

Ethical and Legislative Standards in the Environment of Radio Broadcasters and Their Application into Practice

Eubica Bôtošová¹, Andrej Brnik¹, Tomislav Levak², Václav Kupec³

¹Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Trnava, Slovak Republic

²Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Department of Culture, Media and Management, Croatia

³University of Finance and Administration, Faculty of Economics Studies, Czech Republic

Correspondence: Eubica Bôtošová, Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Trnava, 917 01, Slovak Republic.

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Abstract

The present scientific study deals with the legislative and ethical norms that apply in the environment of media production. The authors have focused their attention mainly on the media in post-communist countries, namely the Slovak and Czech Republics and Croatia. In the process of drafting, they have made a detailed analysis of the legislative norms, giving special emphasis to a brief historical overview of the development of these documents, where they also describe the work of radio journalists, how journalists' sources of information are protected, and how the documents reflect new forms of media development, such as online media, streaming services, podcasts, etc. A similar analysis has also been made of ethical standards in the above-mentioned countries, particularly in terms of the possibility of applying existing codes of ethics specifically to radio broadcasting and radio workers, but also of new developments that a code of ethics should cover, such as comments on social networks, profiles of journalists, their statements, etc. The study also includes a questionnaire for radio workers who process information and focuses on how they apply ethical and legislative standards in practice. Thus, the aim of the submitted study is to compare the ethical and legislative framework of work in the radio media in selected post-communist countries of Europe and their application in practice.

Keywords: ethical standards, legislative standards, radio worker, radio, code of ethics, law

1. Introduction

Radio broadcasting is a solid part of media production, but in some cases the importance and the need to clearly define specific steps and procedures in the production of radio outputs, the collection of material, as well as the approaching of interviewees or the protection of the source, seems to be forgotten. Over the years, mass communication, but also the work of the radio journalist, has changed radically; he or she has to come to terms with the fact that information can be delivered faster and more clearly and also more visually attractively than it is on the radio. A journalist's job has also become more complicated with the advent of social networking, which can be a pitfall, a valuable resource, but also a mistake in doing the job. As a result, legislative and ethical standards become a kind of manual for journalists on what they can, cannot, must and should do. The aim of this research is to find out how the legal and ethical rights and freedoms of radio journalists are anchored in selected post-communist countries, based on the analysis of secondary data. At the same time, through qualitative inquiries of radio information workers, to find out how these norms and their observance are reflected in their journalistic practice. The contribution to the existing material on the subject is that it summarises the different forms of approach to ethical and legislative parameters in the work of radio workers, which are enshrined either in legislation or in the ethical standards of radio editorial offices. It analyses and summarises in detail the findings from selected countries: the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Croatia. It has the ambition to connect these nationalities, for the reason that they are culturally interconnected. Literary sources consist of existing and valid legislation in the selected countries, as well as available public sources, which for example radio media have accessible on their web portals as a basic tool for working with information, how the behaviour of editors and staff who deal with information and have to process it is to be enshrined in internal rules.

2. Methodology

Censorship has two definitions: the first is control over the content and forms of public information, and the second concerns the system that implements such control. Censorship is both a method of control and a mean of precise regulation. As an example, when we look inside the Soviet censorship system, we can distinguish a complex of unique instructions as well as organizations that restricted access to information limited access to distribution channels on the one hand, and restricted access to distribution channels on the other. Ordinary individuals were unable to publish anything. Only a few institutions were eligible and allowed to publish under rigorous supervision. (Lauk, 1999, p. 19). Communism marked many countries with its strict censorship of information and its strong monopoly on mass media, where there could be no media other than state-owned media. Censorship took various forms in communist countries. Moreover, if there were ethical norms and standards, they were not always upheld and the interests of higher class society were given priority. Therefore, we chose as the basic research question of the research conducted:

RQ: How do the legal and ethical norms of selected post-communist countries currently reflect trends in new media and freedoms in information work, and what is the application of these norms to contemporary radio journalism practice?

Among the secondary research questions to assist in answering the main research question, we set out:

1. How do the legal norms of the selected country define the work of a radio journalist?
2. How is working with and protecting sources and information defined in media norms?
3. Do media legal norms reflect new trends in the field of new media?
4. How are the ethical norms that should guide journalistic practice embodied in the selected country?
5. Is there a separate area for radio broadcasting and radio journalists within the established ethical standards (how do the ethical standards reflect new trends in information processing and dissemination)?
6. How do radio journalists comply with legal and ethical standards in practice?

The data were selected and analyzed by the individual authors of the present study, selected from the available legislative and ethical materials of the country to be studied. It was a sequential examination of the legislative and ethical standards in the country represented by the authors. In the case of legislative standards, we focused on existing laws and regulations. In the case of ethical standards, it was the codes of ethics of the journalistic organizations operating in the country. We studied the selected documents and selected only the part that could be applied to the radio media. After analyzing these parts, we summarized the different elements we found and subjected them to comparison. After comparing the findings, we evaluated the opportunities and threats in each of the identified areas and summarized. The sub-questions identified were intended to serve as a guide for the individual authors to touch upon all the essentials mentioned in the analysis.

2.1 Identify Subsections

It is both conventional and expedient to divide the Method section into labeled subsections. These usually include a section with descriptions of the participants or subjects and a section describing the procedures used in the study. The latter section often includes description of (a) any experimental manipulations or interventions used and how they were delivered—for example, any mechanical apparatus used to deliver them; (b) sampling procedures and sample size and precision; (c) measurement approaches (including the psychometric properties of the instruments used); and (d) the research design. If the design of the study is complex or the stimuli require detailed description, additional subsections or subheadings to divide the subsections may be warranted to help readers find specific information. Include in these subsections the information essential to comprehend and replicate the study. Insufficient detail leaves the reader with questions; too much detail burdens the reader with irrelevant information. Consider using appendices and/or a supplemental website for more detailed information.

2.2 Research Method of Data Processing

In answering the main research question, while seeking answers to the secondary research questions, we chose a synthesis of several research methods. Analysis of secondary sources and a quantitative method using a questionnaire survey.

Analysis of secondary sources of research data, which included:

- Legal norms of the selected countries that deal with media law, especially those that reflect radio broadcasting in the selected country.
- National ethical standards in the selected countries that focus on journalistic ethics and the work of the journalist.

Quantitative method of data collection with the use of questionnaire:

How radio journalists comply with legal and ethical norms in practice was investigated using a quantitative method of

enquiry, on an available sample of selected radio news workers. The survey was conducted online, in the month of February 2022, in selected post-communist countries (Slovakia, Croatia, Czech Republic). The questionnaire was designed to reflect the level of knowledge of legal and ethical norms, their observance and application in practice. The number of respondents is not high in terms of quantity, this is due to the low saturation of information workers in radio due to globalization and changes in the radio market. A total of 31 journalists working in radio responded to the questionnaire (11 from Slovakia, 10 from Croatia and 10 from the Czech Republic).

3. Analysis of Law and Ethical Norms

Radio broadcasting in the then Czechoslovakia began on 18 May 1923 (Čábelová, 2003; Szczepanik, 2009). Since then, Czech radio has evolved to include comprehensive elements of modern day journalism and work of journalists (Bednařík et al., 2011; Večeřa, 2015). The current development of radio broadcast is determined primarily by digitization, or digital radio channels whose broadcast is also often visualized (Svoboda, 2009; Končelík et al., 2010). The current state of radio broadcast naturally also reflects the socio-economic environment (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2007), as well as valid legislation (laws) with respect to self-regulating regulations (codes).

