journalists, but with no clear and systematic plan. For example, a sports journalist in Greece reported being threatened by football fans:

«When they [the fans] feel that a news report affects their team, they will write threats on your Facebook, or if they find your mobile phone number, they will send you threatening or abusive texts, such as, at best, ‘what’s your problem with my team’, ‘who’s paying you to write these’, this is at best. At worst, it’s going to be ‘you will die, we will set you on fire, watch what you write’ etc.».


A Romanian journalist was attacked by a random person in the street, with no apparent reason. The incident involved physical and verbal aggression, including racist expressions. “The police came but they did not react and the guy continued to insult me”, the journalist said. “He told me that I am lying on TV and he wants to correct me, punish me. It lasted about 10 minutes”, he added.

This Macedonian journalist was attacked by other journalists:

«I am expecting that they will attack me. Because there are a few very loud journalists, who like dogs, their job is to attack other colleagues. Like the case with Milenko Nedelkovski [a TV show host on *Kanal 5*], who asked publicly for the execution of some of our editors and journalists».

Journalists are also vulnerable during protests. This story, from a Macedonian journalist is instructive:

«We became witnesses of police brutality when a policeman arrested a young boy, who was protesting, and he was on the ground and they started hitting the boy. So, we took pictures of that and suddenly another policeman came to me and said ‘Give me your camera right now’. I



said 'I'm not giving you the camera'. I had my badge that I'm a journalist. I said I'm here to work and I will work, I'm a witness of something and I'll take pictures. Another five or six policemen came to my colleagues and they also said 'give me your cameras, all cameras, everything you have, give me your mobile phones'. So, they started using very rough words, like 'you, whores', 'you should give us the cameras right now'. So, at one moment one policeman came to [another journalist] and he grabbed the camera from her hands and he started deleting the materials by himself. The other policeman was holding my hand very roughly and he said 'delete all the pictures you have right now'. So, I didn't have any other option, but to delete one by one all the pictures I had taken from that night. Afterwards we asked a couple of times to show us their legitimization, we wanted to know their names, but they didn't [...]. But they took our ID cards and they wrote down our names, and addresses and everything».

The multiple and varied sources of threats and pressures on journalists show the kind of environment in which they find themselves. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this is like a minefield, where journalists need to tread very carefully, in order to avoid compromising their safety. Another significant observation here concerns the concurrent existence of all these sources of threats in the same environment. Journalists were receiving threats and encountering obstacles from all these sources, often at the same time. However, often the problem was that the threats were veiled and indirect and their source unclear. This was especially the case when physical violence was involved. The next section will discuss more specifically the mechanisms by which threats were carried out and pressure exerted. While dealing with the sources of the threats requires remedial measures aimed at the structures that sustain them, the mechanisms of threats and pressures can often have a more direct and immediate solution.




2. Mechanisms of Control: How to Keep a Good Journalist Down

While the above section was concerned with identifying the source of the threats and obstacles to journalistic practice, in this section we are discussing the various mechanisms used to carry these threats and occasionally to see them through. The mechanisms, or the forms taken by these threats, are crucial in order to understand how to protect journalists. This is especially the case as in some instances the sources of the threats are not clearly identified; occasionally, journalists suspect but cannot be certain of the sources of the threats against them. They are however very aware of the form that these threats have taken. Because of this, they have a better idea of how to address them and possibly how to counter them. The discussion that follows has identified seven main mechanisms: (1) violence or threats to one's physical safety; (2) lawsuits; (3) advertising as a means of control; (4) threats to employment (5) controlling access to information and/or 'freezing' journalists out; (6) slander and defamation; (7) social media harassment. These mechanisms differ in their severity and consequences, but they are all pernicious to journalism and can lead to both physical and psychological issues. Each of these forms or mechanisms requires a different kind of response, although there is some overlap as some broad solutions can address more than one kind of threats. In addition to these mechanisms there are two kinds of factors that exacerbate the threats and problems posed: these are ethnic tensions and gender: in areas with heightened ethnic tensions, journalists are more vulnerable to pressures while in the case of some women journalists, pressures may take the form of sexual harassment. These are aggravating factors and cannot be resolved easily or outside the cultural context in which they occur. In this section, we will discuss some of the solutions or responses offered by the journalists who have experienced some of these threats.

2.1 Physical attacks and violence

Clearly, physical attacks and violence against journalists constitute the most extreme form of intimidation. Journalists at the receiving end of such threats or violence have been left traumatised and to some extent their journalism has been affected. While in some cases the perpetrators have been caught, a large number of cases remain unsolved, offering no consolation to journalists who have been attacked or threatened because of their job. Several of our interviewees, both women and men, had been beaten up, while others experienced serious and credible threats against not only themselves but also their families; yet others had experienced violence in the form of robbery, arson, or theft of their property. Often, there



is little evidence to show who was behind these attacks, making the situation even more difficult, as the perpetrators go unpunished and journalists live under constant fear. Even in the event where the actual perpetrators of the violence are caught, it is still difficult to prove who was actually behind the attack. The story of this Greek journalist reveals some of the dynamics involved:

«Two men were waiting for me outside my house. They hit me with brass knuckles and I had to have seven stitches done. It was a warning, an intimidation to stop me from writing about fixing football matches. With the football mafia, as I was writing a lot about the topic, and I believe the attack was related to this. The police investigation did not find out who did this. After this incident, I followed all the relevant procedures, I went to the police, I spoke with the prosecutors and made a full deposition. I went to the police several times, to report other incidents, warnings and threats. It is very difficult to find the culprits because it is not a felony, is a misdemeanour which means that the police cannot apply for access to private telephone conversation and consequently they cannot obtain evidence on the perpetrators. With no evidence the case cannot proceed. I suspect who was behind, but with no evidence it is likely that he would sue me successfully for implicating his name. And then, where would I stand? ».

A Bulgarian journalist who was beaten up related his suspicions to the police but nothing happened and the case remains unsolved:


«I have my suspicions and I shared them with the investigating bodies, which gave up the case of course and did nothing. I [...] was one of the people who actively discussed the emblematic cases against organised crime - the "Octopus", "Killers", "Impudent" - which were met with great resistance from the circles explicitly or implicitly linked to organised crime groups and the mafia. [...] I think that people affected by my comments were behind the attack».

In a disturbing twist, it is not only journalists themselves who are threatened, but also their families. And this, understandably, puts a lot of pressure on them. "I am currently under police protection and it has been like that for two and a half years," said a journalist from Montenegro, who also experienced threats against her child, followed by a physical attack.

It happened "because of an investigation I was doing into cigarette smuggling", she added.

This Italian journalist is also currently under police protection:

«For another investigation [...] the trade unionist who handed me the papers had his car wheels cut and a note that said "to say to tell her... to the one of *La Repubblica*, to think of her three children».



Equally disturbing are incidents of theft, which often expose journalists and/or damage their ability to do their job. For example, an Italian journalist experienced a break in in his house, in which computers, cameras and film making equipment was stolen, but similar items belonging to others living in the same house were left behind. The journalist subsequently found out that a similar break in had occurred in the house of one of his sources in a financial investigation. The losses he incurred were in the region of 40,000 Euros, which, as he put it, “as a freelance, I had to buy back to start again. I still haven’t been able to recover everything”. A Bulgarian journalist suffered the theft of her mobile phone, with texts and contacts subsequently leaked and causing considerable damage to her reputation and ability to do her job.

While the immediate reaction and possible solution is to go to the police in order to report a crime or a threat, these excerpts show the limits of its role in protecting journalists. On the one hand, it is the obvious response to violence and threats, as these constitute criminal offences. On the other hand, they show the inability of the police to deal with the specificity of the crimes against journalists. Some journalists have been placed under police protection for their safety. Although without doubt this may be necessary in order to protect journalists from further harm, it has important limitations. For example, this journalist, who is currently under police protection, still has no guarantees about the safety of her family:


«It’s 10 months that I haven’t been able to go out on my balcony, because they know what it’s my balcony. But my kids go out, my husband goes out: they are not protected. But these are unscrupulous people. My older son has already received in front of my house the sign of the cross mimicked by a clan chief».

This journalist from Montenegro, also under police protection, has become exasperated because of the lack of resolution of their case. Police protection ends up looking like prison:

«But now I have had so much frustration and I am considering addressing the Ombudsman and tell him this whole thing makes no sense. I am still under police protection and I don’t know why. What they should do is arrest the people who threatened me, not keep me under police protection. I would be willing to wait if I saw they were doing something, but they do nothing. Why do they keep me under police protection? I cannot work this way. I cannot work in this situation».

2.2 Lawsuits and the legal system

The second mechanism through which journalism is impeded and threatened is the legal system. A large number of our interviewees had either been sued or



threatened with legal action. In fact, this is emerging as an important disciplinary mechanism, as even if journalists win the case against them, they are still harassed and more often than not have to bear the costs of these actions. While their physical safety is not necessarily in danger, their ability to work is compromised. For some, it is also a question of journalistic survival. The examples below show how routinely lawsuits are used to discipline and control journalists who are seen as having crossed the line. The first excerpt is from a Greek publisher and editor of a small magazine and news website:

«They are using legal means, and in this manner there is a whole industry of lawsuits against whoever is investigating or revealing something. We are currently facing about 40 lawsuits. To be present in the court requires every time not only man hours lost but also 2,000 Euros. So every year we have about 80,000 Euros for legal expenses only. And this for a small magazine [...]».

Similar experiences are reported from Macedonia:

«The approach towards [name of media redacted], which has neither dirty money, nor dirty businesses, and is critical towards the government, was different - a barrage of lawsuits for insult and slander. Of the more than 20 lawsuits lodged against us, 90% were directed towards me as an editor-in-chief, the journalists and the company. In those 20 processes, 90% were for defamation with a conveyed statement. We were found guilty in a lawsuit over the headline of a text, in a process started by the Minister of foreign affairs. The text is a large investigative story, nothing disputable, but the headline was [found] defamatory and I was therefore fined with 16,000 Euro».


A Slovenian journalist explains how lawsuits function as a controlling and disciplining mechanism:

«There are a lot of such cases involving charges of defamation. And this is definitely putting a pressure, because once the company has to hire a lawyer, they need to pay and they lose money for this. And usually, they never win. Rarely these cases are successful. I think what they want to do is to prevent journalists to pursue the avenue that they are pursuing».

It is not only media outlets and editors who are disciplined but also individual journalists. As this Bulgarian journalist put it:

«I have personally been the target of all available means. Around ten lawsuits have been lodged against me so far, and I have won them all».

The immediate need for journalists here is to have access to legal help and also some help to cover legal expenses. In some instances, when individual journalists



are sued, their employer stands with them. In other cases, unions are able to step in and help with legal fees. Two categories of journalists not covered by this include freelancers and small media owners, including website/portal editors. But the importance of having your employers and/or the union standing by a journalist cannot be overstated. This excerpt below offers a first person account by a Greek journalist who was sued and arrested for libel.


«I had a lot of support. The reaction of the union and the paper was immediate. I went with my editor [name redacted] to the police station and he never left me on my own. From the beginning both the editor and the owner were of the same opinion, we are not backing down, we did not do anything wrong. The union stood behind me as well and all my colleagues [...] and I saw this support immediately from their comments on television and the articles and op eds [when news of the arrest was made public], they were very positive towards me. And there was a mobilisation from the European Federation of Journalists as well because of the issue of the arrest. But there are colleagues who are sued, prosecuted routinely, and a large part of the press and of society does not even realise this because they are not arrested. But these colleagues are subjected to far more hassle than what I went through. [...] there are people who have lost their houses for things they wrote during their work, for things they have published as journalists».

While this incident had a successful resolution, the pressure from such lawsuits is continuous, as shown in this excerpt from a Macedonian journalist:

«You know, the pressures are much bigger, because we have lawsuits. I have two lawsuits right now, against me and my editor. They are asking from me in each lawsuit 2,000 Euros, so 4,000 Euros in total. This is an amount that I really don't have [...]».

And in Croatia, the situation has worsened, firstly because of the introduction of new laws that have made 'humiliation' an offence and secondly because the financial difficulties faced by media mean that they are not prepared to cover legal expenses for their journalists. This excerpt from an interview with a Union representative is instructive:

«Croatia adopted a new criminal law at the beginning of 2013: in this provision, offence and defamation are defined as criminal offences as before, but the crime of "humiliation" has been introduced too. Two months ago, a first decision was adopted, at first instance, about the case of Slavica Lukić. She wrote about Medikol and the funding of this private hospital through public money. The judge evaluated that the journalist humiliated that institution and that she did so not in the public interest. This decision is clearly nonsense, this is why Ms. Lukić appealed to it. A worrying aspect of this legislation is that the crime of humiliation can be invoked even if the story is true. There is no need to deliver false information to be accused: it is enough that some-



body feels humiliated. Her case was the first. Now there are some 40 trials going on, involving journalists and the crime of humiliation. [...] Ten years ago, newsrooms would cover the costs for a journalist undergoing a judicial process. Today, more and more often this duty is not respected anymore. There are internal informal agreements on this. This also works in the sense of fostering self-censorship».

Notwithstanding the introduction of new offences such as ‘humiliation’, defamation is by far the most common charge against journalists. However, there have been important instances where journalists have been sued for compromising state secrets. A well-known case is the one against the Slovenian journalist Anuška Delić, who has been indicted with publishing classified information, on charges brought against her by the Slovene Intelligence Service (SOVA):


«[There is] an indictment against me for publishing classified information. This has not happened in Slovenia, I think, since 2000 [...] For me it is sort of bizarre, because it feels like a compliment from the authority. Obviously I did something right if the Intelligence Agency decided to file charges against me. Second, I am really angry because in this case there is a very direct politicisation of state institutions which are supposed to be not biased, such as the state prosecutors, the police and the intelligence agency itself. The case has to do with articles I have written and published about the neo-nazi organisation Blood and Honour being active in a particular political party [...]».

