



Freedom of expression and journalistic autonomy

1. What is journalistic autonomy and why is it important?
2. How is journalistic autonomy safeguarded in selected European (Mediadem) countries?

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Journalistic autonomy

- **Whose autonomy? Who is considered a journalist?**
- The High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism:
“Within the shifting sands of the current media environment, the HLG regrets to refrain from offering any firm and consensual definition of either journalism or journalists” .
- Among Mediadem countries:
 - status based definition;
 - activity based definition.
- Definition of professional journalists is formulated by law in Belgium, Croatia and Italy.



Three levels of journalistic professional autonomy

- ❏ **Journalists** (individuals/personal autonomy) ought to be free in selecting information and in covering stories;
- ❏ **Newsrooms** (organizations/collective autonomy) ought to be independent from external influences, such as commercial or political constraints.
- ❏ **Media institutions** (society/institutional autonomy) ought to have guaranteed press freedom and ought to be free from all kinds of censorship.



Factors influencing journalistic autonomy

- Political, economic and technological frameworks as the sources of *external* influence;
- organisational and procedural frameworks as the sources of *internal* influence (editorial practices, internal hierarchies and relationships in the newsrooms, working conditions and trade organisations);
- professional frameworks (codes of conduct, journalism education, professional ideology).



Journalistic autonomy in Mediadem countries

- Differences between ‘established’ European democracies and ‘new’ democracies and
- along ‘media systems’ (Hallin & Mancini 2004):
 - Greece, Spain and Italy – Polarised Pluralist model;
 - Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Germany – Democratic Corporatist model;
 - The UK – Liberal model;
 - CEE countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Romania, Slovakia;
 - Turkey.



Political influence...

- ... through state involvement in the media
 - legal regulation;
 - indirect and direct subsidies.

- ... through the relationships between politicians and journalists.



Economic conditions determining journalistic autonomy

▣ Organisation's level:

“Making money and surviving in the new competitive environment have become the key concerns of commercial media” (Obijiofor and Hanusch, 2011: 160).

▣ Individual level:

- Job security;
- Job market.



Factors stemming from immediate work environment

- Self-censorship;
- Editorial autonomy;
- Self-regulation.



Trade unions

- Strong trade unions: Finland, Denmark, Germany
- Weak trade unions: Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria



Conclusions

- The protection of the autonomy of an individual journalist is an all-European problem.
- The limits of journalistic autonomy depend on:
 - Political and economic background;
 - The overall size of media market and number of jobs available;
 - Level of commercialization and technological advancement;
 - Workload and work intensity;
 - Level of professionalism and overall journalism culture.

