

REFLECTIONS ON CHANGING PATTERNS OF JOURNALISM IN THE NEW EU COUNTRIES

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After the collapse of Communism, journalists and media professionals in former Communist countries faced the task of re-evaluating and redefining the role of the media and journalists in society. It was largely assumed that the newly free media in democratizing societies would naturally follow the path of the "liberal" model of journalism. There were also numerous not so successful efforts to "implant" "western" values and principles in post-communist journalism. This essay outlines the different trajectories from the normative concept that characterize the development of journalism in the new EU countries. As the most successful in their transitional reforms among former Communist bloc countries, the new EU member nations presumably also have the most favourable conditions for creating qualitatively new journalism cultures.

KEYWORDS civil society; Europeanization; journalism cultures; media democratization; post-Communist; press freedom; transition

Introduction

"I do not recognize if this is the same world that I see reading Estonian newspapers, or reading, let's say *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Le Monde* or *The Financial Times*, although the headlines can be almost the same"—Estonian President Ilves said in an interview to a radio journalist just before the 90th anniversary of the Estonian Republic. He did not refer to the language difference, but to the differences in how these newspapers portray the world. The President also sharply criticized the Estonian press for being "angry", "dark" and "yellow" in comparison with European quality newspapers. He was obviously not happy with how the press performs in return for the unlimited freedom and privileges that guarantee its rights of access and for distribution of information, and the right to criticize anybody, including the President.

Estonia has been regarded as a transition prodigy of post-Communist reforms—succeeding relatively well both in societal democratization and economic transformation (cf. Bertelsmann, 2008; Smith, 2001). As for the media, there is no state intervention in the press (that is almost entirely in private hands), no political control or censorship and no press law (the State regulates only Public Broadcasting with a Broadcasting Act). An extremely liberal media policy regulates neither the market nor forms of ownership.

Democratization and restructuring of the media systems with all the consequences, and aspirations for creating a new media culture are not a particular problem of Estonia and its President. These processes have been and still are of decisive importance in the overall societal transformation in all former Communist bloc countries of Europe. Ten of them—Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia—have become members of the European Union. These countries have

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generally been regarded as successful in their economic, political and societal transition (cf. Aslund, 2002, 2007; Nagle and Mahr, 1999; Rose, 2006; Smith, 1999; Zielonka and Pravda, 2001). They have been able to adjust their government and legislation and adapt their economy to EU requirements. Within less than two decades they have acquired the status of fully fledged consolidated democracies although they are still far from maturity.

European communication space has expanded enormously by including these societies that had been ideologically and spiritually, politically and strategically isolated from the rest of the world for almost half a century.

“Return to Europe” or “return to the Western world” or “Europeanization” were not simply metaphors for these newly liberated nations, but were nostalgically interpreted as a return to civilization. Tomáš Klvna describes how Czech lands that are “also known as Bohemia and Moravia prided themselves on being an integral part of Western civilization for centuries” (Klvna, 2004, p. 43). Similarly, Estonians and Latvians identified themselves more with Northern Europe than with their Eastern neighbour throughout the twentieth century (Lauristin and Vihalemm, 1997). A return to Europe could not definitely be the return to the same historical reality that was lost together with pre-World War II independence. After the collapse of Communist regimes, “Europeanization” could only mean the efforts of (re)construction of democratic political systems and creation of civil society structures similar to the established Western democracies.

Analogically, democratization of the media systems and their adaptation to the conditions of an open society has often been viewed as a process of “Europeanization” of media and journalism that has mainly been interpreted in two broad ways. First, “Euroreporting” as reporting on EU issues (both in national mainstream media and pan-European outlets) that would create Europe-wide debates and participation, and lay grounds for constituting a common European public sphere (cf. Machill et al., 2006; Slaatta, 2006). “Euroreporting” also contains a tacit assumption of a shared professional ideology that would characterize “European” journalism.