A journalist in Turkey is also under investigation for publishing ‘state secrets’:

«There is an investigation going on though, I am waiting for it to conclude (...). They [the prosecution] want to charge me with a lifelong prison sentence. You must remember the TIRs belonging to the Intelligence Agency [headed to Syria] stopped at Adana. I was the first person to write about it. They claim that an ordinary reporter could not get into possession of that news and pictures. They say the security of the State could face a risk of war because of my article».

From the interviews we have conducted, the need for **access to legal help** is crucial in these instances, and **unions can be very important** here. It is also clear that in some cases, the **legal provisions must be rethought**. For example, the ease by which a journalist can be sued even when the lawsuit is frivolous, shows that the law can be used against journalism and freedom of speech. More serious cases, such as the one faced by Anuška Delić, raise questions of transparency and the politicisation of state institutions. The comments below from a Turkish journalist show the need to have a proper legal framework in place:

«There is no auditing, no life security and no press law to stop that. Right now writing news about the Intelligence Agency could cost 10 years in jail. You are expected to disclose your



source. There is nothing like that in the whole world. The law is insufficient too. We have no legal guarantees.[...] I could go to jail. We could go anytime».

2.3 Advertising as a disciplinary mechanism

Parallel to lawsuits, another important mechanism for controlling and disciplining journalism is the control of its lifeline, money through advertising. This has turned out to be an important means by which journalists' work can be steered towards or away from some topics. Cutting journalists off advertising was also used as a punitive measure, to punish them for stories published. The first example below comes from Turkey:

«We still have some, but most major companies have stopped giving us advertising. Some of them have communicated personally they would stop and as for the others we have been told by other sources. You don't really need to be told what's happening, it becomes clear when you see the amount of advertising that the pro-governmental newspapers get. Even the newspapers that have a lower readership than us. Everybody has the right to get advertising, I don't contest their right. The problem is that they get it all and we get nothing and it's all done very openly, no one needs to keep it secret».

This example comes from Bulgaria:


«What has happened in the last few years is that the government has become advertiser number one, so most of the money in the advertising market comes from the so-called communications programmes of the European programmes from the Euro-funds. And when the government is advertiser number one, it can influence the content of media. And in fact, it has influenced the content of media. And we can see that the media with the largest amount of money received from government are the friendliest ones to the government».

And this observation from a Macedonian journalist: "If you praise and support the government you will get advertisements. And live happily."

But even in cases where the government is not involved in the distribution of advertising money, corporations that advertise in certain media have important demands. In this interview with a Greek journalist, the role of advertising as pressure is clear:

«The exclusive sponsor of Greek media is the banks. Everywhere you see adverts for banks and where you should be seeing investigations on the role of the banks in the Greek crisis you see ads for the very same banks, this is a clear case of bribery».

An equally direct form of intervention is seen in this story by a Slovenian journalist:



«The [name of media redacted] had to face the influence of the advertising agencies, I witnessed that on me and on colleagues. For example: we were covering the story of a businessman who irregularly built a house on the Dalmatian coast. We received an anonymous notification and from there we started to investigate on the story. When this was already done, the owner of the company got to know about this, and exerted pressure on the editor in chief to prevent the publication. The pressure was big, and in the end it was not published. The company involved, gave us three big ads to our weekly. For our silence. They were very extraordinary ads. This is one example of the way this mechanism works».

Control and distribution of advertising money constitute an important mechanism for controlling editorial lines and media freedom. The main **remedial measure suggested by journalists concerns more transparency for this distribution**, especially if it comes from public money. This Romanian journalist suggests that public money should be used very judiciously, and some advertising agencies should not be allowed to bid for public money:


«Advertisers in a TV station that has broken rules concerning human dignity, the principal values and human rights, who attacks personally, who launches campaigns against the institution of the state, should be forbidden to participate in public tenders. That private company that still advertises should be forbidden from accessing public money».

This journalist from Cyprus suggests that a form of **public subsidy alongside programmes supporting the diffusion of journalism among the younger generations**, would free journalism from complete dependence on advertisers:

«This is the problem of journalism today and especially of print journalism. Because there is no form of public subsidy which would free you, or any kind of programme of diffusing or spreading journalism, or at least a fair distribution of government advertising across all media. All this would ensure survival. Now you have to depend on the business world».

2.4 Threats to employment

While advertising is used to control and discipline journalistic outlets, threats to employment and ability to carry out their job are used to threaten and control individual journalists. These constitute a very common form of threat and they can be direct or veiled. In the context of the countries in our sample, where unemployment is very high and there is only a vestigial welfare system or none at all, these are serious threats and concern the very survival of the journalist. This is even more so in the case of highly concentrated media systems, which in fact are found in the majority of the countries in our sample. Journalists are either fired or threatened



with being fired when their investigations have proven detrimental to someone of importance.

The following examples are typical. As a Turkish journalist put it “owners of the media can hire and fire people as they wish. A journalist is not much different than a chair or a table of the newsroom.”

In Greece a journalist reports that: “we are told time and again, ‘no-one is irreplaceable’, which basically means, do as we say or else...”

This comes from a Macedonian union representative:

«And we asked journalists to, among other things, make a priority list of the main spots of pressure. The main one is economic and social status. So, they can be fired, they can be put on a lower working position; they are usually fired, but sometimes they are made to accept a lower salary. And that's the main spot of the pressure. That's how they corrupt or silence journalists. And everybody does that».

A Croatian journalist speaks of some of the implications:

«There is a great pressure on young journalists also because they know that out there, there is plenty of people ready to replace them. Journalist are replaced very easily, especially the young ones. [...] This causes fear. Fear which can result [...] in servility».

The context of high unemployment makes it even harder for journalists. This is what another Greek journalist had to say:


«In a country where dismissal is the worst nightmare of workers, and journalists are workers, resistance [to pressures] will be minimal, because with the rates of unemployment in our field³⁶ if you are considered to be uncooperative you will be fired, and when this hangs constantly over your head, then you will cooperate. A colleague told me ‘I am really ashamed for what I’m forced to do but I have to provide for my family, I have no other choice».

Others report that they do not advance in their career because they do not conform. This is how a Slovenian journalist put it:

«[...] despite the fact that I was publishing a lot of scoops, stories that really gained attention, I never got promoted. Not a single time did I get a bigger salary or the like».

This is for some too much to take and they quit. This is what this Turkish journalist said:

36 Unemployment of journalists in Greece is estimated at 30%, see Siapera, E., Papadopoulou, L., & Archontakis, F. (2014). Post-Crisis Journalism: Critique and renewal in Greek journalism. *Journalism Studies*, (ahead-of-print), 1-17.



«I could last only two months there. I was getting a good salary, almost 4.000 TL per month. I resigned with an email. I told them they were bookkeepers, not journalists because they were too concerned about making calculations about who would be offended by the news. I wrote we were not reporting any serious news and I was against this on principle. I finished wishing they would make journalism in the future».

In smaller countries, the choice is stark. This Bulgarian journalist explains that you must conform to ‘the editorial conception’:

«Otherwise, you are on the street, with nothing to live on - the market is constricted and many of our colleagues cannot find an alternative job and are doomed to starvation. Now, there are many capable Bulgarian journalists who do not agree to work in this way and are left with nothing to live on».

This raises important ethical questions and the significance of adhering to a clear code of ethics, which are discussed later in this report.

Employment status is a crucial issue for the practice of journalism. More and more journalists find that their labour rights are diminished or sidelined. Full time employment is increasingly replaced with freelancers. While freelancing can afford choice and independence, the new situation that has emerged in the countries in our sample is freelancing but with an exclusive relationship to one employer. This peculiar situation makes journalists entirely dependent on one medium but without the same rights as those on a permanent contract. These freelancers, as a number of our interviewees told us, are easier to control. This Slovenian journalist has been working under these conditions for 14 years:


«It is a very hard time for journalism and it is getting worse, because a lot of journalists do not have a proper contract. [...] We are paid less and less and we have no rights. I do not have a stable contract, for example. After 14 years working here, my contract it is renewed year by year».

This Croatian journalist received warnings, showing the clear link between employment status and vulnerability:

«The warnings were put in such a way that it sounded like advice for my well-being, not to lose my job. At the time I was working there as a freelancer, so the employer could get rid of me that very same day. Because of this, they warned me to be careful about what I was writing».

The vulnerability of journalists is clear in this excerpt from a Cypriot journalist:

«In Cyprus nobody honours the collective agreements, everything is disintegrating. We have seven newspapers, and three are observing the agreements at a rate of about 70%, the others



are doing nothing. No TV or radio station applies them. We are talking about journalists that get 500 euro [per month] with no insurance, sometimes only cash in hand».

2.5 Access to information and ‘freezing’ as disciplinary mechanisms


Even in the event when a journalist cannot be dismissed, there are ways of controlling and disciplining them in terms of accessing information. A common technique used to penalise journalists is to ‘freeze’ them out. This is typically done by governments, politicians and/or organisations that perceive journalists to be hostile or oppositional; the freezing here takes the form of not responding to requests for information, comments, or interviews. A second form that this freezing takes is to cut off journalists from publishing their material. This is mostly done to those who are critical but cannot be sacked. The first example comes from a journalist in Macedonia:

«Now we have a situation with the spokesperson of the ruling party, Iliya Dimovski. [...] I send him a message everyday every single day, and he has never responded so far. I'm sending e-mails, I'm even writing on his wall on Facebook, so that everyone can see, but I never get a response. So, they're just ignoring us like we don't exist, like we don't deserve an answer. That's one thing. They don't pick up the phone when we are trying to reach them».

The second example is from a Turkish journalist, who has been cut off because of working with unions and undertaking critical reporting. It is important to clarify that this journalist works for the public service broadcaster and cannot be easily fired. Unionised and/or critical journalists in the private sector are simply laid off. But those who are still employed experience severe impediments in practising:

«Finally, for the last 4 years, we have not been sent any place to follow up on news stories, be it inside Turkey or abroad. It is a situation that applies to a few people. It's because I am one of the leaders of the Union and also one of the people that started the unionisation in [name of medium redacted]. And also because they assumed we would not accept the type of news language they wanted us to use, producing instead more objective news stories. Every news feature we might write was a risk for them. They would be forced to check every word of it, separating dangerous elements from the others. Instead, they prefer keeping us out of the news producing process, avoiding extra work and risk to themselves. We are never sent to follow a minister or the Prime Minister or the President of the Republic. They are afraid we could ask them questions that could hurt many people. So, that's the current situation».

This comes from a Greek journalist and shows how some carry out their threats:



«I know a case in which a Greek minister telephoned the employer of a journalist and asked for him to be removed, and he [the journalist] was then sacked. This is vulgar and it is by no means the only such incident. Ministers and businessmen telephone editors and order them ‘get rid of X’ because he wrote something they don’t like. I have also heard how you can enter into ‘disfavour’. I have friends that have been ‘frozen’ for months in the newspapers where they worked because they wrote something that someone didn’t like. [...] ‘Freezing’ means that you are made to write very small articles or none at all. I have friends who do not write for months and I believe this is the worst, worse even than being sacked. It’s the worst kind of psychological war and I have been through it».

When asked about possible solutions to these forms of threat – i.e. employment and access to information – journalists have several suggestions. The first is to have **stronger unions who can negotiate more effectively**. Although a number of journalists are critical of the unions, they mostly focus on their inability to function effectively in the current circumstances. However, they accept the principle of the union as a source of support and protection. Strengthening the unions is therefore an important way for protecting journalists. For example, this is what a Romanian journalist told us:


«[...] if you belong to the trade union it will support you and will provide legal advice and legal representation. And they have an impressive list of cases won in court on labour related cases - unpaid salaries, abusive layoffs, etc. [...] The trade unions don’t have a very good reputation here and those of journalists or media people have an even worse reputation [...]».

And this from a Greek journalist:

«I think that journalists under these circumstances should remain very calm, no matter how much pressure they’re under, from politicians, from their own editor or from the publishers, and their first move should be to inform their union. When you inform them that you are under pressure then nobody can touch you. This doesn’t mean that you will not pay for this later on, but there is no other safety net».

Secondly, alongside union support, **journalists must be strong personalities and well versed in journalism ethics**. The Greek journalist above continues:

«You should be aware that you are defending the truth and whoever is in your way is against the journalistic code of ethics. Journalism means truth [...] you must remain really strong to believe that journalism is truth and to seek your union».



Resistance to pressure is therefore also seen as a result of **cultivating a strong personality**³⁷ **alongside a firm belief in the journalistic code of ethics**. This in turn can be cultivated through **education and training**. This journalist from Cyprus argues that:

«[...] it has to do with the journalist's personality. If the journalist has guts they will write their view [...] I consider education a prerequisite. The non-educated are more vulnerable to pressures. [...] Ideally I would like to see journalists with a strong personality, who are not afraid that they will lose their job and seek to be liked by whoever pays their wages. They should have a strong personality and should do this job in accordance with its rules which include freedom of speech and the responsibility of producing the news».

This journalist, also from Greece, discusses how his firm belief in the journalistic code of ethics helped him withstand pressures even if in the end it cost him his job. Although his news story was verified, it was taken down because it contradicted the government. He ended up resigning.


«[...] I believe that cases such as this must not be given up without a fight especially by the younger generation of journalists such as us, nor should we support practices and behaviours that have led Greek journalism to this crisis, which ultimately it is our generation that ends up paying».