The Slovak media market, as well as most of the surrounding countries, is specified by a dual system of television and radio broadcasting. The development of the media market is closely related to the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic in 1993, changes in political and social conditions, the development of private enterprise and, finally, globalization, the penetration of foreign investors and companies into the media market. In the field of radio broadcasting, in 2019 the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission registered 36 radio stations, of which 12 were holders of licenses for multi-regional broadcasting, 14 for regional broadcasting and 10 for local broadcasting. In addition, the Council registered 23 digital broadcasters¹ (RVR, 2020).

In the territory of today's Republic of Croatia, radio broadcasting began on May 15, 1926², and Radio Zagreb was the first radio station in Southeast Europe (HRT Radio, 2022). Since then, the radio market in the region has undergone several transformations and adjustments caused by social and political changes. Between two wars³, from 1945 to 1991, the longest phase of radio broadcasting in Croatia lasted during the Yugoslav federation, and radio was under direct control of the state and the political apparatus (Mučalo, 2010, p. 291). From the spring of 1991 to mid-1993, Croatian radio broadcasting operated under difficult and dangerous wartime conditions. Transformation and privatization processes were initiated with the independence of the Republic of Croatia (Mučalo, 2010, p. 314), and in the second half of 1993 the establishment of the first private radio stations in Croatia began.

According to the Electronic Media Agency, today the Croatian radio landscape consists of a total of 154 radio broadcasters – 143 concessionaires for broadcasting radio programs, differing in audibility ranges and program directions – and Croatian Radio with 11 program channels, part of Croatian Radio and Television, the only public media service in Croatia (AEM, Radio Publishers, 2022). Among the concessionaires, there are only eight non-profit organizations, while all others are mostly companies in exclusive or mixed (private-public) ownership. In terms of broadcasting levels, the most numerous are local radio stations (municipalities and cities) – a total of 86. Three radio stations have a national concession, while the rest are county and multi-regional (Mučalo, 2020, p. 89).

3.1 Legislative Norms in the Czech Republic

A number of laws are in place in the Czech Republic that are related to radio broadcast and radio journalists. The most fundamental laws include Act No. 484/1991 Coll., on Czech Radio, of 7 November 1991, as amended. Also of importance is Act No. 231/2001 Coll., on Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasting, of 17 May 2001, as amended. Also Act No. 348/2005 Coll., on Radio and Television Charges, of 5 August 2005, as amended, should be mentioned. And last but not least, there is Act No. 132/2010 Coll., on Audiovisual Media Services on Demand, of 13 April 2010, as amended. Self-regulating norms will be analyzed below.

The key regulation related to radio broadcast as well as television broadcast is the abovementioned Act No. 231/2001 Coll., on Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasting. Same as in case of other laws, its task is to transpose European Union acts to Czech legislation (pursuant to Section 1, Act No. 231/2001 Coll., this concerns Council Directive 89/552/EEC, Directive 97/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council) and at the same time regulate the Czech environment in the area of radio and television broadcast, including its defining framework (pursuant to Section 2, Act No. 231/2001 Coll., this concerns the definition of radio and television broadcast).

This includes also laws regulating the work of journalists in radio broadcasting. Based on a content analysis (Weber, 1990; Gavora, 2015) it can be said that the work of these journalists is not regulated by one act, so individual sections in selected acts must be used. In this respect, Section 41, Act No. 231/2001 Coll., on Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasting, is of particular importance. It analyzes the protection of sources and content of information, when a person who has

obtained or processed information for radio and television broadcast has the right to decline to provide information on the origin or content of information as well as the right to refuse to present objects from which the origin or content of this information might be revealed.

Naturally, it does not follow from the above that any information could be disseminated. Part V of the abovementioned Act No. 231/2001 Coll., on Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasting, defines the rights and obligations of operators of broadcasting and operators of adopted broadcasting. If mutually contradictory information was broadcast, i.e. if fake information was broadcast, this would be a violation of Section 31, Para 2, Act No. 231/2001 Coll. Possible sanctions are again regulated in Act No. 231/2001 Coll., this time in Part VII, which enumerates the possible solutions to violation of obligations in radio and television broadcast (measures to rectify, potential offences, removal of license and other areas).

If we were to provide a comprehensive assessment of the state of Czech laws in the context of the development of new media, in particular radio broadcasting, we would unfortunately have to say that the relevant laws do not reflect the current trends in digitization of radio broadcasting. This is mainly due to the fact that the majority of basic laws were prepared during the socio-economic transformation from the centrally planned economy in the 1990s. The subsequent transposition of European norms to the relevant laws concerned mostly their technical compliance. The current digitization, the 4th industrial revolution, or different demands of listeners are not addressed in the laws and this confirms the hypothesis that new laws are being prepared with a certain delay.

3.2 Legislative Norms in Slovak Republic

The Slovak media market is specified by a relatively high saturation and a high number of entities that operate in a relatively small market. It consists primarily of organizations whose main task is to publish periodicals and radio or television broadcasting. We are talking about the traditional media, which can be divided into print and electronic. In recent years, however, we can see a significant increase in the number of online media. We are talking mainly about news portals that, like traditional media, bring up-to-date news. Not only the online media, but also traditional media, like television and radio, are trying to turn their content into the online environment by creating various podcasts, broadcast archives and, more recently, their own video streaming services. The legal regulation of the media market itself therefore differs depending on the type of media. Different legislation regulates periodicals, television and radio broadcasting. In Slovakia is focused on the Broadcasting and Retransmission Act no. 308/200 Z.z. This law has been amended several times and a new version is currently in validity from 1st January 2023. The aim of this new legislation is a new comprehensive legal regulation in the field of audio visual media services, which replaced Act No. 308/2000 on Broadcasting and retransmission and on the amendment of Act No. 195/2000 on Telecommunications, as amended (referred to as the “Broadcasting and Retransmission Act”) and Act No. 220/2007 on The digital broadcasting of program services and the provision of other content services through digital transmission and on the amendment of certain laws (the Digital Broadcasting Act), as amended. The new law reflects not only traditional electronic media but also video streaming services⁴ that are available in Slovakia (Act No. 264/2022, 2022). Their broadcasting is also the responsibility of the national supervisory body called The Media Services Council. It is a state administration body with national competence, which supervises compliance with legislation governing broadcasting, retransmission, the provision of on-demand audiovisual media services and the provision of content-sharing platforms (Rada pre mediálne služby, 2022). It was previously named as Broadcasting and Retransmission Council.

Under the current law, there is a lot of space dedicated to radio and broadcasters. Freedom is guaranteed in paragraph 15, article 1 – *The broadcaster broadcasts the programs freely and independently. Their content can be interfered with only on the basis of the law and within its limits.* In the same paragraph, also guarantees the protection of the source of information: The broadcaster is obliged to maintain confidentiality about the source of information obtained for publication in news programs and journalistic programs and the content of this information so that the identity of the source cannot be established if requested by the natural person and that the disclosure of the content of the information does not infringe the rights of third parties; documents, printed matter and other data carriers, in particular video recordings, audio recordings and audio-visual recordings from which the natural person who provided the information could be identified, shall be treated in such a way that the identity of the source of the information cannot be revealed. Consent to the publication of the source can be given only by the person concerned or by law if the obligation of confidentiality does not apply to the case where it is possible (statutory obligation) to prevent the commission of a crime (Act No. 308/2000, 2000). We can state that the free work of a radio journalist and their guarantee for the protection of the source is currently strongly rooted in the law, which of course was not always the case (it was not introduced into the law until the amendment in 2008) (Act No. 308/2000, 2000).