Second, “Europeanization” is seen as adoption and application of standards, values and principles generally agreed upon in so-called Western journalism. This type of professional ideology has been generated and formulated mainly within the framework of Anglo-American journalism and is also known as the “liberal” model of journalism (cf. Chalaby, 1996; de Smaele, 1999; Mancini, 2000).

Contrary to the assumptions, democratization of the media after Communism did not follow these paths smoothly regardless of a generally favourable framework—democratic government, market economy, and freedoms of the press and expression. Why? What are the dominant factors shaping the essence of journalism in the new EU countries? In what ways does the professionalization of journalism in these countries differ from what is prevalent in established democracies? What is the prospect for a “European” journalism with commonly shared values and standards in journalism cultures throughout Europe?

In this paper, these questions will be addressed from the perspective of the 10 new EU member countries.

Winding Ways of Professionalization: Why Normative Concepts Do Not Work

Since the beginning of transitional reforms in the early 1990s there have been assumptions both in the East and West that “western concepts of ‘good journalism’ can

and should serve as examples for the evolution of media and journalism in these countries" (Coman and Gross, 2006, p. 27). Regardless of numerous efforts, however, to export the "liberal" model¹ (sometimes also put on a par with "western" journalism) and experience of "profession-building" to East-Central European new democracies, there are no successful cases of replacing the Communist model with a "western" one. When western journalists, experts and trainers tried to introduce this model to the newly liberated countries, they had to admit with surprise and disappointment that their journalistic principles could not be "implanted like some sort of preventive injection" (Scott and Cropp, 2007, p. 146). It often happened that their best intentions met no response whatsoever or even caused irritation and misunderstanding (cf. Hadamik, 2005; Mickiewicz, 1998). Norwegian journalist Erling Rimehaug described his personal experience of teaching Baltic journalists as follows:

Although I found that we in many respects have the same cultural background, the development in the role of the journalist has been so different that there were great problems in communication . . . My colleague Odéen and I were speaking for six hours, and became more and more desperate. There were no reactions. No questions, no objections, no applause. Only stone faces around the table. Was my teaching really so bad? (1992, pp. 157–8)

The teaching was probably not at all bad, but the professional experience of the journalists in the class and their working environments did not support the ideas and models that were offered by the teachers. No matter how good the teachers are, no matter how much effort is put into journalism training, if particular media contexts and cultural traditions are not conducive to the suggested values and principles, they will not be understood and implemented.

The "liberal" model of journalism is based on the traditional concept of participatory democracy, basic principles of which include separation of powers, political freedom, transparency and accountability. The development of journalistic professionalism is also closely tied up with certain democratic practices that (1) limit the regulatory intervention by state authorities and disable political control over the media, (2) legally guarantee the diversity of media ownership and prevent monopolization (in this way supporting media pluralism) and (3) do not allow any form of censorship and provide the media with the right to freely access and distribute information. Where these principles and practices are insufficient or missing, the values promoted by the "liberal" model are easily ignored.

Furthermore, the ideals and values of the "liberal" model, though theoretically widely appreciated, do not fully function in journalism practices even in Western countries. Taking an example from Italian journalism, Mancini (2000, p. 266) argues that "there is a striking contradiction between a sort of theoretical wisdom diffused among most of the professionals (journalism has to be neutral and detached from power) and real practice (journalists are advocates and close to different social powers)". This contradiction indirectly reflects the deficiency, if not the crisis of liberal democracy in Europe in general that manifests itself in the governments' and elected representatives' increasing inability to cope with the consequences of globalization, European integration, inter-cultural migration, demographic changes, technological developments etc. through their traditional institutions and arrangements (cf. Schmitter and Trechsel, 2004). It also reflects the high degree of media commercialization and the uncertainty of the balance between public and business interests.

Thus, vital conditions for the positive development of journalistic professionalism and media democratization are freedom of the press, minimal state intervention and a mechanism of accountability that would support media transparency, pluralism and responsible performance. To an extent, these conditions are present in all new democracies, but how much they have taken effect in reality varies markedly from country to country.