Strength and conviction are found behind most of our interviewees and show a specifically journalistic form of habitus, which includes public-spiritedness and the ability to sacrifice personal comfort. Journalism for these journalists is very clearly a vocation.

A third way of addressing such pressures to employment is **to establish cooperative, not for profit journalistic outlets**. Indeed, among our interviewees we encountered several such media, often exclusively online, as the costs are significantly lower. This journalist from Croatia explains:

«Being a cooperative, the profits are reinvested in the improvement of the media company itself. In every situation, the board of the cooperative decides through a democratic procedure.[...] Because many journalists are being fired, they tend to re-direct their careers in the sense of creating new, non-profit, media organisations. The non-profit sector in Croatia has never been bigger than now. [...] Last year, the state created a fund for financing non-profit media. There is a call,

37 The term personality may appear misplaced here, but we have kept the original term used by our interviewees. What they are referring to is a strong sense of professional identity or journalistic habitus; not so much a moral or personal choice, but the endorsement and embodiment of the ethos of journalism.



they can apply, explaining the topics they intend to write about. The Ministry declared that it wants to support topics of public interest, by providing funds to this kind of media».

2.6 Slander and defamation

Discrediting journalists through slander is evidently a very common mechanism. Attacking the credibility of the journalist in ad hominem attacks is a way of discrediting what they write without actually addressing the main points or arguments made. This is an especially pernicious mechanism of control because it feeds into a wider climate of cynicism and media distrust, but also because it is often accompanied by aggravating circumstances, discrediting people on the basis of their gender and ethnic affiliations. In areas with ethnic tension, journalists are attacked on the basis of their ethnicity, while in certain cases women journalists are attacked as women.

In this excerpt, a Macedonian journalist explains how ethnic tensions feed into journalism.

«I did an interview a year ago for some Croatian portal and [a mainstream media and broadcast journalist] put the link of this interview of mine and said: "When will we deal with such a person?" And then it was horrible. They stated "we should expel her from the country", because my surname is Greek, "we should kill her"... And the hate speech is institutionalised».


Similarly, this journalist from Slovenia shows how ethnic backgrounds are used to discredit journalists:

«For example, Janez Jansa [former Prime Minister of Slovenia] was recently insulting us, people like me who are not Slovenians. He was publicly insulting us on Twitter. A lot of this kind of insults are being published in this last period, about journalists like me, with foreign origins».

But ethnicity and nationality can also be used to discredit journalists who are deemed unpatriotic. This excerpt comes from another Macedonian journalist:

«Journalists that are criticising the government they are only considered as traitors, non-patriots, that we are paid by the Greeks, by the - I don't know - by the Jewish people, and lately by the European Union. That's really interesting since we are a candidate country officially. But whenever they want to insult us, they use those words - mercenaries of the European Union».

Occasionally, women journalists are discredited on the basis of their gender. In what appears as a common scenario, references to sex are used in order to cast doubt on the ethics and practices of female journalists. In some instances this kind of defamation can be construed as sexual harassment. The excerpt below is from a Montenegro journalist:



«This propaganda is horrible, because for example they say about me that I am a prostitute, a courtesan, things you will not believe through the media and some contacts from Serbia which are broadcasting for example naked photos of Vanja Calovic - our NGO activists, leader of one of the best NGOs in Montenegro dealing with corruption. Or they publish my pictures from the beach [...]».

Similar experiences are reported by a Macedonian journalist:

«I can tell you from my experience, I got from one of the pro-governmental journalists, who has his own TV show at *Kanal 5* television, the second largest television, so he always mentions my name in his TV shows. But he mentions intimate stuff about me, like 'she's sexy,' 'I want her' and something like that. On his Facebook page, my picture is always on top. Everyday I'm dealing with that. He's writing stuff that I'm really sick of repeating, you know, very ugly stuff about my personal life. He even once posted my phone number on Facebook, publicly. [...] Every day my picture, my phone number, he mentions me on his TV shows. And he doesn't mention me as a journalist, but you know, as a woman. That's sexual harassment».

It is clear in both instances that this sexual harassment is used strategically, to discredit women journalists through putting forward their gender and through sexualising them instead of referring to their work as journalists. Through this kind of strategic sexualisation their work assumes secondary importance and is discredited.


In another instance, this journalist from Turkey has been accused of sleeping with sources in a bid to discredit her:

«They wrote I got my information because I slept with judges and prosecutors. They wrote I was writing my stories in the private rooms of the prosecutor. They said the most incredible and filthy things about me».

But journalists are also victims of broader attempts to discredit and threaten them via slander and defamation. This Romanian journalist's story is instructive:

«I was directly threatened by [name redacted] - he called someone, one of my colleagues in [name of media redacted] and he told him, it happened just a few weeks ago. He told him: "Tell [name redacted] that if he continues to write about my contracts with the state I will attack his family on my news TV station; I will tell everyone what I know about his wife and his children. Because I know that he has beaten his wife and his children. Which is a lie, of course, but that was a threat».

In the case of the Greek journalist below, rumours about him were used to attack his credibility:



«I have to say that people started rumours about me, saying things aimed to discredit me and to insult and cheapen me [...] for example when [name redacted] my colleague from [name of media redacted] was spreading the rumour that I resigned because I had gone to work for an MEP. So I called him and asked for explanations because this was untrue [...].»

In Turkey, politically motivated attacks on journalists are using the Gülen movement³⁸ to discredit journalists. This Turkish journalist had this to say:

«They tried to hurt me calling into question my virtue or accusing me of being a member of the Gülen Congregation. I don't have anything to do with that congregation, if I did I would be proudly declaring it because I am not like those people tagging people».

Although on occasion journalists have resorted to the police or the legal system, few, if any, consider that going to police or the courts can be the solution here. Rather they are sceptical about what the police can do in these circumstances and they are afraid that pursuing these rumours via the courts may end up consolidating them in the public mind. What need here is **solidarity from other journalists, and from their unions**. It is clear in the above quotes that a lot of these rumours have started or are circulated through other journalists. This excerpt from a Turkish journalist is instructive:


«If there was a collective resignation of journalists refusing to target anybody, to accuse them with false news, and if they asked not to be censored, that would be something. But it's only a dream. If they ask them they say they have to make a living out of it. They say they are obliged. I don't believe them. I'd rather go and work as a cashier at the supermarket than living with no self-respect».

For the Greek journalist quoted below, this lack of solidarity has been very disappointing:

«Unfortunately, what really left a very negative impression on me was that I received no support from the Union – on the contrary I was attacked by a journalistic system friendly to the government. [...] Most of the times you have to deal with two things, firstly with the guilty silence of a large number of your colleagues and of a system that is afraid when someone is making waves and the second thing you have to face are attacks from those who feel they need to safeguard their gains and therefore seek ways to hurt and discredit you».

Equally, the creation of a context where journalists strongly adhere to a code of ethics and are strong enough to withstand pressures is also applicable here as a possible remedial measure. But this has to take place in a broader context that re-

38 see the thumbnail on Turkey for more about the Gülen movement.



spects democracy and the democratic tradition. Here's how a Turkish journalist put it:

«I think they [the Unions] have a morality problem too. They are apparently present, but when they need to act they disappear. You can say that for most of the journalists too. They are civil servants. Half of them are working for the Intelligence Agency. There are people who are journalists in the name of the Intelligence Agency. There is a reporter of [name of media redacted] here that follows me all the time, checking the rooms I am going into. Everybody knows about it. He lives in the houses provided for the Intelligence agents. They don't even try to hide anything. [...] We need to form a conscience. [...] And morality/ethics should come before everything».


In these terms solidarity and ethics go together and are the result of a broader democratic and ethical culture; journalism is in many ways a reflection of its context and remedial measures need to take this into account.

2.7 Online/social media attacks, threats and harassment

Although the rise of social media is on the whole understood as positive by most of the journalists interviewed, a large number of them also reported issues of harassment through social media. Because journalists are already quasi-public figures and their social media accounts are operated as such, they are left vulnerable to a lot of spiteful and often hateful comments about themselves and their work. Often, social media are the vehicle of choice for threats because of the ease by which a journalist can be contacted. In some instances, they have also been used as a means by which to incite others to threaten or harass a journalist. While journalists did not consider social media as such to be threatening, their references to harassment via social media points to the need to develop a safety protocol regarding such instances.

In this excerpt, an Italian journalist explains how Facebook was used to intimidate him and to create a momentum of hate:

«One is related to a series of threats on Facebook in response to my inquiry on a popular festival that is held in Naples and that is in the hands of the bosses of the Camorra. I went there with a camera and with a valuable colleague, and we have represented that story. It looked like a movie by Francis Ford Coppola and instead it was the harsh reality of Naples' suburbs. From that moment, a part of the neighbourhood felt offended, and for days there were constant attacks against me on the social networks, to the press, some threats even arrived as private messages on Facebook from people I didn't know. [...] I was afraid because the reaction was fairly widespread. On the one hand there was the fear of the Camorra itself. And on the other



hand, these people, who have then been arrested, fomented the debate on Facebook fuelling hate against a journalist, me: it became risky».

Another Italian journalist, who is currently under police protection relates a similar experience:

«I received threats through social networks too. Some time ago I uncovered a case with a colleague of mine: we discovered that underage kids of Forza Nuova [a far-right movement] were having fun by going around and beating up Bangladeshis [...] I also wrote that one of those arrested used to be a registered member of Forza Nuova, at which point someone wrote on the social networks: “we will let her have a fun Christmas ... we will wait for her under her house».

And another Italian journalist points to how she was the victim of social media threats and insults:

«At this point just because someone tagged me, unintentionally, I discovered that my post had been shared in many groups or personal profile pages of people, and there were comments below, some unrepeatable insults, where they wished for me to die, to be killed and even to be raped».


This journalist from Bulgaria explains how the comments section of online news sites has now become a means by which to vent hate and anger:

«The comments section under news articles has become in recent years an especially popular place for sending warnings to their respective authors. Yes, I'm talking about trolling, a tool that allows the sender of specific messages or warnings to a journalist, like: your story has angered many people and you will not get away».

There is some speculation that this kind of trolling is part of a more systematic effort to discredit critical or oppositional journalists. The following excerpt is from a Romanian journalist:

«A journalist covered this story. He infiltrated himself into a party and worked for several days in the backgrounds of the internet a few years ago. Now he is also a freelancer, I think. He proved that this is a practice - how the messages were given to them and then they posted them on the internet».

In some instances, social media are used to anonymously slander journalists, as in a case from Romania, where a journalist became a victim of a defamation campaign that started from a blog, alleging that the journalist worked for foreign secret services. The journalist took the case to court: "The judge ordered them to reveal the actual identity of the person who wrote this. It turned out to be a girl that I had never heard of," said the journalist.



In an ironic twist, while social media are freely used for harassing journalists, when journalists themselves post information there, they may be subjected to police inquiries. This has been the experience of a Serbian journalist:

«I use social media to talk about the people who want to ruin this town. [Name redacted] reported me to the police for what I wrote on Facebook. Police came to me at work and took me for an informal discussion in their office. I wrote something on Facebook about him. [...] And he reported me to the public prosecutor because of that».

Finally, hacking has also been used as a means by which to defame and threaten journalists. In these separate examples from Serbia, journalists have been victims of malicious hacking attacks:

«For example, hacker attacks that happened during the local elections on Kosovo blocked our website and put the Albanian flag on it with a note in Albanian language. That happened because there was large pressure from the EU that Serbs from Kosovo must vote in these elections, which we criticised. But our colleague who speaks Albanian very well told us that there were at least 12 grammatical errors in just three words of that note. That makes me believe that someone from Serbia was behind the attack. We reported that to the police. The police have done nothing so far».

In this example, also from Serbia, the journalist's own Facebook account was hacked:

«I must say that they tried to discredit me in the worst possible way. They somehow managed to break into my Facebook profile and made someone from the party write offensive comments on other people's Facebook pages».

The domain of new/social media is notoriously difficult to regulate and this means that journalists are at a loss as to how to respond. In some cases, when clear threats are articulated, **resorting to the police**, as in the case of the Italian journalist quoted above, has helped. In other, as in the Romanian journalist's case, **suing for slander** has helped unmask anonymous posts. But in the case of random hateful comments, it is difficult to see what can help. It is, as discussed earlier, a question of **creating a broader moral and ethical context that accepts the existence of dissenting opinion**. But until then, there is little a journalist can do when in the receiving end of social media harassment.

This discussion of the mechanisms of threats has provided useful insights as to the 'how' of attacks against journalists, using their own words and experiences. The next section will go over the conditions of possibility for these threats to materialise.


3. The Conditions of Possibility for Threats: Understanding the Structural Context

The examples of threats and attacks against journalists showed that in the Europe of 21st century media freedom is not guaranteed. In fact, our interviews with journalists paint a very mixed picture of going forward and backward at the same time. Journalists in various countries in our sample spoke of improvements but also of deep-seated problems, legacies of the past, and outcomes of the confused present. This section summarises the main structural conditions that make threats and compromises to media freedom possible. The main ones identified in the journalists' discourses included: (1) media ownership (2) widespread deregulation (3) weak unions (4) managerialism and de-professionalisation (5) the legal context (6) political corruption and authoritarian legacies (7) ethnic tensions. All these are interrelated and often feed into each other leading to a vicious circle that is toxic for journalism. In this they will be discussed in relation to each other.