However, radio broadcasting has a rich tradition in Slovakia. The first private media began to emerge only after the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic (after 1993). The reason was mainly the slow introduction of new media laws that would reflect the dual system of broadcasting. However, as a clear example, we can mention the

broadcasting of FUN radio from Bratislava, it was a student radio station, which was transformed by the entry of a French investor, which, for example, broadcast in 1991 as permitted by the Ministry of Culture (Denník N, 2020).

Until this time, public service media, which functioned as monopolies, had a dominant position, but they were often subject to the pursuit of political control, which can be described as one of the main risks of deliberative communication. At present, private media players have a dominant position in the media market, both in the case of television and radio broadcasting. In the case of print and online media, these are exclusively privately owned entities.

In recent years, media ownership has become a relatively discussed topic, which has repeatedly raised questions about the independence of the media, the objectivity of the news and the degree of its involvement in deliberative communication. Articles published on news portals also draw attention to selected cases. The development of information and communication technologies, as well as increasing access to the Internet, have significantly contributed to the emergence of new media, especially online media, but also to the expansion of traditional media into the online environment and thus better access to information. However, better accessibility has also brought about the fragmentation of the media market and has enabled the emergence of various entities, which the literature refers to as disinformation or conspiracy media. These are media that often publish inaccurate information, distort reality, or deliberately present facts in a way that pursues a specific goal. The danger of disseminating such information, as well as the issue of non-regulation of online media, has been significantly highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently, a new law is in force in Slovakia, Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on Media Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts (the Media Services Act), which entered into full force on 1 January 2023. The main aim was to transform Slovak media legislation, modernize it and bring it up to date for the 21st century. A major priority for the reform was also to help journalists to carry out their work freely and safely which can be another impulse for supporting deliberative communication. The key topics of the new legislation include transparent media ownership, source protection, equal rights and obligations for television, radio, print and online media, and the solution of online video platforms. It also expanded the possibility of community radio broadcasters (Act No. 264/2022, 2022).

The most significant change brought about by the new legislation is the inclusion of video-sharing platforms in the regulatory framework for audiovisual media services. For this reason, the new legislation regulates the rights and obligations of broadcasters, on-demand audio visual media service providers, retransmission operators, multiplex providers, as well as the rights and obligations of video-sharing platform providers and content service providers that do not belong to the above-mentioned entities. It regulates the rights and obligations of the signal distributors⁵.

3.3 Legislative Norms in Croatia

Dominant trends in the last decade, such as globalization, marked advances in information technology, market liberalization and the general digitization of content, have had a major impact on the electronic media market. For this reason, a wide-ranging debate was launched on the need for regulatory reform and strengthening the role of alternative modes of regulating all forms of electronic media, including radio in Croatia. This implies the involvement of all stakeholders in the electronic media market in the regulatory process – media service providers, interest groups, civil society, industry, regulatory bodies and legislative institutions (Lisičar, 2016, p. 640).

Since the independence of the Republic of Croatia, several laws have been passed related to the regulation of activities of the media and media workers, which to a greater or lesser extent also apply to broadcasting and radio journalists. The legal acts in force today were preceded by other media laws – the Public Information Act (in force from 1992 to 1996), the Public Communications Act (from 1996 to 2003) and the Telecommunications Act (in 1994, from 1999 to 2003). Many media freedoms, including freedom of expression, are guaranteed by the existing Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (Topić, 2011, p. 25; Mučalo, 2020, p. 91). The basic Croatian media law is the Media Act (adopted in 2003, last amended in 2013), with other relevant laws, which also concern radio broadcasting, currently in force: the Electronic Communications Act (2008, last amended in 2013), the Right to Access Information Act (2013, last amended in 2015) and the Croatian Radio and Television Act (2010, last amended in 2017), which exclusively regulates the activities of the public media service. The most recent, and most important for the topic of radio broadcasting, is the Electronic Media Act, which entered into force in October 2021. In addition, several related legislative and regulatory acts of the European Union are applied in the field of media in Croatia, such as Directive 2010/13 / EU of the European Parliament and the Council on audiovisual media services (Lisičar, 2016).

Freedom of the media is one of the general principles of the main Media Act. Articles 3 and 4 of this Act guarantee freedom of expression and freedom of the media, and elaborate on what exactly it covers, when it is exceptionally permissible to restrict it and how it is protected. The protection of sources of information is regulated by Article 30 of the Act. Paragraph 1 states that a journalist is not obliged to provide information on the source of published information or information he/she intends to publish, and two paragraphs of the same article explain the exceptions. Paragraph 4 reads as follows: *The State Attorney's Office may, when this restriction is necessary in the interests of national security,*

territorial integrity and health protection, submit a request to the competent court to order a journalist to provide information on the source of published information or information intended for publishing. The following paragraph 5 provides: *The court may order a journalist to disclose the source of the information published or the information intended for publishing, if this is necessary to protect the public interest, in case of particularly significant and serious circumstances,* which are then elaborated. All of the above also applies to radio journalists and editors.

As for potential production and dissemination of false information through the media, again there are no rules focused only on radio. Moreover, this problem in Croatian legislation is primarily regulated in the laws regulating misdemeanours and crime, and not in any of the media laws. Article 16 of the Misdemeanours against Public Order and Peace Act stipulates that anyone who fabricates or spreads false news (including journalists) that disturb the peace and tranquility of citizens will be fined for the offense with 50 to 200 DEM in the equivalent of the domestic currency or imprisonment for up to 30 days⁶. Also, the current Criminal Code provides for a fine or imprisonment of up to one year for someone who expresses, disseminates or spreads rumours that he/she knows to be false in order to upset a large number of people, and he/she achieves it (Topić, 2011, p. 47).

When it comes to new media trends, it can be concluded that even newer, and especially older, Croatian legal acts still do not sufficiently reflect them. For example, the Media Act does not explicitly mention the Internet, and especially not new media forms and content, such as podcasts, audio streaming, video streaming and the like. In the Electronic Communications Act, this issue is primarily approached from a technical point of view. The new Electronic Media Act, adopted in 2021, also addresses this issue in a rather basic and general way, so that, for example, only the provisions on audio and audiovisual media services on request have been amended and modernized (Article 26), while new provisions have been introduced on video-sharing platform services (Article 95). Therefore, there is still a lot of room for improvement in this area in Croatia, including the field of radio broadcasting.