A glance at the press freedom ranking in *Reporters Without Borders*² provides a clear indication of how different the situation is in this respect in the new EU countries today. Among 169 countries, Estonia and Slovakia have risen from 11th and 8th position, respectively, in 2005 to 3rd and 4th in 2007, while Romania is 42nd, Bulgaria 51st and Poland 56/57th together with Ecuador. The other five countries in question are placed between the 12th (Latvia) and 23rd position (Lithuania). The new EU countries at the top of the list stand among the countries with a high level of civic culture and journalistic professionalism—Estonia and Slovakia rank amidst the Nordic countries, Latvia between Switzerland and the Netherlands, and Hungary between Austria and Canada. The higher the position in the ranking the more liberal the media policy to be found in the country. In the countries on lower positions, state interference is still substantial (Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland). Although the democratic Constitutions declare the freedom of the press, legal measures are still occasionally used for punishing “disobedient” journalists and news media. Slander and libel as criminal offences are still not removed from the texts of the Penal Codes of several of the new EU countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, and the Czech Republic).

The situation is not, however, as unambiguous as it may seem when comparing press freedom ratings and monitorings. Paradoxically, a high ranking for press freedom is not necessarily accompanied with high-quality journalism and responsible performance. Rather in the opposite way: the freedoms and privileges that the news media enjoy, are taken for granted, but increasingly used for “exercising self-interested political and economic power rather than acting as a disinterested check on the abuse of such power by others” (Schultz, 1998, p. 4). Within the context of ever-strengthening market competition and concentration with minimal (or no) legal regulation of the ownership, the management, owners and elite journalists gain control over the professional environment and, inevitably, the business interests take over.

Simulation of Self-regulation

In the established democracies, three factors in unison—legislation, public control and self-regulation—form the framework of the media accountability mechanism. Self-regulation institutions such as Codes of Ethics, press complaint commissions (or Press Councils) and the ombudsman institution are introduced to oversee compliance with the principles of “good journalism”. Prime examples of these systems can be found in the Nordic countries, especially Finland and Norway, where a strong tradition of media self-regulation exists supported by a well-established civic culture and authoritative rules of good journalistic conduct.

Media self-regulation emerged as a new development in the new democracies. Today, in some formats, Codes of Journalistic Conduct are adopted in all new EU countries, but journalists largely ignore them. The internal Codes of individual media organisations, where they exist, seem to be more appreciated. The mechanisms or the bodies that would

watch over the implementation of Ethical Codes are clawless or missing. The existence of the Code itself does not raise the quality of reporting or prevent violations of the ethical norms. Furthermore, freedom of the press when it becomes *the freedom for the press without accountability* contributes to the abuse of the freedom of expression and leads to the simulation of self-regulation, as is for example, the case in Estonia.

Estonia was the first among post-Communist countries to establish a Press Council (Estonian Press Council—EPC) in 1991 under the umbrella of the publishers' association (Estonian Newspaper Association—ENA). During the first six years of its existence, the EPC dealt with more than 100 cases that eventually formed the foundation for a set of case-based guidelines on how to report certain topics. These guidelines became the Code of Conduct that Estonian journalists adopted in 1997. In order to ensure the EPC's impartiality and weaken the structural connection with the publishers' association, the EPC was reorganized in 1997 into a non-profit organization that included representatives from both media and lay organizations. Against the background of ever-growing competition and the declining prestige of the press in general, the editors-in-chief of the six largest newspapers regularly ignored the commitment of publishing the adjudications of the EPC, seeing them as a threat to the commercial success of their newspapers. Finally, in 2002, they withdrew from the EPC and established another Press Council to deal with the complaints concerning ENA's member publications. Some Internet news portals, a commercial TV channel and Public Television and Radio also recognize this Press Council.