The question of media ownership is complex and characterised by paradoxical trends. The first trend is increased media concentration, with the rise of media oligarchs who control a large number of media. Media concentration is found in several countries in our sample, from Berlusconi in Italy to Peevski in Bulgaria to the Alafouzos and Kyriakou groups in Greece and Cyprus. The second trend is media polarization, or as a Romanian journalist put it, media 'cartelisation', where media become part of broader business and political interests, which are pegged against each other. These elements combine to create a very difficult environment for journalistic and media freedom.

More specifically, as discussed earlier, the concentration of the media in the hands of only a few media owners is associated with a series of problems for journalism. Among the journalists in our sample these have been identified as direct interference in their work and threats to employment. The tendency towards media concentration is not only the result of a quest for political influence; it also makes financial and business sense, as it enables a company to survive and become profitable (Harcourt and Picard, 2009)³⁹. This presents a well-known challenge, and it is not limited to the countries in our sample. In fact, Harcourt and Picard (2009) argue that the degree of concentration is directly related to the population/market size; in countries with less than 10 million, there will be 1 to 2 large media groups, in countries with 10-20 million this will rise to 4-5 groups and so on. Relevant policies Har-

39 Harcourt, A., & Picard, R. (2009). Policy, Economic, and Business Challenges of Media Ownership Regulation. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 6(3), 1-17.



court and Picard argue, must address the financial and business factors involved in the drive towards concentration.


However, concentration alone cannot explain the rise of problems of media freedom, including direct interference and threats to employment. Rather, these need to be seen as the result of a process of cartelisation. This kind of process is not strictly speaking a cartel, as understood in the field of economic policy, which involves agreement between competing firms in order to control the market more effectively. Media cartelisation, as explained by one of our interviewees, refers to the coming together of business and commercial interests with political ones, using the media as vehicles or platforms. It is not simply that the media market in the countries sampled is concentrated. It is also that this concentration is primarily undertaken with a view to promote and safeguard specific business interests, with the help of allied politicians, through the media. Conversely, as the case has been for Italy, industrialists acquire media in a bid to acquire political influence (Amyot, 2004)⁴⁰. And in both these scenarios, media and journalistic freedom may get in the way, as journalists are employed not in order to serve the public interest but the specific interests of their employers. This is how a Romanian journalist described the situation in Romania:

«Abroad the media serves the public interest, in Romania the media serves the oligarch's interests. [...] In a nutshell, a media which serves financial and political interests only».

The threats to employment and interference in journalistic work therefore must be addressed in the context of a very specific tendency to mix business and politics and to use media instrumentally.

Addressing these threats should therefore take place through **increasing the transparency of media ownership**. Who owns shares of which medium must be information that is widely available. Journalists working in such media must assume a **process of full disclosure**, explicitly referring to any interests the media publishers or shareholders may have so that the public knows what kinds of stakes specific media do have in specific reports. Secondly, **legislation and policy must be drafted with a view to avoid this kind of cross-sector influence** and the use of the media to yield political influence. Relevant measures may include a **'cooling off' period** precluding media owners (and journalists) from standing for political office for a certain period of time after they resign or sell their media interests in much the same way that business executives are not allowed to join a competitor for a certain period of time. In general however, it is clear that threats to journalists and compromised media freedom because of combined business and political interests

40 See Amyot, G. (2004). *Business, the state and economic policy: the case of Italy*. London: Routledge.



have to be addressed in structural terms as well by adjusting relevant media policies.

Taking a step back from the increasing cartelisation of media, a number of the journalists in our sample adopted a historical narrative of things in the past and now, where the past referred to an era with more regulation. This narrative is not necessarily a nostalgic one, but it is significant that there were no journalists in our sample who could say that today's journalism is better than even a few years ago. This progressively worsening situation was observed both in countries that are recent democracies and in those understood as consolidated democracies. And a number of our respondents described a confused and hazy media landscape, with no clear rules or regulations, overlapping and contradictory legislations, and laws that were there in letter but not in practice.

With most countries in our sample either in the EU or in accession talks, a tendency towards harmonisation in the sphere of media regulation should be expected. Yet the only harmonisation observed was that of widespread deregulation. Deregulation is three-pronged: (a) deregulation in media ownership, which was covered above; (b) deregulation of employment conditions; and (c) deregulation in terms of distribution of government/EU advertising. All three have a significant impact on journalistic practice and media freedom.

Deregulation of employment is one of the main factors affecting journalistic work as it is directly linked to rising precariousness in the field, and an increase in the number of freelance journalists. These freelancers, in a context of very high unemployment and low pay rates, are generally considered to be more vulnerable and easy to be exploited. As a Greek journalist put it:

«When you get paid by the piece, you'd better make this piece likeable enough to be printed».

This 'liberalization' of the conditions of employment has had other effects as well: those in unions, those seen as more critical, those seen as more independent were the first to be sacked and replaced by either conformist journalists or freelancers. According to a Greek journalist, in Greece this 'pogrom' against independent voices began in 2008, when the crisis was spreading and continues unabated:

«On the pretext of the economic crisis many journalists were fired. The crisis led to a purge and those who were the first to go were those with alternative voices. [...] I was fired because I refused to sign a personal contract [instead of a contract based on the collective agreements]. Five of us did not sign and we were all fired. [...] Journalists can do nothing to protect themselves. Legally they have no hope to win. When not even the union representative is vindicated, what can I expect?».



A similar position is taken by a Croatian journalist who comments:

«The general attempt to promote a neo-liberal state goes in the direction of weakening the trade unions and the enforcement of collective agreements. The absence of collective agreements for journalists is a problem at least for the last 10 years».

Deregulation of the conditions of employment is also linked to a decrease in the pay received by journalists. This keeps them increasingly dependent on their employers while it is also connected to the de-professionalisation of journalism, as more and more able journalists leave the profession for more profitable and stable employment, for example in the field of PR. As a Cypriot journalist put it in a quote cited earlier, journalists are now earning 500 Euros per month if that, and often with no insurance. This journalist also has this comment to make:

«We do not have people of a high standard working as journalists. It's a shame, but in combination with low wages, all the serious people who could take journalism seriously are deserting it. If they can find something else, they leave».


And this from a Romanian journalist:

«Low income has led to de-professionalisation of journalists. They know to which group they belong and accept right from the beginning their financial dependence».

The de-professionalisation of journalism goes hand in hand with a rising culture of managerialism, where news media managers are not journalists and/or where editors themselves make editorial decisions on the basis of management concerns. This points to a decreasing autonomy for journalism: instead of deciding what constitutes good journalism on the basis of journalistic and public interest criteria, managerialism requires that stories conform to external criteria, mostly to do with circulations and ad revenues. Managerialism exposes journalists to an extraneous culture and when they are found incompatible with this, they are fired. Moreover, managerialism is part and parcel of a growing culture of control over the media. This is how a Croatian journalist put it:

«Editors today are not the first among the journalists but the last among the managers. They are not there to protect journalists and to edit the news, but they act as a manager, as the extended hand of the owner. To control the journalists, the newsroom and the content. To make sure that nothing is out of control, out of the programmed news policy».

De-professionalisation, low wages, precariousness, and managerialism are in turn linked to weakened unions, who seem unable to protect their members from external pressures. Although the importance of unions is almost universally recognized, their ineffectiveness is also flagged. Weak unions cannot protect journalists,




and this weakness is seen as the outcome of both mistakes made by the unions themselves and of the broader climate of deregulation and neoliberalism. Among the mistakes attributed to unions, journalists reported their extreme politicisation to the extent that they were seen as serving the interest of specific parties and political formations than journalists themselves or controlled by the government – this was reportedly the case in Slovenia and Turkey. In countries such as Montenegro and Serbia, media unions are young and inexperienced and inevitably make mistakes. In Greece and Italy, unions are seen as closed. For example, in both countries, freelancers are not considered full members; in Italy they are referred to as collaborators, while the main Greek union will not accept journalists unless they have had a full contract with a print or broadcast medium for a minimum of two years, thereby excluding all online journalists and freelancers. A Greek journalist described her exclusion in this manner:

«I don't understand this thing with the precondition [for becoming a union member] they put some really impossible criteria and then they say 'well you don't actually meet our criteria'. I have a journalism degree, I work so many years and then they say I do not meet the criteria because I do not have two continuous years of paying insurance contributions. This is a problem, you exclude those who are working. You should not put any conditions [...] When you are not doing this [accepting all journalists] how can you convince them that you operate in their interests? You can't. I think that if the union called these people in, it would automatically have a louder voice».

The fact that unions cannot get the courts to support them, for example in cases of journalists who were fired or in trying to get employers to honour collective agreements, is seen as the result of broader shifts towards neoliberalism. This important problem of weak unions is clearly recognized as having contributed to the decline of media freedom and journalistic safety, but there is no consensus as to how to address it. Most journalists call for **stronger unions**, but are vague as to how to accomplish this. The Greek journalist quoted above points to **wider inclusiveness** as a means to do this. Others point to the need for these unions to turn towards society itself and to reinforce itself through public support. This example, again from Greece, is telling:

«A journalistic union should first of all open its door and turn its ears to society. If this union doesn't get on with society, if it doesn't have a relationship of solidarity and coexistence it will not accomplish anything. So, you need a union open to ideas and young people, open to society, a union that will prioritise morality and the ethics of the profession, and which will check and control the reality of intertwined interests. The bankruptcy of the media is not unconnected to



their role, to the fact that public opinion, rightly or not, has condemned them. They must regain their credibility».

In other countries, unions are under attack. This is how a Turkish journalist put it:

«After the 1990s the media has been tamed, every attempt to organise a union initiative has been blocked, mobbing and violence have been used. Now people think: 'I can't do anything against them, I'd better stick to my salary, keep good relations with the management to get personal advantages'».

In Macedonia, being a union member may get you sacked:


«We have members in, literally, all media. But the problem is that we have secret members. Let's say half of them are secret members, because to be a member of the union is perceived by the management, by the owner as a sign of disloyalty at least. And since the president of the union was fired, the message was very clear - if you are a member, you will get fired. And I'm not talking about, let's say, pro-government media, but also critical media».

Similarly, in Serbia, unions are all but extinct:

«There is not a single union in the private media. They are not formally forbidden, but there is a silent agreement: do not do that. There is huge fear among journalists. If the state withdraws from all private media, where we have some, though weak, unions, the only union that will be left will be at the national broadcaster. You can imagine what will happen then. Professional journalists can exist only where the media is free. And the media is free when the journalists are protected».

In general, it is a strongly held belief that weakened unions have exacerbated the problems that journalists face, although unions are themselves not without problems. **Stronger but fairer and more open unions** may help support journalists under threat from managerial encroachment, de-professionalisation, and precariousness. But such unions have to rely on the existence of **solidarity** between journalists, otherwise they will fail. According to this Turkish journalist, unions are ultimately only as strong as their members' bonds:

«We have to remember to be in solidarity with each other. Nothing else can save us. Neither can the union. If 15 people cannot come together in a workplace the union can't do anything for them. The union exists thanks to its members, who are its source of power. As long as your friends do not support you, a media owner can fire you even if you are a member of the union. However the trade unions are the best expression of providing this kind of solidarity in all over the world».



A confounding factor is the broader legal system, which instead of protecting journalists, is turned against them. Earlier we discussed in some detail how lawsuits are used to control and discipline journalists, even though they often have no basis and journalists end up winning most of them. In other instances, legal measures that are meant to protect the public have been turned against journalists: this is the case of the ‘humiliation’ law in Croatia. In more disturbing cases, journalists have prosecuted for infringement of secrecy acts, as for example in Slovenia and Turkey. In Italy, the law has been used as a means for obstruction, preventing journalists from publishing sensitive reports on the basis that they constitute evidence in pending cases. A common complaint of a lot of journalists vis-à-vis the legal system concerned the delays involved. Processing a legal case can take months, and occasionally even years, living journalists in limbo. This is especially serious in the cases of journalists who have filed police complaints against violent assailants or threats. For a journalist in Italy, the protracted time she spent under police protection has been frustrating and she argues that it is necessary to expedite matters when it comes to threats:

«[I would like to see] more compressed times to see action following a threat complaint, and give more attention when the threat deserves it [and] an acceleration in the times of inquiry».

In another example, in Macedonia, laws that are meant to protect the quality of the media are either ignored or also used against journalists, often imposing crippling fines that put the very existence of the media in danger:

«So, you have a new media law, which stated that journalists can refuse to write something, which is not according to professional standards. But you think somebody has done that? No! [...] The media law had like 30 articles and a third of them is about correction and penalty that media should pay, editors should pay in case a government institution requires correction. You know, if you look that law formally, for example, in Sweden, you will not find anything problematic in that. But the problem is the practice. Selective justice. We have a new law on electronic media, for example, and there is some provision that the television, in order to support Macedonian culture, etc., etc., should have equal parts of folk and pop music...».

The journalist then refers to the example of two Macedonian media outlets, Telma and Satel, which were fined for not adhering to the requirement of quotas in folk music air time.

«[...] And they didn't count as folk music without singing. And they said: “Aha, you have 30 minutes less and you should pay 20,000 Euros for that”».

In these terms, while in several of the countries in our sample there existed clear laws and regulations meant to protect journalism, they have ended up used against


it. This feeds into an ambivalence towards regulation. This is clear in the words of a Romanian journalist:

«[...] if you want to regulate the press, to impose some rules you have to think twice because it could be turned against you in time. So I wouldn't rush to say do that and that. I am very tempted to say "try to stop the concentration in media, encourage pluralism", but when you say that, you have to restrict some people from doing certain things. So you have to be very careful when you are doing this. [...] I prefer to fight with oligarchs every day, saying everyday that they are corrupt and having a debate in the society than to cut freedom».