Each country has its own laws governing the rights and obligations of the media. Some countries have liberal, democratically set standards, others are stricter and regulate the media in their countries more, sometimes to the extent of interfering with their right to inform freely, in the form of censorship. The countries we have chosen as a sample in conducting our research and writing this research paper share several characteristics. All three are currently democratic countries, are part of the European Union and are united by a common past of a communist bloc and a socialist system. During their long-standing participation in the so-called “Eastern Communist Bloc”, censorship of authors and concealment of information was a common part of journalistic work. Today, however, their democratic governments are bound by the agreements resulting from EU membership and therefore their media laws include transpositions of advanced European media law. Using a brief analysis of these legal media standards of selected countries, we will imagine how they reflect the protection of journalistic sources today, It follows – in what way are broadcast false information in radio news sanctioned or do the standards reflect new trends in media development? For example, there are online media, internet, streaming services, on-demand TV, podcasts, etc.

Table 1. Threats and opportunities of Legislative Norms in chosen countries

THREATS	OPPORTUNITIES
Legal provisions governing the media (including radio) do not reflect new trends in media development (online media, streaming services, on-demand services, podcasts)	Existence of a national media regulator, whose competencies could be strengthened so that he could react more flexibly to new types of media without government standards. For example, the adoption of a comprehensive media strategy will determine the development of media policies in Croatia in the next few years has been announced
Insufficient supervision of the legality of radio broadcast	Use of technological possibilities of supervision and remote access
Changes in demands of the target groups and the incapability of radio broadcast to respond to it	Expanding the content and its digitization by visualization
A small media market with a small audience that is limited by their own language	Existence of a dual broadcasting system
Media globalization and media grouping into media conglomerates and media houses.	Impossibility of cross-ownership of media within different types of media.
Indirect political influence on public service media	For example, countries are pro-Europe oriented and regularly adopt various important and modern European directives related to the media
A large number of criminal charges and persecution against journalists in Croatia	Possible adoption of new laws that will include new contemporary media trends
Intentions and announcements of the Croatian Government regarding changes of legal provisions in the direction of restricting media freedom	Impossibility to create media trusts that would cover different types of media

Discription: own processing, 2022

Table 1 shows the threat that has emerged as an intersection of several facts that apply to the countries under study. One of the most significant facts is that legislative standards do not reflect new trends in broadcasting, but also in the media in general. It is important to take into account the fact that the media world is changing rapidly, and therefore the institutions responsible for the functioning of the media should also be quicker to orient themselves to the issues and to come up with new ways of regulation. In the context of radio media, the problem is also ineffective control, changes in the requirements of the recipients, but also the fact that some media markets are small and limited by national language. Legislative norms do not cover the topic of journalists' freedom or the globalisation of the media or the political influence on production.

3.4 Ethical Standards

Radio ethics has been developing since the beginning of radio broadcasting, primarily in the second half of the 20th century, as journalism ethics, or ethics of a certain profession. At the same time, specialized professional institutions were established, which oversee the compliance with ethical standards (Huber, 2016). Forms of professional ethics include professional codes, press councils, professional ombudsmen, specialized education and sets of values of individual journalists (Halada & Osvaldová, 2017). In order to better define the terms, it should be mentioned that the notion of ethics in radio broadcast is explored through theories defining ethics as a theoretical reflection of morality (Šmajš et al., 2012).

Speaking about ethics and ethical standards in Slovakia, we must mention that in the Slovak Republic, the journalistic community relied on the Code of Journalistic Ethics approved by the Congress of the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists in the year of its establishment in Bratislava on 19 October 1990 (Šefčák, 1997, p. 29). The Slovak Syndicate of Journalists is a professional organization that was founded shortly after the Velvet Revolution⁷ on 5 January 1990. The Code contained the most important ethical requirements for the behaviour of journalists in relation to the public, the source of information, the object of interest, editorial colleagues and the editorial office. Acting as a journalist in the public interest was also a requirement (Remišová, 2010, p. 103-104). The Slovak Syndicate of Journalists (SSN) is an independent organisation of journalists, which brings together employees of print, radio, television and digital media, news agencies and independent journalists and columnists. It is a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Brussels-based European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). The SSN currently has approximately 2000 members (SSN, 2022). The Code of Ethics for Journalists has been in its original form for 20 years. However, under the influence of both members and the professional community, a working group was formed, emphasising that the first Code was timeless and comparable to other European codes of ethics, and that its aims and objectives would not be changed (Remišová, 2010, p. 106). On 5 November 2010, the delegates of the ninth SSN Congress adopted the Code of Ethics for Journalists, which was expanded from the previous six articles to ten. The intention of the creators was to establish binding rules for the practice of the profession, to prepare guidelines for other professionals, to inform the public about the principles of journalistic work (Hlavčáková, 2011, p. 26-27). There are several changes that were made: *„the removal of the duty to allow sources to authorise interviews after they have been conducted; clearer rules and definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest for a journalist; a definition of censorship and also of the public interest justification which would entitle a journalists to use a hidden camera and covert sources or to publish information concerning the private life of an individual.“* (The Slovak Spectator, 2010) Later, perceiving the changes in the media environment, the Code of Ethics for Journalists was adopted on the basis of the agreement and consent of the Association of Press Publishers (AVT), SSN and the Interactive Advertising Bureau Slovakia (IAB Slovakia) as an expression of binding ethical standards for journalistic work also in digital sphere (EKN SSN, 2022). *„The Representative Body of the Association for the Protection of Journalistic Ethics (ZZ AONE), which members are representatives of SSN, AVT and IAB Slovakia, approved this Code of Ethics in its meeting on 17 June 2017 with effect from the day following its approval.“* (Code of Ethics, TR SR, 2016). As the SSN is a professional organisation, it is necessary and legitimate for non-member journalists to abide by its standards (Remišová, 2010, p. 104). Ethics is also monitored by the Press and Digital Council of the Slovak Republic as an independent body. The Press and Digital Council of the Slovak Republic (TR SR) is the executive body of the Association for the Protection of Journalistic Ethics (AONE) in the field of ethical self-regulation of journalists. It addresses complaints about breaches of journalistic ethics, as well as complaints about journalists being prevented from accessing information (TR SR, 2022). The actual Code of Ethics also sets out, for example, how a journalist should work with sources: *A journalist or media outlet shall not publish any information that it knows to be false. A journalist shall never manipulate textual, pictorial, audio-visual or sound recordings or photographs. Only technical modifications intended to improve their quality or clarity are permissible. If a journalist discovers that he or she has published incorrect information, he or she must do everything possible to correct it without delay, even without inviting any of the parties concerned or the editorial staff. The journalist shall abide by promises to protect the identity of the source until relieved of this obligation by the person who is the source of the information* (Code of Ethics, TR SR, 2016).

In journalism and the media, there are various forms of written norms of governance and respect for ethical norms, as

well as bodies and organizations that monitor their application (Malović, Ricchiardi and Vilović, 2007, p. 48). There is an independent journalistic organization in the Croatian media system that advocates good practice in journalism. This umbrella organization is the Croatian Journalists' Association (HND). The society was founded in 1910 and has about 3.000 member journalists from all media (including radio) including independent journalists (freelancers).⁸ The most important role of the Society is to develop the culture of the profession and self-regulation of the journalistic profession (Zgrabljic Rotar, 2011, p. 104). Since 1992, the HND, which has changed its name several times since its founding, has been a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and then the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). Apart from the HND as the main professional organization, the Croatian Journalists' Union (SNH) also has a key role in the fight for a better position of journalists (Vilović, 2011, p. 130). SNH was founded on 19 May 1990, in Trogir to protect the fundamental labor, social and professional rights of journalists. SNH members can be journalists and employees in media houses, as well as free and retired journalists (Vilović, 2011, p. 130; SNH, 2022). In addition to these organizations that bring together representatives and employees of all types of media, in Croatia there is a similar association focused exclusively on radio. It is the Croatian Association of Radio Broadcasters (HURiN), founded in 2002. It is also the legal successor of the initial organization, which was entered in the register on 24 April 1964, as the Association of Communes and Workers' Collectives (HURiN, 2022).