The initial EPC, where seven members out of ten represent public non-governmental organizations and three are representatives of the Journalists' Union, continues in existence and adjudicates complaints. It also provides expert opinion and evaluates the quality of media content and performance. EPC's adjudications are published on its website.³

At the request of the ENA, all the media connected with the ENA Press Council do not publish EPC's adjudications or any other materials coming from the EPC. All 43 ENA newspapers advise the public to send their complaints to the ENA Press Council and do not mention the possibility of asking for an alternative opinion from the EPC. In response to enquiries from the EPC, newspapers claim that they recognize only the ENA Press Council and ignore the adjudications of the EPC. Thus, the EPC's critical voice is blocked by the newspapers.

Journalists working in ENA newspapers are not allowed to communicate or cooperate with the EPC for fear of losing their jobs. Although Estonian journalists' access to information is protected by law, they are not harassed by the authorities, and though they have the most modern communication devices for their use, their freedom of speech—the basic condition for performing their professional tasks—is not safeguarded. Journalists choose loyalty to professional independence to maintain their jobs. Thus, paradoxically, press freedom does not always mean freedom of expression for journalists working for the same press.

In this way self-regulation in Estonia is turned into a simulation where the media try to control what is said about the media; where newspapers choose by themselves which critical voice they acknowledge and construct a Press Council where their editors-in-chief have the upper hand.

The ability of a Press Council to act impartially depends upon its independence from the media industry. The composition of the ENA Press Council is heavily weighted in favour of the media industry. In 2008, five out of ten members are editors-in-chief, one is a

former managing director of the ENA and four members are not media-related. It is quite obvious that this press council is controlled by the interests of the media elite and does not represent the public. Several examples of the practice of the ENA Press Council demonstrate how the Code of Conduct and principles of “good journalism” can be arbitrarily interpreted in favour of the news organizations instead of securing ethical values of journalism and protecting people from being abused by the media.

In February 2008, the largest Estonian weekly *Eesti Ekspress* published in its cultural section a list of 90 acts hostile to Estonian culture. Among the occupations, deportations, murders, bombing of the national theatre, persecuting writers and artists etc., there was also mentioned the birth of a well-known journalist. The works of another person, a university professor and author, were labelled as crimes against humanity without any reason. When these two people complained to the ENA Press Council, the response was that *Eesti Ekspress* did not violate any ethical convention. The Press Council interpreted the list as a “satirical opinion article” (though not in the humour section!) and stated that as both complainants were public figures, they should be able to take stronger criticism (!) than anybody else. The ENA Press Council seemed to entirely forget both §17 of the Constitution of the Republic Estonia that states: “No one’s honour or good name shall be defamed”, and the Code of Ethics. Later on, *Eesti Ekspress* published the Press Council’s adjudication under a headline stating that these two men were unable to understand humour. The news portal *Delfi* picked this up and published the story under the headline “X [journalist’s name] Is Hostile to Culture”.

When an eccentric author in his radio comment labelled the same professor a criminal, accused of having committed crimes against humanity, the Ethical Advisor of the Estonian National Broadcasting (also a member of the ENA Press Council) did not see anything wrong in it. The ENA Press Council condemned the radio channel for not allowing the professor to reply. Consequently, according to the Press Council, he should have publicly proved that he had not committed crimes against humanity!

The cases where the media organizations or journalists abuse their power without consequences are frequent not only in Estonia, but also elsewhere. What is said about Slovak and Czech journalism, that “investigative reporting does not attempt to search for important truths about social reality, but functions as a form of public execution” (Školka, 2001, p. 114), is also true about the other countries in question. When it comes to the critical assessment of the quality of the media, news organizations effectively block these issues. While the media take the right to criticize everything and everybody, they remain opaque and inaccessible to criticism themselves, and any question of responsible use of this right is carefully avoided. The cases where media organizations follow unwritten agreements not to criticise their media rivals for fear that they might criticise them are more a rule than an exception, and described, for example, in Czech, Lithuanian, Estonian, Romanian, and Bulgarian journalism (cf. Balčytytė, 2006; Coman and Gross, 2006; Čulík, 2002; Harro-Loit and Balčytytė, 2005; Raycheva and Petev, 2003). Media accountability mechanisms function in none of the 10 new EU countries. The conditions, in which the media organizations would be ready to discuss the quality of journalism and ethical issues openly and publicly, are still missing in these countries.