In some ways, this ambivalence and uncertainty over how laws and regulations are going to be used is a reflection of the authoritarian legacies of the past and the political corruption that is by no means uncommon, at least according to the journalists we interviewed, in most of the countries in our sample. The remnants of the past are still haunting some of the countries in our sample and this also includes ethnic tensions that make journalism more difficult. While all countries in our sample are proper functioning representative democracies, they all fall in the 40-50 score in the corruption perception index calculated by Transparency International⁴¹. The exception is Cyprus which scores in the 60-69 range. To offer some perspective, North-West European countries score typically above 60 with Denmark topping the list with a score of 91 out of 100. This perception of corruption was evident in most of our journalists, who felt that going to the police or the prosecutor was not always the best course of action, who considered police tactics to be at the very least heavy handed, who felt that there were goings on behind closed doors, with politicians, businessmen and media owners striking deals to which very little publicity has been given. At the same time, ethnic tensions feed into an environment that is already tense, occasionally erupting into violence – and although such violence is not necessarily towards journalists themselves, it certainly makes their work more dangerous and more difficult. Often, it feels like walking on eggshells. In other times, ethnic tensions lead to manipulation and censorship. The quote below comes from a Turkish journalist:

«For example I once featured a piece of news on Kurdish language [...]. I made interviews with a Kurdish language school and a friend that teaches Kurdish. They mentioned both positive aspects and the problems they are also facing. The article referred also to the reactions they were receiving, from the nationalists etc. My interviewees also said that there was a growing interest to the courses, however that didn't mean that hatred [towards Kurds] had decreased. My editor who supervised the piece omitted those parts and the article became very shallow».

41 See <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/infographic>



What is less clear is how best to address these legacies of the past and how to deal with ethnic tensions. There are no clear or immediate remedies one can apply but small steps towards broader change. At the very least, talking about these issues in the open is a first step towards overcoming them. Some issues, especially those concerning ethnic tensions, can be addressed through the adoption of a strong code of ethics. The example below, given by a Macedonian journalist shows how the lack of any sensitivity towards cultural and ethnic diversity feeds into the tensions:

«We had an incident in one municipal area, Gjorce Petrov - there was a murder and the media published that an Albanian guy killed a Macedonian guy, and that was it. I mean, the focus was on the nationality. A few years ago, there was an accident - a father and a son got killed in a train accident and the media - not all of the media, but some of the media reported that a father and son [of] Roma [origin] got killed. They got killed. What does it matter what their nationality is? When we had floods, when Skopje was flooded because of the rain, some of the Internet portals published that some Albanian guy saved a Macedonian girl. And they asked 'Now why they are not publishing, this is a good story, good example? Why some media are not publishing this information?' So, everything is politicised, national-based, there are no ethics».

As we will see in more detail below, a restructuring and reiteration of a code of ethics may go some way towards addressing some of the long term needs of journalism. In terms of corruption and authoritarianism, journalism is paradoxically in the appropriate position to deal with these through publicity and investigation. In this manner, by shedding light and by driving a public discussion, small steps are taken against such phenomena. For example, a Macedonian journalist explains how a group of journalists got together and formed a group looking into the ownership of Macedonian media:

«It's actually not a portal, but a database of the media, of media ownership. So, when you click on one medium we have investigation on who the owner is. We've only had a chance to make it for the Internet portals. The results were really surprising for us. We didn't expect such results, because we found out that there are two or three people hiding behind all the web portals that are under governmental influence and many of them are registered in offshore zones. But, again, we managed to prove that one businessman and one senior official are standing behind all of them. So, now we got a grant again from the Norwegian embassy and we are going to continue that for all the traditional media and all the local media».



PART III - BUILDING A SAFETY NET: What do journalists want?

The section begins with a discussion of the immediate and pressing needs of journalists: what needs to be done immediately after a journalist has been threatened. It then discusses the longer term, broader structural changes that are required in order to safeguard journalistic integrity and media freedom. The discussion moves on to the existing provisions for safety and the extent to which they address the need of journalists, both pressing and longer term.


1. Immediate and pressing needs

The most immediate and pressing needs of journalists under threat include: (1) physical safety; (2) removal/management of the threat; (3) solidarity and psychological support and (4) access to legal and financial assistance. While the needs are clear, the ways in which they can be accomplished are more complex and require further discussion.

1.1 Physical safety

While violence against journalists was still thankfully an uncommon occurrence, a number of journalists felt unprotected when this happened, and were unsure as to how to deal with it. Most of our respondents who found themselves in this situation reported the violence to the police and from then on, it was dealt as any other kind of physical attack. But dealing with the threat of violence and having to protect oneself from this, is a difficult process as it requires full time protection. In at least two instances, journalists who have spoken to us were placed under **police protection**. However, as we have seen, this is not without problems, especially as in some instances threats expand to journalists' families. Additionally, the whole experience is also perceived as a form of punishment to the journalists themselves while the actual perpetrators remain free.

What may therefore be the best way to safeguard journalists' physical safety? None of the journalists could clearly articulate a solution here apart from police protection notwithstanding its shortcomings. Perhaps the establishment of a **safe house** of some sort may cover the most immediate need for protection, as journalists now have to rely on friends and family for this. It may also require some pre-emptive thinking by journalist themselves who may take some measures for protection before publishing or exposing wrongdoings; these can take simple forms,



such as protecting their property and their archives through insurance and backup or installing security cameras. One of our respondents explained how his martial arts training protected him during a violent altercation, so perhaps also self-defence lessons may prove useful. In the case of this Bulgarian journalists, such skills helped save this life:

«I was only able to fend off the four assailants because I have been practising Martial arts all my life - I've been awarded the 5th Dan in Shotokan by the Japanese Karate Federation and was a martial arts instructor in the army. I was injured, but I had knocked the knife out - it was found at the scene of the crime - and, ultimately, the assassination attempt failed».

To be clear, we are not suggesting that all journalists get martial arts training, but merely to be more **proactive and aware** when it comes to their own safety. This is especially the case when journalists are likely to experience revenge attacks for things they have written.


More broadly however, addressing the issue of physical safety requires the removal or management of the threat.

1.2 Removal/management of the threat

While protecting oneself from violence is immediate and pressing, removing or dealing with the threats is crucial in order to ensure long term safety. One of the problems encountered by those journalists threatened or even beaten up is that they cannot prove with certainty who was behind these attacks. In these cases, **going to the police** although necessary, is not always helpful. This journalist from Greece explains the complexities involved when a case is referred to the police.

«The case did not go any further and it could never go any further. It is very difficult to find those responsible because it [the attack] is not a felony but a misdemeanour which means that the police cannot apply for access to private telephone conversation and consequently they cannot obtain evidence on the instigators. With no evidence the case cannot proceed. I suspect who was behind, and the prosecutors suspect too, and they ask me for a formal deposition. And I'd like to do this, but what about the repercussions? The prosecutors said I could bring a criminal case against the instigator, but without proof, I would lose the case and then for the rest of my life I would be under threat or even my life would be destroyed if then he counter-sued for defamation and I had to pay thousands for damages. So I couldn't really say to the police, he is the man behind nor did they have the means to find out who he was».

So removing the threat is not by any means straightforward even when the journalist knows those responsible. In other instances, journalists don't know who is be-



hind attacks or threats against them. In most cases, such attacks remain unsolved and the perpetrators unpunished. This is what a journalist from Montenegro told us:

«And what is the problem with all these attacks? Most of them you do not know who did them and who ordered them. Even if you know who did it, you do not know who ordered it. We have suspicions that someone from the top is doing this, but how can you prove who ordered it?».

This climate of impunity is really damaging for journalists who perceive that nothing is done to protect them. Finding a clear means for removing the threat is therefore imperative. A number of journalists suggested that **publicity** may in fact neutralise threats. For example, if a journalist is threatened because they are researching a specific area, then by going public with such threats may expose those responsible to more adverse publicity, forcing them therefore to withdraw. Moreover, publicity contributes to the longer term management of threats, because it makes the public aware and keeps the spotlight on the journalist. The quote below by a threatened Romanian journalist is instructive:

«I made it [the threats] public. So it's a kind of defence, it's a way to defend yourself. I published it on my Facebook page and some of my colleagues wrote about it and the subject became public. The reaction was that some NGOs publicly defended me, because I was not the only journalist threatened by [name redacted] - there are others too».

And similar comments from an Italian journalist:


«Certainly, after an adequate period of precautionary silence, I would like to keep the spotlight turned on. It is important not to feel alone».

In the quote above, we can see that publicity is also linked to the issue of **solidarity**, to elicit and get the support of others, both journalists and the public. However, there is a thin line between publicity for support and awareness and publicity for self-promotion. The following quote from another Italian journalist explains:

«Except for the piece published by *Ossigeno* [Ossigeno per l'Informazione, Italian monitoring organisation], whom I thank, there hasn't been a lot of publicity, also because I do not like playing the role of the victim or the hero. I like to tell things insofar as I can ensure my safety».

Experiencing a threat can often isolate a journalist from others. This experience of loneliness is what motivates a number of threatened journalists to seek solidarity in others; through receiving support, their actions are validated and their loneliness and isolation addressed. Lack of solidarity, conversely, feeds into and worsens the experience. The following example comes from a Bulgarian journalist:

«A bomb was planted in the apartment house where a colleague from [name of media redacted] lived. It was detonated outside the door to his flat. The fact that his door was shattered was not



that terrible - he fixed it. What is terrible is the reaction of the neighbours, the way they move away from you. What is terrible is the reaction of frightened people in the trade, who get the feeling that the person who's been injured has done something [wrong] to deserve it».

On the other hand, when solidarity is there, the pain of the experience is mediated. The quote that follows comes from an Italian journalist who had experienced a series of threats in her social media accounts:

«I had decided to close down my social profiles. However I was prevented by thousands of messages that arrived from many colleagues, even privately, and this is very important because you understand that it is indeed worth continuing».


In fact, solidarity has been highlighted by a number of our respondents both as a means of meeting the needs of managing a threat and as a need in its own right. This solidarity, will be discussed next.

1.3 Solidarity and psychological support

It is really striking to see the position of solidarity in the discourse of the journalists. Although relationships with colleagues are notoriously ambiguous in journalism – Tuchman (1978)⁴² referred to journalists as having ‘competitor/colleagues’ – there was a clear identification of solidarity as a necessary condition for the safety of journalists. In its formal dimension, this could refer to unionising. Unions can offer solidarity through issuing supportive statements, but also in more practical terms. In its informal dimension, solidarity refers to all kinds of support offered by colleagues but also the public. Publicity and the alliances between journalists and the public constitute an important vehicle for this informal solidarity. Solidarity can help address both the psychological impact of threats, and the practical aspect of how to deal with being unfairly dismissed or how to seek compensation from former employers.

In terms of **union solidarity**, it is important to reiterate that unionising is not easy or straightforward in all the countries in our sample. In cases where there is an undeclared war against unions, solidarity is the condition for unionising. For some journalists in these countries, people must be persuaded that forming a union will help address some of their pressing needs. However, while in some instances they may want to unionise, they are reluctant to do so openly because they may get fired. In Montenegro, a union representative explains:

42 See Tuchman, G. (1978). Making news (Vol. 147). New York: Free Press.



«Union is a persuasion. We are encouraging them to join the union. At the very beginning, we had numerous calls from journalists facing various problems. I guess that we can say that people are interested and more and more journalist come to us and make complaints against their managers. For example, a lot of journalists were laid off in the daily newspaper *Dan*. Those fired journalists joined the union after they were laid off, because the management didn't allow them to join us at the time when they were working».

Formal union solidarity can take the form of issuing supportive statements or even protesting on behalf of journalists under attack. The example below also comes from Montenegro:

«We organised protests in front of the government because someone threw a bomb in our colleague's house».

In Croatia, the union (HND) organised a petition in order to repeal the clause about humiliation. In Greece, unions have organised strikes in support of journalists who were unfairly dismissed. Additionally, unions can appeal to international journalistic associations, formally soliciting international solidarity and support.

On the other hand, union statements of support or denunciation of threats against journalists are not seen as especially effective, although there is recognition of their symbolic value. For example, in Bulgaria, where most journalists were critical of the union (UBJ), a journalist told us:

«Well, I don't really know what the UBJ's role is, but I certainly think that the more associations, federations or whatever of journalists - the better. Whatever they do, no matter how little it is - it is important and it is useful [...]».


Informal solidarity and support comes from both journalists and the public, and it is seen by journalists as equally crucial. This is what an Italian journalist said:

«Many threatened journalists who do not have a stable professional situation prefer to change jobs. Instead, if we have the support of everyone, we can all be stronger».

And this from another Italian journalist, for whom public solidarity can take the form of nice tweets:

«The solidarity came from those who read me, from those who follow me, who know me. On Twitter I have to say that most comments were displays of affection [...] and this is very important».

For a Greek journalist, this public solidarity safeguards journalism and journalists:



«I strongly believe that you are safeguarded via two things: one is to have a true union that includes all journalists that can intervene, and the second is to have the public itself behind you, people who follow and appreciate your work».


For another Greek journalist, it is important to have solidarity between journalists and to act together. In the following quote he explains how solidarity can help address threats and uncertainty, but its lack is demoralising in the extreme:

«I have said this so many times, we must come together and face this [threats] as a group, to go to the prosecutor 20 journalists together, all of us who have been targeted by certain sites, and who have received even death threats. But there is no will for this. When you are on your own, you think, what can I do on my own; and why should I go on my own? Why should I be the one to play the hero? Why should I be the one who comes forward? And then you do nothing and nothing changes».