3.5 Analysis of Ethical Standards in Czech Republic

The basic documents regulating journalism ethics in the Czech Republic include in the first place generally valid ethical codes. *"If journalists are to be accepted as a professional group (like doctors, lawyers or academic workers), they must work in accordance with a uniform code of conduct which ensures their moral integrity, trustworthiness, and thus their status as informers about the 'truth'."* (McNair, 2004, p. 67). An ethical code is defined as a document that specifies ethical rules for employees or a profession. Such code provides instructions on exemplary conduct and specifies the general set of values so that the conduct of the relevant individuals corresponds to ethical and moral principles (Tetřevová, 2017).

In the Czech Republic, ethics in journalism is set by the Syndicate of Journalists of the Czech Republic. According to the declaration of the *4th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy* held in Prague in 1994, journalists have the right to accept self-regulating norms, such as in the form of a code of ethics. The adopted resolution refers to the journalist profession, which is based primarily on the basic right to freedom of speech (Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights). Therefore, the Syndicate of Journalists of the Czech Republic prepared a Code of Ethics for Journalists, which is binding for all members, and all journalists, regardless of whether they are or they are not members of the Syndicate, were encouraged to observe it (SNČR, 2022).

The abovementioned Code of Ethics for Journalists has the following parts: Part 1 – The right of citizens to timely, true and unbiased information. This part is concerned with civic rights to information pursuant to Article 17 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the Constitution of the Czech Republic. This law is fulfilled by the activity of journalists, from which the obligations of journalists ensue (Part 1, letters a) to j) of the Code of Ethics for Journalists). Part 2 – Requirements of high professionalism in journalism. This part highlights the responsibility of the journalist profession towards the public (Part 2, letters a) to h) of the Code of Ethics for Journalists). The finally, Part 3 – Trustworthiness, decency and respectability enhance the authority of the media (Part 3, letters a) to j) of the Code of Ethics for Journalists) (SNČR, 2022).

The Code of Ethics for Journalists put together by the Syndicate of Journalists of the Czech Republic does not explicitly mention any specific journalist profession. The ethical implications of radio broadcast and the work of journalists in radio broadcast can be subsequently detected in the Czech Radio Code, which defines the rights and obligations of Czech Radio and its employees towards the public. *"In the Code, the highest and unignorable criterion which is binding in the humanist tradition in the broadest sense of the word is the respect to human dignity based on respect to all manifestations of existence."* (Český rozhlas, 2022). In Chapter III, the Czech Radio Code explicitly defines the relevant professional and ethical issues.

The abovementioned Chapter III of the Czech Radio Code (Český rozhlas, 2022) is concerned with the following areas: language (Article 16), religion (Article 17), prohibition of discrimination (Article 18), respect for privacy (Article 19), presumption of innocence (Article 20), rules for making recordings (Article 21). Further, it touches on areas of live broadcast (Article 22), critical situations (Article 23) when radio has to provide its listeners with information on extraordinary events that seriously threaten or affect normal life. Attention is also given to depiction of violence, victims, sexually explicit behaviour and the use of archival recordings (Article 24), conflict of interest (Article 25), basic rules of economy (Article 26) and legal actions and administrative procedure (Article 27).

Based on the content analysis (Weber, 1990; Gavora, 2015) used already in the previous examination, it can be summed up that the same as laws in the area of radio broadcast are also self-regulating regulations – codes of ethics – do not reflect

the current trends of digitization of radio broadcast, or digitization of society as a whole. Codes of ethics for journalists working in radio (see the Czech Radio Code) do not explicitly regulate the area of social media, neither in terms of professional use of social media (sharing of information), presence of journalists in social media (profiles of journalists), nor regarding communication with the users of social media (comments on posts).

From the territorial perspective of the Czech Republic it can be said that the profession of radio journalists, and not just radio journalists, stands at the start of a period of transformation of a very demanding update of laws and self-regulating regulations. The abovementioned transformation should include in particular a thorough analysis of the current digitization of society and specific assessment. This should be followed by an interdisciplinary discussion on the results, not just through the lens of the relevant journalists, but logically also of lawmakers, sociologists, technicians and other professions. The results of the discussion must subsequently constitute agile management of modern legislation as well as self-regulating professional regulations, which will contribute to the quality of outcomes of the work of journalists.

3.6 Analysis of Ethical Standards in Slovak Republic

Based on the current Code of Ethics for Journalists, which SSN publishes on its website, we can conclude that there is nothing clearly stated in the document about radio employees or radio stations. However, the Code of Ethics applies to media workers, editors and newsrooms. This means that the principles can also be applied to radio. It deals with the values of freedom, fairness and decency. The core values are impartiality, objectivity, honesty, truthfulness, rigorous verification of facts and accountability. It directs that the source should always be cited, the only exception being a confidential source, which is defined in the section of the Code of Ethics on the use of extraordinary sources. For radio workers, the section on handling audio recordings, which can only be tampered with for technical editing and to improve quality or clarity, is also a guideline. Also applicable to radio practice is the article on opinion and value judgements, which must be clearly distinguished from news reporting (Code of Ethics, TR SR, 2016). In general, it can also be identified with the other parts of the Code that are in the section The journalist and the object of his/her interest. If we are talking about sources, the journalist obtains sound recordings and background material in such a way that their full name and the medium for which they are working are apparent. In addition, they are entitled to make sound recordings at public events without the consent of the performers, as long as there is no copyright infringement. They may take a similar approach when making recordings and information in public places. Redacting and editing text, sound, image or audio-visual recordings shall not be considered censorship. The points concerning the journalist and editorial staff, colleagues, sources of information and censorship are generally applicable to all types of media and, in our view, there is no need to specifically address a particular type of media, in our case radio and radio employees.

In general, the Journalist's Code of Ethics does not apply current changes and trends in radio broadcasting, nor does it specify them further. It is intended to ensure that all content published in print and on the internet complies with the general in accordance with the binding regulations of the Slovak Republic and in accordance with good morals. It adds that a journalist publishing on the Internet is also bound by the IAB Code of Conduct for Internet Content Slovakia, which was approved by the General Assembly of the Internet Advertising Association IAB Slovakia on 21 January 2015 (Code of Ethics, TR SR, 2016). The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to help electronic media meet ethical considerations. However, it also does not describe a journalist's work or behaviour on social networks, as it is more focused on marketing (IAB Slovakia, 2010). The two strongest radio media houses – Bauer media (Rádio Expres, Európa 2, Rádio Jemné⁹ belong here) and Fun media group (Fun Rádio, Rádio Vlna belong here) do not have a code of ethics on their websites, which would regulate their activities (Fun Rádio, 2022; Bauer Media Group, 2022).