Another aspect that impedes the normative principles of “good journalism” from taking root is politicization of the media and particularistic pressures towards journalists and media organizations in the countries with stronger state intervention and less liberal media politics. Governments and new political elites in these countries are more

concerned to gain dominance over the media than to create conditions for their public service functions and respective accountability.

Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 58) view clientelism (“a particularistic form of social organization, in which formal rules are less important relative to personal connection” and commitment to particular interests is stronger than to the “common good”) as an agent of instrumentalization of both public and private media. Ignoring professional criteria and making appointments to the leading posts on the basis of political loyalty has been a frequent practice in the public media of the new democracies in Eastern and Central Europe. According to Jakubowicz (2007, p. 316), “there are practically no cases when the appointment of broadcasting regulatory authorities and governing bodies of public service broadcasters, including their top management, has been made apolitical”.

In the Czech Republic, “all Councils for Czech TV since the fall of Communism had been appointed by Parliament in such a way that the balance of power on the Council reflected the momentary balance of power in Parliament” (Čulík, 2001). Although the current Radio and Television Broadcasting Board has a better reputation than its forerunners, Czech public television still faces criticism for low professionalism and for failing to produce independent programmes on current issues (cf. Vrba, 2007). Mainly because of political pressures, Slovak Television had 11 general directors, 17 editors-in-chief of the news department and 26 co-editors-in-chief between 1989 and 2000 (Školkay, 2001, p. 128). In Romania, according to Coman and Gross (2006, p. 111) “the most important means of controlling the work of journalists is the hiring, firing and promotion process . . . Nepotism, friendship, political connections or *pile*, or simply the whim of owners, editors and directors decides who is hired and promoted”.

The media elite, successful broadcast and newspaper directors, managers and editors-in-chief who are able to monopolize the political debates, appearing regularly and frequently on the front pages and in talk shows, present themselves to the political elite as “the only possible partners in the process of legitimizing or de-legitimizing political acts, pronouncements, and candidacies”, as Coman and Gross argue about Romania (2006, pp. 116–7).

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the cultural basis for professionalization is weaker where the political culture allows favouring particular interests over the general public good. Underdevelopment of civil society and democratic deficit in the post-Communist societies do not create sufficient conditions for normative models to become ingrained, although theoretically, journalists might know and approve the normative principles of objectivity, impartiality, balance, and public interest.

The Ambiguous Impact of Foreign Ownership

Western European and Scandinavian media corporations today control 85 per cent of the press markets in former Communist bloc countries. Romanian, Bulgarian, Czech and Polish print markets are dominated by German corporations. Norwegian Schibsted ASA and Swedish Bonnier Group dominate in the Baltic markets. Today, Schibsted ASA owns 100 per cent of the largest national media company in Estonia. The Swedish Bonnier Group controls the largest Latvian national daily *Diena* (readership of circa 300,000), 11 regional newspapers and seven magazines, distribution and subscription services, and printing facilities. Bonnier also owns a business daily in each of the Baltic countries. Foreign investments certainly brought benefits in terms of greater resources, product and