Solidarity is therefore an important means by which the work of journalists is recognized and validated and threats addressed. One of the issues faced by journalists, especially those who risk their safety in order to break an important story, is the lack of interest by the public, who in general are cynical towards the media, and often with good reason. It is therefore a kind of a vicious circle: journalists need the public's solidarity in order to be able to deal with pressures and do their job, and the public needs to see that journalists are really representing the public interest. It seems to us, that **more publicity and visibility for the accomplishments and revelations of journalists**, their contributions to society and culture may contribute towards a greater recognition of the important role of journalism. More could be done also to separate journalists from media systems that are seen as corrupt, and again publicity seems suited to this goal as well. This publicity can also come from European journalistic institutions, as peer recognition. This then allows journalists to continue and persist in what they are doing. For example, this is what a journalist from Greece told us:

«Through the intervention of foreign media, and I open a parenthesis here to say that the Greek mainstream media never said a word, so with the publicity given to the case in the foreign media there was a lot of noise about my case, and I was therefore acquitted».

It is therefore important to **open up systematic channels for communication between journalists and European wide journalistic associations and media**. On the other hand, this must be done with due care, especially in areas where there is ethnic tension. For example, in Macedonia, attempts a journalist to gain international attention backfired:



«And for example, if I discuss about this case with representatives of the international community, I will be considered to be a traitor, a non-patriot. [...] [Name redacted] from the UN was present at the court procedure [...] and I was told afterwards that this pissed off the court representatives and I was therefore found guilty».

But on the whole, contact with international organisations is important, as the same journalist comments:

«We don't have any mechanism, except that we talk about these problems publicly and with international organisations. We have contact with Dunja Mijatovic, OSCE, the international media associations, Freedom House, Amnesty International [...]».


Alternatively, journalists can **organise public events that shed light in the crisis of the media and journalism**, calling for a broader dialogue. This is the proposal of a Slovenian journalist:

«I am thinking about a network of established journalists, which would promote public events and discussion. They shall talk to politicians and to the public as well, explaining how important is the current crisis affecting the media. To mobilise thought, bring people to critically engage, to make them think and understand that the current crisis will have long term consequences. Because there will be long term consequences on journalism, from this crisis. Wisdom is lost».

Finally, solidarity can take the form of some kind of psychological support for journalists under threat. In some of the cases we encountered, journalist were left traumatised by their ordeals, which often involved violence or the threat of violence. Additionally, the continuous stress of having to fend off those suing or threatening to sue, the ongoing fight for financial survival, all these take their toll on people's health. Although it is very difficult to address these problems in the short term, at least some **psychological support and the opportunity to discuss these issues** with a sympathetic person may go some way towards alleviating some of the worst elements. The quotes below illustrate some of the ways threats and violence have affected journalists. The first one comes from a Montenegro journalist currently living under police protection:

«When we meet [with the prosecutors], I tell them this: "I am giving you another opportunity to do something", but they keep doing nothing. [interviewee starts crying and says it is very hard to talk about this]. This has been going on for such a long time, four years now, and I feel really exhausted. It is very hard. I have no strength anymore, but I try to hold on. It is horrible».

This Macedonian journalist felt that the constant barrage of lawsuits was too much:



«The lawsuits were one of the methods [...]. I gave up on my editorial post, I could not handle it anymore due to health issues -you go crazy after a while [...].»

And this Greek journalist was left feeling paranoid and anxious:

«After the attack I developed a psychological issue, I became very careful when returning home, I always look behind me, I always think about what I write».

Solidarity, both formal through unions, and informal coming from colleagues and public, **publicity, visibility and psychological support** are important requirements for journalistic safety.

1.4 Legal and financial support


Given that two of the biggest issues faced by journalist concern legal representation and employment security, it comes as no surprise that one of their most pressing needs is for help with legal issues and/or financial support. As mentioned earlier, journalists are frequently taken to court and often have to face legal expenses of crippling fines on their own. Help with legal representation is therefore very important. In the event that they are found guilty and need to pay fines, they are often need financial assistance. Similarly, journalists who are laid off because of what they published often with no compensation require financial support to survive. **Access to financial and legal assistance** is therefore crucial.

Legal expenses are typically covered either by employers or by unions. However, these still leave out at least three categories of journalists: those running small independent media, freelancers and those who are not union members. In the case of small independent media, access to legal help can ensure their survival. We referred to the case of a Greek editor of a small magazine who is facing forty lawsuits, at a cost of 2,000 Euros each, a cost that needs to be paid regardless of whether the case is lost or won. The crippling fines imposed on Macedonian media are also a case in point:

«The fines are too high. 17,000 Euros is the total amount for the company – 2,000 Euros for the journalist, 5,000 Euros for the editor-in-chief and 10,000 Euros for the company. One or two lawsuits and we can shut down the paper. If someone does not help us, we don't have the chance to pay that money. We paid 1,500 Euros in taxes for a court appeal».

This is also the case when freelance journalists are sued. This example comes from Slovenia but is characteristic of the kind of pressure put upon freelancers:

«I have a colleague in [name of media redacted], she is not employed but she is a brilliant young journalist. Somebody is suing her for defamation. Luckily she was smart and she deman-



ded the company to sign that she won't have to pay for legal expenses by herself. But this is not typical, most of the times there is no safety net here, there is nothing».

Indeed this is what a Slovenian freelance journalist told us: “if there is any problem, someone suing you, you would have to cover all the expenses.”

There are therefore instances where the safety net falls through and there is nowhere for journalists to turn. The excerpt that follows is from a Montenegro journalist:

«I am not part of any unions, so I would never get the free legal help. I don't think I will get any help – maybe if there are some major problems with the authorities or something I can protest and contact NGOs and they could help me, but I don't have an idea where to look for... I don't think anyone here wants to help journalists or journalism. Whom should I talk to help me, if such an issue emerges?».

And this from a Bulgarian journalist:

«So, there is no organisation offering specific protection or providing an opportunity for journalists to seek protection, to request, or apply for financial assistance, etc. ».

In Macedonia, a journalist currently dealing with a lawsuit had this to say:

«[...] Because we have a journalist who's in custody now, we have another journalist, who is in prison, so there's a solidarity fund, but until now I haven't had a chance to ask for money. I hope I won't have to, but as the situation stands, if I lose this lawsuits I really don't have an option, but to ask for money or to beg for money, actually».

And in Greece, in the well-known case of the closure of the public service broadcaster, when over 2000 people were laid off, journalists and other media workers had to rely on charity to survive.

There is a clear need therefore for **the creation of a structure parallel to a union**, which will offer legal and financial assistance to all journalists and perhaps even more broadly to all those in need of help because they were engaged in acts of journalism. This must have the **support and input from all unions and associations** but has to operate separately and independently.

The Table below summarises the immediate and pressing needs of journalists.

Type of need	Meeting the needs
Physical safety	Police protection Safety and security awareness Creating safe houses
Removal/management of threat	Police Publicity Solidarity
Solidarity and psychological support	Formal (unions) Informal (journalists and the public) International organisations Publicity and visibility of accomplishments of journalists Recognition of psychological trauma
Legal and financial assistance	Ensure that those who fall through the net are covered; Possibly form an organisation parallel to unions to provide assistance

While these measures may provide some alleviation to the problems and threats faced by journalists, these threats must be seen more as a symptom of a broader pathology of journalism in the countries surveyed. Effectively dealing with threats and obstacles therefore requires a more holistic examination of the long term needs and structural changes that need to take place for journalists to be safe and for journalism to fulfil its role and mandate. These needs are the topic of the next section.

2. Longer term needs: addressing the pathologies of journalism

Given the clear interrelation between journalism, politics, society and culture, it is difficult to isolate the pathologies of journalism from broader social problems. It is important to highlight that **a crisis of journalism is also a crisis of a political and social institutions**, and that a society cannot address the problem of journalism outside its context. From this point of view, the discussion below is more sociological and analytical, although directly drawing from journalists' discourses and experiences in the countries in our sample. Overall, there was clear awareness among journalists of the need to change the broader context within which journalism operates, as it absorbs and feeds back to it. The main long term needs identified include: (1) educating the public; (2) strong and binding adherence to a clear code of ethics; (3) addressing the question of freelance/precarious journalists; and (4) adjusting the legal and regulatory framework.

2.1 Educating the public

This follows almost directly from the need for public solidarity to journalists. For a public to appreciate journalism and the work undertaken by journalists, it must be well versed in democratic culture and this is not always the case. **The public must be trained to demand and expect more from journalists**, and this will in turn lead to the increasing isolation of those seen as violating the broad social consensus on journalism. In some ways, what journalists are asking for here is for social awareness and for a means for transgressing and overcoming the authoritarian legacies of the past and the neo-authoritarian practices of the present.

The importance of healthy media for social and political functioning is therefore something that needs to be cultivated and reinforced. This is how a Bulgarian journalist put it:

«The problem is, what is missing is citizen awareness of what media is and what is the media interest. This is why the protests were very useful, because they shed light on the media ownership. I was horrified that for ten years in a row nobody paid attention to that. People watched us, but people did not comment. They were not so critical. I was happy that, because of the protest, people began scrutinising [the] media's work in Bulgaria. This is what was missing, but now even this is fading. So, I think the only realistic thing is: keep the awareness in Bulgaria, and the outside pressure».

Similar thoughts from a Romanian journalist:

«[...]The first question might be why the public is still watching this kind of propaganda, political propaganda. [It is because of] lack of education. Lack of democratic education and the people is not educated. The basic education is not good so they cannot make a difference between shitty propaganda and obvious lies. Violent campaigns against democracy, against specific institutions like the Constitutional Court, or judges, or... They cannot tell the difference between a legitimate critical approach and a personal attack. They cannot tell the difference».

And a Turkish journalist agrees:

«They don't want [children] to acquire a democratic – civic conscience. There is a compulsory religion class instead. Don't teach me religion. I can do it by myself and teach it to my kids as well. Teach me democracy, not formally, but in reality. Unfortunately, we don't have anything of that».

Educating the public and raising awareness about the role of journalism for some journalists requires broader social changes. **Journalists and citizens should**



align themselves with each other and press for more democracy. This is how a Greek journalist put it:


«Journalists can get out of this situation only alongside society and alongside broader societal changes. I mean reversals in how society is governed and organised and in the policies that it adopts».

A broader public awareness of journalism and its democratic credentials will in turn feed into journalism, and journalists and media will be evaluated on the basis of their contributions to society. But journalism should also be internally regulated through its own code of ethics.

2.2 Adherence to a code of ethics

Most, if not all our interviewees held strong beliefs on the value and validity of a **journalistic code of ethics**. They also felt that **the broad acceptance of this code and its enshrinement on formal statutes** was an indirect means of safeguarding journalistic freedom and safety. In some ways, the discussion of a code of ethics is a reflection upon the increasing de-professionalisation of journalism. New entrants to the field do not necessarily adhere to any code especially when they are not allowed to join a union, or if they are hired as freelancers paid by the piece. The calls for a journalistic code of ethics are not therefore nostalgic calls for a return to a golden past of journalism, but are rather formulated as a pragmatic response to problems of today. From this point of view, renegotiating a code of ethics, making this known to all stakeholders, employers, colleagues, unions, publics, and requiring this code to have a **binding effect** constitute an important way for journalists to protect themselves. At the same time, journalists are not naïve: they know fully well that codes are already in existence but they are not observed. But as with all long term needs that need to be addressed, (re)creating a code which attracts a broad consensus, is part and parcel of a set of changes that go hand-in-hand. A change in the code alone cannot bring any long term changes, but alongside the other parameters, i.e. education, addressing the employment status of journalists and the legal and regulatory context, as well as creating new business and funding models for news outlets, it can significantly contribute to the public expectations of journalism and to provide a set of guidelines for journalistic practice.

However, ethics must be seen as a project and a process where all stakeholders are involved and participate. It is a paradox that, as with unions, journalists are both fully aware of their importance and extremely sceptical about their present functions and operations. It is no accident that traditionally, unions are responsible for the enforcement of ethics. Reform of ethics must also mean reform of unions. And in both



cases, public involvement is necessary to expand and safeguard the validity of unions and ethics. In this project, we documented the role of (the lack of) a code of ethics, and how it correlates with credibility, trust and respect for journalism. Violation of ethics ultimately works against journalists, and this is why it is imperative to restore ethics.

In Bulgaria, journalists were aware of the existence of not one but two code of ethics, each supported by its respective union, but none of which was actually functioning properly. This is how a journalist there put it:


«However, each of them [so-called unions] has its own code of ethics. Both codes sound great in terms of the protection of journalism, of freedom of expression, of integrity, of decency, of information, of non-interference in private life, of the inviolability of personal data, etc. But they exist only on paper. This is called façade democracy, façade functioning of institutions».

In addition, the Bulgarian public is also sceptical about the operations of these codes, and the mechanisms of enforcement, if present at all, do not seem to work. This feeds into a broader cynicism and lack of trust and credibility in the media. This is what another Bulgarian journalist said:

«For instance, there are people who have felt offended by certain media publications. But when you tell them, 'well, take advantage of the code of ethics and use the right of reply' and they say 'there is no point, they will not publish it in the manner in which they slandered me, and so it makes no sense to do this'. There were several cases, which were discussed by these ethical committees, but they could not come up with a solution. The fact that pictures and headlines that are somehow insulting continue to appear implies that there is no mechanism to make this procedure work effectively».