Public broadcaster Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) has their own Code of Ethics that refers about communication on the internet (RTVS, 2018). This Code of Ethics applies to the content of disseminated by RTVS staff¹⁰ through social networks, blogs, microblogs and other websites. It applies to both the content created and disseminated by RTVS staff, as well as to the dissemination of content published by third parties. In general, the current Code of Ethics for Journalists does not cover current trends such as comments, posts, statuses, etc. This is where the important role of individual editorial offices comes in, which could adapt and establish ground rules for their staff in accordance with the current Code of Ethics. The public broadcaster RTVS can serve as a good example (RTVS, 2018).

In terms of the validity or practical application of the Code, the conditions for adherence are included at the core of the document in Section IX. „*Any professional organization, media, news agency, information service provider, website, editorial office or individual may adhere to this Code of Ethics by sending a notice of adherence to AONE. In the same way, such person may withdraw his or her adherence to the Code of Ethics.*” (Code of Ethics, TR SR, 2016). This means that if a particular media outlet decides to accept the wording of the code of ethics, it can formally accede to it. However, some media companies and media outlets prefer only to state on their websites that they respect the wording of the code of ethics, others have formulated their own codes and therefore it is not immediately clear which, if any, code of ethics the editorial office follows¹¹.

3.7 Analysis of Ethical Standards in Croatia

The umbrella document regulating journalistic ethics in Croatia is the Code of Honor of Croatian Journalists, modelled on the codes of other international journalists' associations. Since the 1990s, when it was first adopted by the Croatian Journalists' Association, this Code has been amended on several occasions¹². The latest version of this Code, which is in force today, was adopted at the 50th Assembly of the Croatian Journalists' Association, held on 27 November 2009 in Opatija (HND, 2009). The implementation of the Code is the responsibility of HND's Journalists' Honor Council, which is to respond to any abuse (Malović, Ricchiardi and Vilović, 2007). The Honor Council is the only body of self-regulation of the media space in Croatia and operates within the HND. It has 11 members elected by the HND Assembly from among its members. During the election, special attention is paid to the experience of candidates and the representation of various media, which means that the Council regularly includes representatives of the radio media. The measures it can impose on a journalist or editor are a reprimand, a severe reprimand and expulsion from the HND (HND, 2022). When it comes to (self) regulation of radio activity in Croatia, it should certainly be pointed out that two other bodies are, among other things, in charge of this. The Electronic Media Agency (AEM) is an independent regulatory body that promotes the public interest and pluralism of the media and was established in accordance with the provisions of the Electronic Media Act (AEM, the Agency, 2022). The Council for Electronic Media (VEM) is an independent and autonomous regulatory body in the field of electronic media in Croatia, and its basic tasks are prescribed by the Electronic Media Act and the Croatian Radio and Television Act (AEM, Council, 2022).

Thirty-one points of the Code of Honor of Croatian Journalists state the rights and obligations of journalists as guidelines that should govern journalists in their professional activities. Among the general principles of the Code, it is emphasized that in their work journalists they are obliged to defend human rights, dignity, freedoms and values, respect pluralism of ideas and views, resist all forms of censorship, contribute to strengthening the rule of law and participate in democratic control of power. It is their obligation to adhere to professional ethical principles. The Code provides important and binding guidelines and instructions related to the journalistic vocation, free flow of information, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, autonomy of judgment and editorial responsibility (HND 2009; Grmuša, 2012). The Code does not single out the radio profession, but all its provisions also refer to radio journalists and editors.

Radio broadcasting, but only in the domain of public media service, is additionally (self) regulated by a separate document called the Code of Ethics for Journalists and Creative Staff of HRT. It was first adopted in 2006, after which it was amended several times. This code regulates ethical principles and professional standards at Croatian Radio and Television, and also applies to external associates. This code of ethics, among other things, prescribes professional standards and ethical principles that require the publication of "true, complete, verified and timely information" (Ivanuš, 2021, p. 77). Unlike the Code of Honor of Croatian Journalists, which does not mention new media trends, the ethical principles in the HRT Code apply to all appearances of journalists and creative staff, including journalistic and editorial profiles and comments on social networks.

It is difficult to figure out which Croatian media, whether printed, electronic or digital, have their own editorial code of ethics because there is no publicly available information about it, nor can such information be found on their websites (Ivanuš, 2021, p. 76). However, there are a few exceptions. For example, Europapress Holding, then one of the leading Croatian media organizations, adopted its own code of ethics back in 2008. Its author was the famous journalist Sanja Modrić. Europapress Holding became the media company Hanza Media in July 2016, and in January 2021 a well-known journalist Inoslav Bešker created a new code of ethics for their employees, i.e. information standards. *Večernji list*, one of the most widely read dailies in Croatia, also has its own editorial code of ethics. However, all the mentioned documents refer exclusively to journalists and editors of printed and online editions of daily and weekly newspapers and magazines, and not to any radio media, public or private.

Ethical norms are rules that, although not legally enforceable, are, like legal norms, regulators of human behaviour. Ethical norms are supported by public opinion through which pressure is exerted on the violator of ethical norms to respect them. While legal norms regulate people's material and social relations, ethical norms regulate moral relations – good, evil, honour, justice. Human action cannot be contained by laws alone. Legislation cannot foresee all the circumstances that may arise in interpersonal relations. Moral principles, on the other hand, cover a wider area in human life than legal norms. What is illegal is also unethical. On the other hand, not everything that is not illegal is ethical. Ethical norms are not codified and can therefore respond more flexibly to possible changes or new circumstances. Thus, law represents only the minimum of morality. Legal norms must not contradict ethical norms, but must run in parallel and complement each other (Smith & Quelch, 1993, p.10).

Table 2. Threats and opportunities of Ethical Standards in chosen countries

THREATS	OPPORTUNITIES
Self-regulating regulations of the radio environment do not reflect technological development, as well as problems such as the production and dissemination of disinformation	Setting up the regulations of the radio environment in accordance with the ethics of related professions and its current multimedia approach
Impacts of ethics failures of journalists on providing information to the public	Increasing the professionalism of radio journalists and cultivation of the environment
Worded too broadly, lacking terms such as radio, broadcaster, radio worker, using the generic term journalist and also they do not refer to the specifics of individual professions	Trying to divide the wording of the Code of Ethics according to the focus of the media profession in order to describe more comprehensively the rights and duties of the journalist, but also involving larger number of journalists and editors with examples from practice in order to create a new, modern code of ethics
Lack of real sanctions and penalties for journalists and editors for violating ethical principles	Organization of workshops to present the provisions of the code of ethics to young journalists and editors and external collaborators
It is not clearly stated, only in very general terms, who should follow or respect the code of ethics; some professions in the case of Slovakia are mentioned on the AONE website, but also include, for example, journalism educators and students (SSN, 2016)	Seek to ensure adherence to the Code as soon as you start work as a journalist (acceptance could be part of the recruitment process)
There is a lack of definition of the actual problems that arise in connection with misinformation, hoaxes, or specific rules that a journalist should adhere to in terms of behaviour on social networks	Communicating with individual editorial offices and considering suggestions from practice in order to draw up one universally applicable code of ethics that covers as many media workers as possible

Discription: own processing, 2022

Table 2 summarises the defined threats and opportunities that apply to ethical standards in the selected countries. The challenge for newsrooms is to ensure that they have their own code of ethics that covers the particular area that they cover in the newsroom. Furthermore, it is necessary to include sections in general codes that address the new challenges associated with technological developments. It is therefore important to set out the rules in related professions with journalism, but also within the online environment or on platforms that are new in the field of communication. In general, radio workers find the code too general and must find the intersection of their work with the rules included in it. It is not even clear to whom the Code actually applies, and this is also one of the challenges that await the responsible institutions to improve the level of media ethics.