management improvement, and increased independence from national political elites. There are, however, no indications that they have remarkably contributed to introducing similar professional values in the countries of their destination as in their home countries (cf. Balčytienė and Lauk, 2005; Gross, 2004). Vice versa, aggressive commercial policies are being pursued at the expense of journalistic standards. For example, Norwegian Schibsted ASA has not invested a great deal of effort to introduce the excellent journalistic principles that they so strictly follow in their home country to its Estonian outlets. Questioned by the author of this article "What is the mission of your company in Estonia?", one of the managing directors gave a very straight and unambiguous answer: "What mission? We are making money!" This is the message from the foreign investors to their local managers who have to simultaneously fulfil two tasks: they must guarantee profit to the owners, and they should also be concerned about the quality of national journalism. A serious conflict of interests arises here. Robert Picard (2004) has pointed out that managerial responses produce practices that lower the social value of newspaper content. They also distract newspaper personnel from journalism to activities primarily related to the business interests of the press. As a consequence, commercial ideology increasingly prevails over public service ideology, and the quality of journalism severely suffers. To sell the story better, headlines and leads often contain sensational rather than relevant facts. Journalists use anonymous sources more often for getting opinion than information. Mixing facts and views is very frequent, especially in political reporting. By combining commercial aims with the potential power of the press, a new type of editorial has been created that can frequently be found at least in the Estonian press. Anonymous demands and opinion that are not supported with facts (or if they are, the sources are not named) are presented as a collective opinion of the news organization and amplified as a collective demand of the "public" in order to put pressure on the politicians or other public figures.

Weakness of Journalists' Organizations

The agents potentially capable of exercising positive control over the profession and simultaneously protecting it from outside pressures are certainly the journalists' organizations. There is no country among the new EU members, however, which would have been able to establish a strong professional association or trade union capable of defending journalists against the pressure of political or economic forces. In many countries, various new journalists' organizations have emerged, but these compete instead of co-operating with each other (e.g. Lithuania, Romania). The others have still not been able to overcome the image of a Soviet-type trade union (Estonia, Latvia) and have no authority among journalists whatsoever. The inability to establish an organization capable of protecting the independence and autonomy of the profession and ensuring internal control over the quality of journalistic performance signals the absence of a shared professional ideology and interests. Consequently, a generalization offered by Karol Jakubowicz applies to the new EU member countries:

The fragmentation of the journalistic community and its inability to present a united front against the owners and managements of the media outlets in which they are employed prevents them from being able to fight for their rights, including journalistic independence. (2007, p. 323)

European Journalism and the European Public Sphere

After the EU enlargement in 2004, the issue of the formation of certain commonly shared values and standards in journalism cultures throughout Europe is more relevant than ever. Is something that can be called “European” journalism germinating?

A considerable amount of research from various perspectives addresses the development of media systems within the societal context of post-Communist transition. These include detailed descriptions of societal and media changes in particular countries or regions (e.g. Balčytienė, 2006; Coman and Gross, 2006; Lauristin and Vihalemm, 1997; Nordenstreng et al., 2002; Paletz and Jakubowicz, 2003; Paletz et al., 1995); attempts to construct systemic theoretical frameworks to describe the transformational changes (e.g. Downing, 1996; Jakubowicz, 2007; Sparks with Reading, 1998); analyses of societal conditions for the democratization of the media, the media orientation and their engagement with politics (e.g. Aumente et al., 1999; Splichal, 1994; Sükösd and Bajomi-Lázár, 2003; Vartanova, 2007); and structural changes of media markets (Huber, 2006) to name just a few.

The issue of “European” journalism appears in connection with the research and discussions of a European public sphere (cf. AIM Research Consortium, 2007; Brüggeman, 2005; Eriksson, 2005; Machill et al., 2006; Risse and Van de Steeg, 2003; Sievert, 1998; etc.), which assume that (1) “European” journalism would be embodied in a pan-European mass media with Europe-wide coverage, distribution and audiences independently from national public spheres and media; (2) “European” journalism would emerge through the “Europeanization” of national media and public spheres, where the same “European” issues will be discussed synchronically at the same level of attention and participation.

Although some signs of the emerging pan-European public sphere have been detected (e.g. Machill et al., 2006; Risse and Van de Steeg, 2003; Schlesinger, 1999), most of the studies conclude that the accomplishment of the idea of an autonomous democratic and open pan-European public sphere in contemporary reality is highly unlikely. The identified main shortcomings include bureaucratic decision-making, the deficit of democracy and publicness, the lack of civil society participation and political alternatives as well as the lack of a clear political opposition (cf. Karppinen, 2007; Splichal, 2006). A serious obstacle to the formation of pan-European mass media is, indeed, the fact that there is no a common language of which all people in Europe have an equally good command. According to the 2006 Eurobarometer, 44 per cent of EU citizens know only one language—their own mother tongue (European Commission, 2006). Furthermore, the EU’s linguistic diversity policy appears to be counter-productive to greater popular participation in a European public sphere, as evidenced by surveys (Rose, 2005).