Moreover, when discussing the possibility for devising more robust mechanisms for enforcement, things became complicated. This from yet another Bulgarian journalist:

«Speaking honestly, I do not think there is any need of changes in the legislation area. [...] Because, such a law could include a requirement obliging any owner of a media to sign a contract with journalists, containing a 'conscience clause', which exists in many European media. That clause stipulates that one cannot be penalised for refusing to carry out some investigation that violates the code of ethics. Of course the owner can always find journalists who don't care about the code, but such a provision would bring some comfort at least to those who would like to observe the code».



So how may we go about reforming and reformulating a journalistic code of ethics. For some, this is a question of **personal responsibility**. For example, for this Italian journalist, it is a personal matter:

«Ethics is above all a personal question. The moment we understand what our profession is about, I believe we will be able to enact it under all points of view».

For others, it is a matter of **proper training and education**. This comes from another Italian journalist:

«On the other hand there are the new generations [...] and the schools of journalism that I believe do not give great guarantees of preparation. [...] From the point of view of the ability of doing a job, and especially of the ethics and the ability to have a plurality of points of view, I believe that there are corrections to be made».


However adopting a binding code of ethics is also something in which **media owners must participate** too. It is not seen as the exclusive responsibility of journalists and their unions. This is how a Greek journalist put it:

«The professional unions of journalists should co-sign with the owners of news media a common code of principles and values. The owners must be pressured or convinced to sit on the table, to find a commonly accepted solution, to agree on specific codes of good journalistic practice, to co-sign them and to apply them, because in the current context we must re-discuss all this».

As for the actual contents of the code, for a Greek journalist and union representative, **accountability** is key:

«You have to make media businesses and journalists accountable for the contents, the credibility and the quality of the contents. I am not saying that we are going to threaten free speech, but we must be aware of what is going on. You cannot for e.g. have neo-nazis on air for three hours denying the holocaust. You cannot shut down the public broadcaster because you like, you have to be accountable for this closure. When the balance of power changes, then I think we can give journalists back their lost dignity but we also need further training, because this is an issue as well, if you have a high quality public discussion then the public will return. You know that surveys rate the class of publishers/journalists as the most hated class of professionals. So you must make changes».

An interesting development here concerns the **role of the internet** and the ways in which it leads to a renewal and a revision of a code of ethics for journalists. While there is no agreement as to the form that this takes but nevertheless there is a clear need for it. And moreover, this code is one that requires that the public adheres to it



as well. The first quote comes from a Cypriot journalist and points to need to revise ethics in order to include and address the internet:

«We would also like them (media owners and the public) to sit and reformulate the code of ethics and to include the internet because we have a lot of ethical violations and there is a gap there. For example, if a newspaper posts a lie on its website it will be punished, but if a 'pirate' news site does it there is no need».

And this from an Italian journalist who argues that ethics must apply to all those who post online, especially as these contents may be offensive or even threatening:


«What I would like is that, maybe, a new Charter is drawn, a new Code of Ethics, that must be debated, in new meetings, which must give new rules for journalists and for all those who write online, so that there is a greater control over the social media, on the blogs».

The key stakeholders, journalists, unions, owners, and the public must therefore come together to discuss what a new journalistic code of ethics should look like. By participating in common in the process of revising the code, their agreement and adherence to this code is more likely.

2.3 Employment protection and new business/revenue models

As long as there are different statuses for journalists and a clear inequality between them based on the type of employment contract they have, the more vulnerable journalists will be exploited and pressurised, thereby affecting the whole field. Throughout our interviews, the position of freelancers was understood in negative terms: firstly, it was seen as the result of loss of employment and labour rights; on the other, freelancers were seen as contributing to the disrepute of the profession but unquestioningly accepting the demands of their employers. Moreover, freelancers were also typically excluded from unions, thereby undermining the union position and unity as well. The main redeeming feature of freelancing was limited to a small category of freelancers, who were freelancing by choice, and who had connections with international media; this privileged group enjoyed a high degree of freedom and autonomy, as well as prestige because of their international connections. But in general, the existence of forced and 'false' freelancers was seen as a negative development that needs to be addressed.

'False' freelancers is a peculiar but not uncommon status in the countries in our sample, where journalists did not have a permanent contract with full employment rights but would be classed as freelancers although they had an exclusive relationship with just one medium. It is clear that this status deprives the journalist from any employment protection, insurance and social security contributions from the em-



ployer, while also making them more vulnerable because they do not have a choice. Some 'false' freelancers get paid by the piece that their medium publishes, so that even if they have produced three or four pieces, they only get paid for one. This means that such journalists put priority on pieces more likely to be published, rather than adhering to any code of ethics or uncovering sensitive or controversial stories. Moreover, freelancers do not qualify as union members in most countries' unions because they are not seen as full time employed journalists. Yet more and more journalistic work is outsourced to such freelancers.

This is how a Macedonian journalist described the 'false' freelancers:

«The situation is very bad for working journalists and for freelancers it's impossible. Actually, we have false freelancers. They are not employed [with a contract], but they work as normal journalists in the media room and they are not allowed to work for other media».

And this from another Macedonian journalist:

«Local correspondents - most of them are freelancers, because they got fired - are working per piece and they are very poorly paid. As for insurance, I pay only health insurance, because I'm paying by myself. But I'm not covered for pension».


This Montenegro journalist describes the restrictions on freelancers:

«If I do something with my own name on some blog, I am sure that I will immediately get fired. I am sure of that, 100%. [...] I don't even have a formal contract - I have a contract but it is temporary/freelance. It is not a real contract».

A Slovenian journalist makes a clear link between precariousness, de-professionalisation and lack of solidarity:

«I wish for more quality journalism, in a way. What happens is that many people somehow just got caught in the transition and the transfer of experiences from older to younger generations of journalists happens very rarely. I was lucky because I had the chance to work with some older, more experienced journalists who passed me their experience. But for example, I never worked with an editor, I never participated to editorial meetings. They had that in some of the newsrooms I worked for, but I am used to work by myself. More and more people do work in this kind of precarious conditions, or do not feel really connected with their work environment. The situation is getting worse regarding money received for the job done, worries about maintaining your job...and then solidarity [...] is destroyed».

How to address precariousness is not clear. There is a realisation that this is part of broader socio-economic trends and difficult to reverse. Nonetheless, there are three immediate things that can be done: the first is for unions to accept freelancers



as full members; the second is to control and regulate the freelance contracts offered; the third is to clarify the position of news sites and the extent to which news site workers are journalists. Again, the role to be played by unions here is pivotal and they have to somehow live up to their role.

In parallel to these measures to protect and unionise freelancers, a number of our respondents spoke enthusiastically of the new breed of journalistic cooperatives that have emerged in several countries. Because these are comprised of journalists as partners, they are seen as fairer and more equitable. Additionally the development of **cooperatives as a new business model** for journalism liberates journalism from pressures from owners and advertisers. It is of little wonder that cooperative media are seen by many in our sample as the way forward. The success of these new kinds of media businesses is crucial for the future of journalism as a whole. This is the view of a Greek journalist:


«If these self-managed, cooperative media succeed, they are paving the way not only for the field of media but for society as a whole. But for them to succeed, they must have the support of society and they must at the same time represent society. So this is how you change the balance of power and you can also create new jobs. Then, you can begin reformulating collective agreements, when there is a political change that allows you to do so, because it is effectively prohibited now».

The importance of an alternative business model is also highlighted by this Turkish journalist:

«In journalism you can affirm yourself only if you have a stance. However I think that with these media owners it won't be possible to change anything. The media bosses have to go through an evolution or, as an alternative, there must be independent newspapers with no owner. I am thinking of something beyond the foundation owned model of *Cumhuriyet*: it might be a cooperative system or a group of several different investors or even independent or anonymous investors that collect the money jointly. The newspapers should have an independent administration system which could use that money. A new formula needs to be developed. It's impossible to make journalism in Turkey or elsewhere with the current owners, especially with those who are businessmen».

In the bleak circumstances of the crisis-hit Greece, cooperatives may represent a way forward:

«Effectively in Greece there are small islands of journalism that self-organise and create new outlets on the internet, create new magazines, for example *Hot Doc* and *Unfollow* magazines,



and sites such as *The Press Project*, so we must invest in self-acting and in the dignity of journalists».

In part, the idea behind cooperative media is that they are able to produce independent quality journalism, which will then appeal to the public, thereby restoring its credibility and faith in journalism. Without the public, these initiatives will not survive in the long run. This is how another Greek journalist put it:


«De facto these cooperative schemes are facing survival issues. Citizens must realise that if they do not pay for their news and information, then someone else will. And this someone else will give them the kind of information that he or she wants. This is a clear realisation».

Similar thoughts come from a Slovenian journalist:

«Commercial media no longer have moral and ethical codes of conduct. They got rid of it. I hope that non-profit media would change that, influence this trend, by showing that working in the public interest is still possible. But the problem remains, because if there is no sufficient source of financial support for this sort of media, this won't be possible».

For most of our respondents, journalism is caught in a vicious circle of disinformation, cover-ups, exploiting, pressurising and even threatening and punishing journalists who dare to differ and protest. To get out of this cycle, journalism needs to look inward, to invest on journalism itself, rid itself from outsiders and outside influence and seek to regain public support, which eventually may contribute to its financial security. Because this is a cycle, the process can begin at any given point. For example, crowdfunding initiatives or EU subsidies may enable a media project to launch. If this manages to produce good journalism, as judged by peers and the public, then they may be more willing to fund it again. Aris Chatzistefanou, a Greek journalist who was part of a team that produced crowdfunded journalistic documentaries, notably 'Debtocracy' (2011), 'Catastroika' (2012) and 'Fascism Inc.' (2014), described the process in the following terms:

«We had heard very little about these alternative modes of funding, and in practice we had never done anything like this. Then in 'Debtocracy', they covered 8,000 Euros of expenses, equipment and travel, and in any case we had said, nobody gets paid from this. In 'Catastroika' the model changed and we tried to see if as professional journalists we can rely on this.[...]We put as our goal to pay all contributors on the basis of their contracts, because we also wanted this to be a political message that when collective agreements are destroyed we make it our goal to offer a professional journalist this level of salary. In the end we weren't very successful as we only got the equivalent of a two month salary. At the same time, our costs were also significantly increased. In total we crowdfunded about 25,000 Euros, which covered our expenses plus




something extra to be shared by all. Now for the third documentary, our crowdfunding effort has gone even better, which means that we can give something more to contributors».

Chatzistefanou is not naïve about crowdfunding. He sees it as a great opportunity but not as sustainable in the long run. In the short run however, it can help free journalists and allow them to do journalistic work that would not have been possible if they were salaried employees. The existence of such an independent and sustainable initiatives may be in turn contribute to the revitalization of the field of journalism, because journalists can see a viable alternative and thereby resist some of the pressures. Public support may therefore be seen as both preceding and following such initiatives.

2.4 Adjusting the Legal and Regulatory Framework

Throughout our series of interviews with journalists, the role of the law and public policies was seen as ambiguous at best and as inimical to journalism at worse. Laws that are meant to protect journalists were used against them, regulations to safeguard plurality and media diversity were either openly flaunted or abolished. It's no wonder that proposals for new laws, policies and regulations are viewed with at least a dose of scepticism. On the other hand, there is a clear realisation that unless some firm and binding rules and regulations are in place, the deterioration of journalism will continue unabated. In terms of the actual longer term needs for journalists' safety and protection, we identified three main areas for legal intervention. These concern the broad parameters of the legal and regulatory framework of journalism in the countries in our sample, but do not refer to more specific adjustments in the specific legal systems of specific countries. This part of the report is seeking to propose a broad direction and logic of changes based on the interviews with journalists, and to open up a broader public discussion about the specific form that these make take in the near future. The first concerns a clear recognition of the specificity of the journalism and therefore consider crimes against journalists or those who commit acts of journalism (citizen journalists, witnesses, bloggers and so on) as specific kinds of crimes that require special treatment, including expedited procedures. Secondly, the protection of journalists from legal excesses, and especially from frivolous lawsuits. Thirdly, the adoption of clear policies and regulations aimed at preserving diversity in journalism and preventing monopolies and oligopolies.

To begin with, offences against journalists, violence or the threat of violence, are considered in the same way as any other kind of crime against ordinary citizens. However, when a journalist is threatened in the course of their work, this should be treated as a specific type of offence as journalists are operating in the public in-




terest and therefore interfering with them means interfering with the public interest. These are not the same circumstances as with private citizens who are threatened in the course of their everyday private lives, and the legal system must recognize this. Legal systems must therefore open up to recognize that free journalism and free media are crucial for the functioning of society and any interference or offence against journalists must be dealt with accordingly. And this also concerns 'low level' offences such as threats and hate speech via social media: insofar as they are used to discipline or punish journalistic work, they must be dealt as attempts to prevent freedom of speech. For example, an Italian journalist, victim of these continuous social media threats described how her complaint was more or less ignored and in the end nothing happened:

«The reporting of an offence to the postal police is a serious complaint, which must be taken seriously, and I believe that a journalist who receives threats on the social networks should be someone whose report and complaint falls on deaf ears».

This climate of impunity is extremely demoralising for journalists and steps must be taken to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. Considering offences against journalists as a particular and special category of offence may be a step towards this direction. In another example, a Greek journalist argued that an assault against him was classed as misdemeanour and therefore the police could not obtain warrants for telephone conversations which would find who was behind these attacks. The result was that the case never reached the courts and the message sent was that such attacks can continue with impunity. But such assaults do not only have an effect on their immediate victim: they have broader social effects and this must be formally acknowledged as such.