4. Results of Questionnaire

The job of a journalist today is challenging because there are much greater demands placed on it than in the past. Journalists today have to be flexible and capable of processing the received information faster (Brník & Bôtošová & Kapec, 2021). But are journalists equipped with sufficient competencies in media and ethical standards? How do radio journalists comply with legal and ethical standards in practice? Using a questionnaire survey in three former communist bloc countries, we conducted a quantitative inquiry-based study to investigate how radio journalists who work with information approach media law and codes of ethics. The survey was conducted between 22 February and 8 March 2022 and involved 31 radio journalists from Slovakia (35.5%), Croatia (32.3%) and the Czech Republic (32.3%). The number is not large but given the saturation of radio stations in these countries and the number of staff working with information (not stream presenters), this number is a sufficiently representative sample.

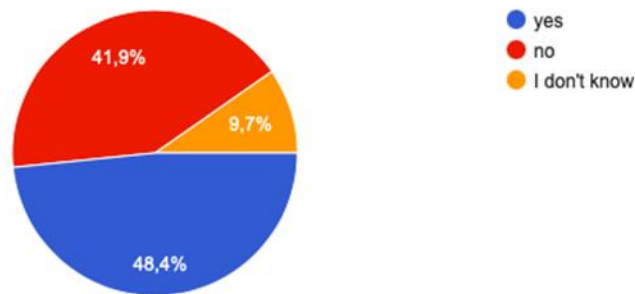
Of the total number of respondents, 61.3% were women and 38.7% were men. The largest number of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 30 (32.3%), the next largest group was between the ages of 31 and 40 (23%), followed by the 41 to 50 age category (22.8%), and the smallest sample was in the age range of journalists over 50 (16.1%).

Of all the respondents, as many as 64.5% of the journalists work in commercial (private) radio stations, 6.5% work in state (state-owned) media and 29% work in public (state-established) radio stations. Regarding radio signal distribution in the context of territorial coverage, 64.5% of radio workers who participated in our research work in radio stations with nationwide - national coverage, 16.1% work in regional radio stations and the same 16.1% work in local radio stations, and 3.2% work in radio stations with multi-regional territorial coverage.

Most of the journalists interviewed are clearly familiar with the legislation governing radio broadcasting in their country. Among those surveyed, as many as 93.6%, only a small percentage said they did not know the legislation (3.2%) or could not say (3.2%).

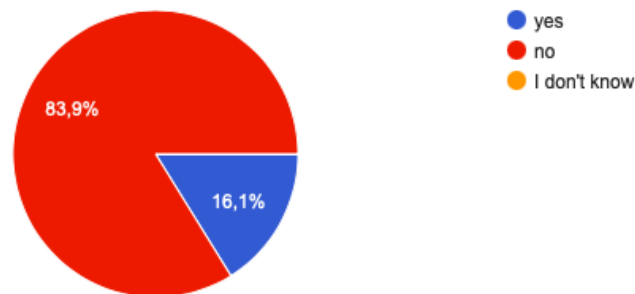
We were interested in what journalists think about whether the legal norms that regulate radio broadcasting in their country sufficiently reflect new trends in radio broadcasting (internet regulation, social networks, podcasts, etc.). This is a topic that is often discussed in academia and it is therefore interesting to see how journalists themselves feel about the issue. Only about a third of those surveyed (29%) think that their country’s legal standards sufficiently reflect the new trends and technological advances of the time. Conversely, the majority (64.5%) think that countries are not doing enough in this area and that changes in legal standards are very slow.

Surprisingly, as many as 48.4% of the radio journalists surveyed in the three European countries have ever encountered a breach of the legal norms governing radio broadcasting in their profession.



Graph 1. Violation of legislative standards

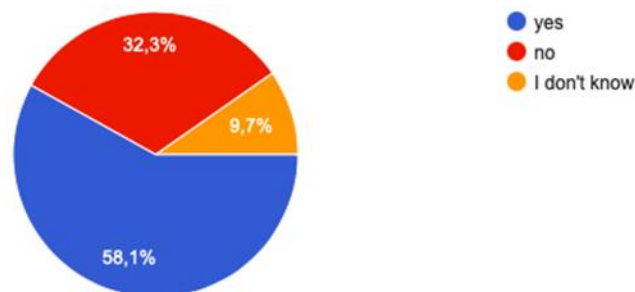
And 16.1% of respondents have even knowingly violated the legal standards that govern radio broadcasting in their country at least once during their career.



Graph 2. Violation of legislative standards by interviewed radio workers

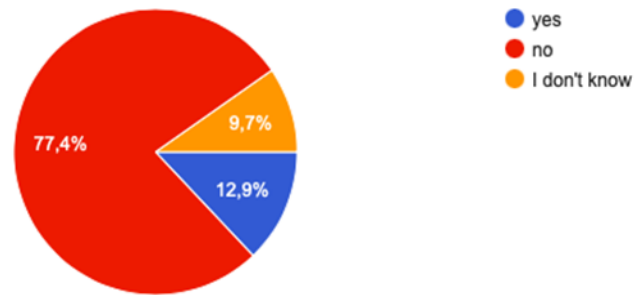
Let us also present the results of the research in the context of ethical standards, where all respondents (100%) said that they were aware of the Code of Ethics that regulates the journalistic profession in their country and sets ethical boundaries within the profession. At the same time, all of them (100%) declared that they are guided by it in their work.

Similarly to the legal standards, the majority of the respondents (54.8%) think that ethical standards do not reflect the current trends in the field of media, including technological advances. An interesting finding was that in addition to the national Code of Ethics for Journalists, most radio broadcasters (58.1%) have their own code of ethics, which further regulates the practice of journalism. Such codes can respond more flexibly to the various changes and challenges that arise in the media sphere.



Graph 3. Occurrence of existing codes in individual radio newsrooms, which further regulate the operation of staff

A number of journalists (12.9%) have encountered a situation in the course of their work where someone around them has deliberately violated ethical standards.



Graph 4. Conscious violation of ethical standards around the interviewed radio workers

5. Discussion

The research showed that journalists are aware of legal and ethical norms and try to follow them in their work. On the other hand, it is really interesting to find that legal norms are also violated in practice by journalists consciously, not just unconsciously.

In our search for an answer to the main research question, we also set secondary questions, where, due to quantitative inquiry research we have found answers to some of them.

- How do the legal norms of the selected country define the work of a radio journalist?

The status of journalists and their work is not clearly defined anywhere in the legislation, but information can be found in the law to which the profession of radio worker can be applied. Rather, we can find in the norms a general anchoring on the protection of the source, the independence of the media or the exceptions that apply to the anonymity of the source of information. We find more specific information about individual radio workers rather in the ethical standards.

- How is working with and protecting sources and information defined in media norms?

In selected countries, they guarantee the independence of the media and the protection of information sources. This is both legally anchored media independence and legal protection of information sources. This means that radio media workers can legally rely on regulations that allow them to protect and anonymise sources and thus protect them.

- Do media legal standards reflect new trends in new media?