The other assumption that “a European public sphere can be constituted via the Europeanization of reporting in the national media” (Machill et al., 2006, p. 57), has been repeatedly tested in numerous studies and research projects. Machill, Beiler and Fischer analysed 17 respective studies conducted in 15 EU member countries, during 1994–2003, before the enlargement in May 2004 (Machill et al., 2006). They concluded that:

Overall, EU topics account for an extremely small proportion of the reporting in the particular national media. Players at EU level only feature in minor roles. It can be concluded that the public spheres of the EU states continue to exhibit a strong national orientation . . . the much-discussed deficit in terms of democracy and public in the EU runs in parallel to a deficit in European media reporting. (2006, pp. 57, 80)

The conclusions of Machill, Beiler and Fischer's meta-analysis were to a great extent supported by another large international study—an empirical project called AIM (Adequate Information Management in Europe)⁴—that was started after the EU enlargement in 2004 (and ended in 2007). The project focuses on how the mass media produce EU coverage in the context of diverse journalistic cultures. The main conclusion was that the coverage of “Euro-topics” in European countries is continuously nationally oriented and the mainstream media have not been successful “in creating a common focus of attention for Europeans and European issues” or a so-called “European perspective” (Kunelius and Heikkilä, 2007, pp. 70–1). Against this background we can conclude that a particular field of journalism that content-wise could be called “European journalism” is only just emerging and national journalistic practices do not noticeably support its development.

Within the context of the lack of trans-national EU-wide media and national journalism cultures determining the ways in which Europe is reported, emergence of a commonly shared “European” journalism culture in the EU states remains an issue for the future. A finding of AIM that there is a gradually “growing common awareness and unique common practice” among journalists who report European issues from Brussels (Kopper, 2007, p. 187) can be seen as an indication of the development towards this direction. Moreover, during the last decade or so, the European Journalism Training Association (EJTA) and European Journalism Center (EJC) have delivered a number of courses for journalists and journalism students on “best journalistic practice”, on teaching methods, on “Euroreporting” etc. that carry certain common understanding of professional standards and values. EJTA has also developed and adopted a document setting out the standards of European journalism education (the “Tartu Declaration”).⁵ There have also been courses arranged specifically for journalists from the former Communist bloc countries.

For the emergence of a new professional paradigm based on common European values, ideas and principles it is obviously not enough, however, if a relatively limited number of journalists who work in specific conditions (as foreign reporters in Brussels) or those who participate in specific European training projects share a trans-nationally oriented practice and content of journalism.

It can also be assumed that the globalizing communication technologies of the Internet and World Wide Web would form a base for unifying journalistic standards and journalists' role perceptions. According to recent research (e.g. Dahlgren, 1996; Deuze, 2001a, 2001b; Paulussen, 2004), so-called online journalism as a functionally different “branch” of journalism has emerged. Research, however, does not convincingly confirm that “going online” has brought about something substantial in basic values and principles that could be viewed as an emerging new journalism culture, and trans-nationally common. Most online journalism is not seen as journalistic reporting, but adapting stories for the Web and distributing them quickly (Singer, 2003). Surveys on journalists' role-perceptions indicate that there are only slight differences between online and print journalists in interpreting their professional roles (Brill, 2001; Cassidy, 2005; Singer, 2003).