Similarly, a common complaint by journalists was the duration of legal cases, either those brought against journalists or those that journalists brought against others. Given that immediacy is a key value for journalism, which can be seen as a continuous history of the present, to have to wait for months for a resolution means that stories are effectively silenced. This is what happened in the case of an Italian journalist, whose reports were considered as evidence in a criminal case, and when three articles were published, the legal authorities and he was not allowed to publish them until the case was resolved. This is the reaction of the journalist involve:

«My requirement after what I experienced would be to have more protection, maybe a channel for these processes because the risk of gagging the press is a heavy thing. The Italian justice system is already slow, but the information cannot be slowed by these continuous delays».



Expedited procedures for cases involving journalists may also help address the issue of protracted police protection which ends up feeling like prison for journalists and their families, while the actual suspects are allowed to get on with their lives unhindered. If therefore cases concerning journalists were given a special legal status issues such as these could be addressed. It should also be pointed out here that any kind of special status should cover acts of journalism even if they are committed by individuals not employed as journalists. The main question should concern the extent to which the offence was against a person because of their acts of journalism.


A second legal element concerns the use of law and the legal process as a means of silencing and disciplining journalists. While we do not expect journalists to be above the law, their systematic subjection to what can be described as frivolous lawsuits can be seen as an attempt to compromise their ability to report. Some protection against frivolous lawsuits must therefore be in place. This is how an Italian journalist put it:

«A major problem for freedom of information in Italy is that of frivolous lawsuits. In Italy there is not the opportunity to condemn those who put forward a lawsuit recklessly and so many newspapers and journalists are the victims of justice, as shown by the number of unfounded complaints».

In the US there is a growing realisation of the strategic use of such lawsuits, and there have been effective attempts to have lawsuits thrown out of court on this basis. The so-called anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation) statute allows a defendant company or person to ask the courts to dismiss claims based on their statements about an issue of public concern, and it has been used successfully in a number of cases in the US, although according to the Electronic Frontier Foundation this is still not federal law⁴³. While these laws were suggested by non-governmental organisations and environmental activists, whose attempts to influence the public discourse was met by continuous lawsuits, they can find useful application in protecting journalists. In Europe, there have been discussions about this kind of protective measure, and in some cases proposals have made it into legislation – see for example the work of the Libel Reform group in the UK⁴⁴. None of these discussions however has taken place in any of the countries in our sample, and journalists are still exposed to continuous lawsuits and the crippling expenses and stress associated with these. It is no wonder that journalists, for example, the Italian journalist quoted below, ask for this kind of protection:

43 For full details see: <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2013/04/another-lawsuit-threat-why-dont-we-have-federal-anti-slapp-law-yet>

44 Details available at: <http://www.libelreform.org/>



«I would like to see more protection for our profession, but if a journalist makes a mistake [they] must pay. More streamlined in certain procedures and new laws to stop those who want to muzzle the press with reckless lawsuits».

But the most crucial kind of legislation and regulation concerns reform in the media ownership laws. But the situation is more complex as many countries actually have an appropriate anti-monopoly law, but these are not applied properly. In other cases, while the letter of the law is not violated, its spirit is. More thought should be applied on how to deal with this issue. A way forward must include transparency of ownership and possibly also interest disclosure when there is potential conflict. For example, in Greece a major news organisation owns shares in a controversial goldmine in Skouries, Chalkidiki. Articles in this organisation's outlets should be accompanied by full disclosure of the group's interest in the goldmine. In Romania, in a similar case of a controversial mine in Transylvania, the company paid for media advertising, in a move that was widely conceived as a form of bribery of the media. In cases where stories are censored, such as for example the Hasankeyf dam project in Turkey, where the media owner 'killed' the story because they had interests in the project, the role the importance of media diversity is made clear. Stakeholders must discuss ways of ensuring media diversity, and in some cases this may involve public subsidy of new journalistic initiatives as a means of breaking media monopolies, as is the case in Croatia, where there is a public support system for non-profit media. Alternative forms of subsidy could include the following idea discussed by a Greek journalist:

«I am in favour of the view that since information is a public good then it must receive some kind of public financing. Until now public financing was considered as state control. However, it could operate as a pool of money and then people could decide where this money will go to, so as to divorce the direct connection between the state and the news producer; in other words, to subsidize each citizen who can then say, I choose to give this amount to this newspaper. So it's not really the state that decides where the money goes but the citizen. The state only comes in to subsidize information as a public good».

These should not be seen as alternatives to proper controls of media monopolies but as parallel measures to protect media diversity and hence protect journalist and journalism from encroachment from private interests.

The Table below summarises the main long term needs and the changes proposed in order to address them.

Long term needs	Structural changes – media freedom guarantees
Educating the public	<p>The public must be aware of the role and importance of media and journalism.</p> <p>Citizens should be able to formulate their demands and expectations from journalism.</p> <p>A public that stands behind journalism is an important safeguard.</p> <p>The public and journalists must debate on the kind of journalism they want and how to attain it.</p>
Code of Ethics	<p>Reformulate, restructure and publicly discuss the journalistic code of ethics.</p> <p>Broaden the code to include online acts of journalism.</p> <p>Offer continuous ethics training and/or establish ethics groups in news media.</p> <p>Ensure involvement of all stakeholders (public, Journalists, unions, owners).</p> <p>Establish accountability and personal responsibility for journalists but also media owners.</p>
Employment status	<p>Unionise freelancers</p> <p>Regulate freelance contracts.</p> <p>Clarify status of contributors to news sites.</p>
New business models	<p>Diversification of business/revenue models can enrich journalism and offer more possibilities to journalists.</p> <p>Co-operative and non-profit models a hope for a new independent journalism that can enrich the field.</p> <p>Crowdsourcing a new model, albeit mostly for one-off attempts.</p> <p>Public subsidies must also be considered.</p>
Adjusting the legal and regulatory framework	<p>Exceptionality of offences against journalists or those committing acts of journalism – given their status as serving the public interest, legal systems must consider the possibility of differentiating such offences and expedite their resolution of legal conflicts involving journalists.</p> <p>Address the question of frivolous lawsuits used to discipline journalists – legal systems should consider some kind of anti-SLAPP measures.</p>




Conclusions: what is to be done?

This report represents an attempt to allow journalists to relate their experiences of threats and impediments to practising journalism, their views on the current state of journalism in their country, and especially to discuss their needs and requirements for them to continue practising journalism safely. Throughout this report we identified some well-known and persistent problems, including the questions of ownership, financing, and political control. The report also highlighted some less discussed but equally pernicious trends, including the rise of business-political consortia that tend to operate as cartels; the increasing precariousness of journalists and its impact on media freedom and the field of journalism; the significant impact and role of legal systems as a disciplinary mechanism; the role of gender and ethnic identities as aggravating factors in threats against journalists; and the role played by authoritarian legacies and their resurgence in conditions of crisis. All these conspire to prevent journalism from fulfilling its mandate and in this manner remove from citizens their right to information.

It is important to stress that the focus of this report has been on identifying the needs of journalists, and the potential remedial measures that can offer immediate respite and more long term improvement of conditions for journalists. It is our contention that it is very difficult to address these needs without thinking about the political, social and cultural role of journalism, and the ways in which it is part of a complex set of relationships between the field of the social, politics, and economics. The pressures that journalists face are symptoms of broader pathologies that affect society as a whole. Addressing these in the long term may therefore require broader socio-political changes and we must ask whether societies are willing and able to carry them out. But if media freedom is a necessary condition for democracy, then the stakes are very high indeed.

These findings reiterate and add depth and empirical validity to current descriptions of the state of journalism. In 2013, Sandra Hrvatin talking about Slovenia, argued that 'In the last two decades the euphoria of both politics and civil society has been founded on the belief that market forces would liberate us from the past restraints of the single party, undemocratic, non market system and lead us to a new society of equal opportunities (not possibilities) for everybody. Whereas in actual fact the political space (and, indirectly, the media space as well, which rather quickly got colonised by politics) has been invaded by the ideology of unbridled privatisation, unreasonable deregulation, uncontrolled media concentration, the pre-




carisation and pauperisation of the journalistic work force, a re-established state control of the public service broadcasting⁴⁵. More than two years later we have found a similar situation across eleven different countries each with their own history and problems, but each confronted by very similar issues in terms of media freedom. The similarity faced in the experiences of journalists further point to the need to develop a common methodology for monitoring violations of media freedoms, an argument persuasively made by Ossigeno per l'Informazione.

The kinds of people we came across in our interviews were in some sense courageous and exceptional individuals, who have experienced hardship, threats and violence for no other reason than doing their job. They all had a very clear sense of ethics, a vision of the public interest, a commitment to the truth. While not all journalism is required to be especially courageous or heroic, properly functioning democracies need to ensure that when society needs such journalistic heroism then at least it has provisions in place to protect and support people engaged in acts of journalism, whether they are citizens, full time employed journalists, freelancers or interns. This report adds sociological depth and detail to the experiences of journalists, and these must be taken into account in any future policy.

Policy Recommendations

One of the challenges of this report is to find a common way of addressing the different requirements and intensities of the problems faced in the countries of our sample. It is difficult to make concrete recommendations given the varying institutions, traditions and journalistic cultures. Our recommendations are therefore necessarily framed in an abstract manner, seeking to capture essential commonalities and provide broad directions for relevant policy changes. Some of these policy proposals can be undertaken by existing institutions at the local level, for example Unions, Press/Media Councils, local NGOs and media monitoring organisations; others require supranational support for example, from EU institutions, international associations and international NGOs and media monitoring organisations; yet others may require the formation of new structures operating as bridges between journalists and the public, and between the local and European-international level. Finally, it must be noted that, as many of our interviewees pointed out, it is impossible to make changes in journalism without making social and political changes as well. We have tried to address this requirement by pointing to the need for social open-

45 Hrvatin, S. (2013), One Step Forwards, Two Steps Back. Mediawatch journal, 44:45: 62. Available at <http://mediawatch.mirovni-institut.si/eng/mediawatch-comparing-media-reforms.pdf>



ness and for involving the public in protecting and revaluing journalism. Journalism cannot survive without support from the public and the society it is meant to serve.

Legal and regulatory environment

- Help local journalistic organisations to create the structures that can address problems immediately and efficiently.
- Create a special police unit to deal with threats against journalists specifically.
- Consider the implementation of anti-SLAPP measures protecting journalists from frivolous and malicious lawsuits.
- Consider ways of expediting pending court cases concerning journalists.
- Create a legal and/or hardship fund open to all those involved in journalism, including citizen journalists that will operate with the support of unions but independently.
- Protect unions and their members - one of our interviewees suggested imposing a quota of 60:40 unionised to non-members imposed on media outlets. This however presupposes the openness of unions, while it may create another division between employed and freelance journalists. Careful thought and open consultations should ensure the best outcome.

The report is reluctant to suggest more regulatory changes, as it has emerged that often there are issues of implementation. Rather, it may be more efficient to support local structures, for example unions or associations, which can put continuous pressure for the correct implementation of existing frameworks.

Safety

- Create a protocol of response to different threats.
- Publicize widely all kinds of support available to journalists; set up a website with up-to-date information and simple flow charts informing journalists about their options, including a list of lawyers available to represent them pro bono.
- Ensure that there are safety structures in place, for example, a safe house.
- Organise seminars and training sessions on safety awareness, including online safety.
- Publicize and keep 'alive' instances of journalists under threat.



Media Financing and Employment

- Create support structures for cooperative media ventures
- Re-negotiate and monitor implementation of collective agreements
- Monitor media ownership status
- Develop ways of ensuring equitable and transparent distribution of EU and state advertising money across all media

Media/Journalistic Practices

- Publicise media and journalistic achievements, making the public aware of the importance of healthy journalism
- Open up and invite public consultation for a re-drafting of the journalistic code of ethics: this should address the online component and journalistic acts undertaken by citizen journalists, as well as a full disclosure of interests
- Organise regular meetings and discussions between journalists in order to strengthen solidarity
- Re-structure and open up unions to form inclusive and transparent institution
- Develop a common way and methodology for monitoring violations in order to be able to make meaningful comparisons

The Table below summarises the project proposals in terms of the specific safety needs of journalists.

Key Recommendations

Threats/problems	Immediate Needs	Long Term Structural Changes
Violence/threat of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety awareness • Police • Safe house • Publicity • Solidarity/support from colleagues and the public • Psychological support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider adjusting the legal system to make the fact that the victim of violence/threats was acting as a journalist an aggravating factor • Create solidarity structures in parallel with unions, for example, a hardship and/or legal aid fund available to all
Slander/defamation of journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity/support from colleagues and public • Union support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedited legal procedures dealing with complaints by journalists • Address aggravating factor, especially ethnicity and gender in wider social context
Threats to employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity from colleagues and publics • Union support • Offer financial and practical support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honour collective agreements • Create new business models, especially cooperative, non-profit news media
Legal measures against journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to legal help for all (i.e. non-union members, freelancers, citizen journalists) • Financial assistance to help with legal fees/imposed fines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider some kind of anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) legislation protecting journalists from frivolous lawsuits • Establish a legal aid fund
Online/social media attacks, threats and harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a protocol of response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ warn, report, block √ if serious, then police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate the public • Develop a code of ethics • Collaborate with social media corporations
Media Oligopolies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure transparency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ establish databases of owners/shareholders/executive boards of media organisations (example of Macedonia's MediaPedia) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust the legal system • Ensure compliance • Improve transparency • Adopt a disclosure policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ if a media owner has an interest in the story reporter it must be declared
(Lack of) Adherence to code of ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen unions and associations • Public discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure ethics alongside all stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ public, journalists, owners • Ensure ethical compliance by having media owners on board • Rethink the internet/social media in ethical terms
Precariousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unionise and support freelancers/project workers/part-timers/interns 	

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