Most journalists believe that they do not. Both for legal and ethical standards.

- How are the ethical norms that should guide journalistic practice embodied in the selected country?

In the countries studied, there are national ethical standards, the so-called journalist's codes of ethics; in addition, most radio broadcasters also have their own codes of ethics, which expand on the national code of ethics already mentioned.

- Is there a separate area for radio broadcasting and radio journalists within the established ethical standards (how do the ethical standards reflect new trends in the processing and dissemination of information)?

Most journalists agreed that the ethical standards in force in the country do not sufficiently reflect new trends in media and technological advances.

- How do radio journalists comply with legal and ethical standards in practice?

Legal and ethical standards are violated in practice. In every country, journalists said that they knew of cases where a legal or ethical norm in force in the country had been violated; even some of the interviewees admitted that they had violated these norms themselves knowingly. In the context of the information that all of them are aware of the journalist's code of ethics and the vast majority of them also of the legal norms of the country, more research would be needed on the situations in which they are willing to knowingly violate these norms.

Thanks to all the data we collected while writing this paper, we can also arrive at an outline of the answer to our main research question:

RQ: How do the legal and ethical norms of selected post-communist countries currently reflect trends in new media and freedoms in information work, and what is the application of these norms to contemporary radio journalism practice?

The creation of legal norms in each country is subject to a long and difficult bureaucratic process, which involves several steps, where various domestic but also international institutions and ultimately the human factor in the form of the approvers (parliament) enter in, where the influence of populism and not always expert views of the matter is possible. In addition, the technological segment is advancing very rapidly and, almost every year, new possibilities for communication and dissemination of information are emerging in terms of technology, but also in terms of the Internet and the possibilities for using it, or the various applications within smartphones. It is impossible to reflect all the trends, especially as it is impossible to predict which technical elements and discoveries will be mass-produced and, in particular, when they will be applied in society. However, once a communication platform is firmly established within people and its use can lead to abusive handling of information, in particular the spread of misinformation, fake news, etc., it is necessary to regulate such channels. That is why the legal norms are also being amended. The situation is the same in all the countries we have studied. Based on our own analysis of legal norms and inquiries among journalists in the selected countries, **we can state a clear fact that not only legal but also ethical norms (which are not subject to a complicated state approval process) do not sufficiently reflect the new trends in the field of media and information dissemination and their regulation.** Although countries have made significant strides within the law in terms of journalists' freedom of work and the protection of their information sources. At the same time, we can conclude that legal and ethical norms are consciously and consistently violated in all the countries we studied, even though journalists are well aware of the limits of these norms and try to abide by them. Unfortunately, the limits of our research cannot directly answer what leads journalists to violate the rules and whether the lack of reflection on new trends has an impact on this fact.

6. Conclusion

The setting of the study is to focus on the individual processed ethical and legislative norms in the individual countries, which we have gradually presented to the reader and are to be treated individually, but at the same time provide the reader with an overview of what things they have in common or different. At the end of the subchapters, we summarise and generalise the insights and information we have gained from the analysis of the materials. These are listed in the literature section. The survey in three countries showed that the definition of the work of radio workers is insufficiently clear. This means that in the legislative norms we can find information about the protection of the source, information, but also about the freedom of the media. When we find information on the work of a journalist, we only base it on information that can be applied to radio workers. Source protection is enshrined very clearly in the legislation of the selected countries. Journalists can rely on legislation that is clearly stated and in force in the selected countries. An important task facing media legislators in the coming years is to ensure that legislative standards reflect current trends. There is a new law in Slovakia which covers current media-related topics, but there is also a need to focus on trends in the work of journalists. Ethical standards are being summarised in selected countries mainly through codes of ethics. However, many newsrooms have their own established ethical standards, according to which the employees are to be guided and adhere to them. According to the answers of the journalists interviewed, the ethical standards set in the countries do not reflect the current trends that would need to be implemented in practice. The survey also shows that journalists break the rules in practice. In every country surveyed, journalists admitted that they knew of a case of violation of ethical and legislative regulations. The survey in the selected countries shows that ethical and legislative standards do not reflect current trends in media and information dissemination and regulation. The point of the article and the exploration of the individual countries selected for this study is that they could be an inspiration for the creation of new media legislation, or they could be used in the educational process to illustrate possible different versions of embedding legislative and ethical norms in the given countries with similar media systems. The scientific study can be beneficial for further creation of legislation, ethical norms and can serve for scientific purposes and broader elaboration of the presented issue. It also has the potential to address other countries that are outside the post-communist line. Further, the results of the study can be used as a secondary source in extending the research to other countries, or in fieldwork and information work in practice. In conclusion, it is worth noting that European and international law, which is part of the EU member states, contributes to a large extent to a truly free dissemination of information. Unfortunately, the very system of legal and ethical standard-setting, which is very inflexible, also contributes to this freedom.

Notes

Note 1. There are several types of radio stations according to territorial reach in Act No. 308/2000 on Broadcasting and retransmission: *local broadcasters* – broadcasts in a small territory; *regional broadcaster* – it is transmitted to less than 30% of population; *multi regional broadcasters* – more than 30% but less than 80% of population can get its signal; *nation-wide broadcasters* – the signal is transmitted to 80% of population.

Note 2. Croatia was then part of a state called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

Note 3. The Second World War was fought from 1939 to 1945, and the Homeland War, i.e. the defense and liberation war of Croatia against the Greater Serbia aggression, lasted from 1991 to 1995.

Note 4. There are on demand streaming platforms as Netflix and so on.

Note 5. The author of the article was a member of a working group that is preparing a new media law in Slovakia.

Note 6. The law prescribing this offense, has been in force since 1977 (last amended in 1994), with minor changes. Therefore, even today, fines are prescribed in German mark that are no longer in use, of course in the equivalent of the Croatian kuna, the valid currency in Croatia.

Note 7. During socialism, in the words of long-time radio and television presenter of Slovak Television A. Bugošová, they were governed by the Code of Ethics for Journalists, which was based on the principles of the Code of Ethics of the British Broadcasting Corporation – BBC.

Note 8. Due to differences in worldviews, some HND members left the Society in 2015 and founded their organization Croatian Journalists and Publicists (HNIP), which, as they pointed out, will “*follow professional, not ideological guidelines in their activities.*” (HNIP, 2022). Due to that, the number of HND members decreased slightly, but the mentioned Association is still the leading journalistic organization in Croatia.

Note 9. Rádio Jemné changed the name to Rádio Melody.

Note 10. All members of editorial offices or employees of RTVS.

Note 11. For example, on the website of a regional radio station, when you scroll to the bottom of the page, there is a mention in the bottom left-hand corner that they respect the Journalist’s Code of Ethics. See: Trnavské rádio. (2022). *O nás*. [vid. 2022-02-17]. Retrieved: <https://trnavske.radio/>

Note 12. According to Marina Mučalo, a long-time and award-winning Croatian radio journalist and university professor, when Croatia was part of Yugoslavia during socialism, its journalists and editors were designated as socio-political workers. On the ethical side, they acted on the basis of the provisions of the Code of Journalists of Yugoslavia, which was last amended in 1988. This Code defined the activities of journalists in the public communication system, but, for example, did not regulate the active role of citizens in the process of public communication (Plenković, 1990, p. 132).

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