Discussion and Conclusions

What has been said about the essence of societal change can well be interpreted in terms of the transformation of media systems and journalism:

for societal change to occur and to last, a confluence of three factors must take place: first, new institutions must be authoritative and binding; second, they should build upon existing traditions and culture; and third, several decades and generations are needed to change people's habits and acculturation so that the societal change is decisive and enduring. (Howard, 2003, p. 9)

The above quotation also encapsulates the answers to the questions asked in this essay: why was it not possible to change journalism's professional philosophy and practice simply by replacing the old "Soviet Communist" model with the Western "liberal" model?; why is the President not happy, or why do mainstream media tend to favour commercial interests over public interests and misuse their power, although all the basic conditions for democratic development are present?; and what are the perspectives on the development of a "European" journalism as a commonly shared professional philosophy and practice?

In the initial phases of transition, the expectation was that democratic and modern journalism could be relatively quickly generated with the help of Western know-how and investments. It was also assumed that Western professional ideology should and could be introduced to promote professional journalism. There does not, however, exist one pattern to follow for all these countries, but each of them creates their nationally coloured journalism culture based on their historical and cultural traditions and mentality. New professional values and standards will be gradually adopted when favourable conditions for their introduction emerge.

Media systems are increasingly internationalizing. Foreign companies dominate in all large and medium to large Central European markets (except Slovenia). Also after a short while, foreign investments invaded the small markets. These investments have "contributed to a move away from the previously over politicised media and from the direct influence of the state" (Splichal, 2001, p. 46), and undoubtedly diversified media production. Foreign investments have also improved immensely the technological and organizational conditions of journalistic work to a global standard. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the internationalization of ownership has fostered the development of shared professional ideology across national borders. It has been assumed that foreign investors would also invest in the improvement of journalism in their newly obtained outlets that in very many cases were national opinion leaders in their destination countries (Balčytienė and Lauk, 2005, p. 100). These efforts, however, have remained limited. Indeed, the profit interests of foreign capital have fostered commercialization and shifted the attention of the media from the public interest to the publicly interesting. As Jakubowicz (2007, p. 351) argues, commercialization and marketization of the media is likely to be one of the dominant trends in media system change in the future. (Hyper)commercialization, the fragmentation of channels and audiences, market concentration, and the introduction of new communication technologies are all elements of global trends that influence media transformation after Communism. On the other hand, specific local conditions determine the ways, in which particular phenomena appear in particular national contexts. As demonstrated above, freedom of speech can be abused by the authorities in one country, but sacrificed by the press itself for business interests in another.

In addition, new global factors such as online services (24-hour cable television news channels and news portals) have emerged that weaken the normative professional principles of journalism, everywhere. "Objective reporting" as such is increasingly challenged, and especially for online journalism, where the news is often first published and later corrected, if necessary. The dividing line between fact-based and opinion-based

journalism, as well as “hard” news and “soft” news, is becoming increasingly blurred (cf. Plasser, 2005; Pöttker, 2004). More often than not, traditional editorial content and the entertaining and commercial material take hybrid forms (e.g. *advertorials*, *infotainment*, *infoganda*, *public relations news reports*) (cf. Erjavec, 2005; Ursell, 2001). Thus, developing journalism cultures in the new democracies face the same global phenomena as the well-established journalism cultures, but within a different context. The mechanisms that would be able to withstand the negative influence of these factors to journalism practice are not “authoritative and binding”, but marginal and weak.

Strong civil society structures that contribute to public control create conditions where written and unwritten ethical standards and principles take effect and journalists cannot ignore them. The balance between serving the public interest and producing economic profit is under public scrutiny and the media contribute to the critical discussion of their own performance. Lack of effective accountability mechanisms paves the way to the misuse of media freedom and power. Media self-regulation mechanisms have been established in most of the new EU countries in one format or another. In the current circumstances, where the civic control over the media is nearly non-existent and the legislative practices do not encourage news organizations to be strict in following ethical rules, these mechanisms have no effect. Although ethical principles and standards of reporting are familiar to all journalists, they easily ignore them. Journalists’ organizations could and should ensure the implementation of the Codes of Ethics, but only a minority of journalists belongs to these organizations. In some countries, however, they already have a say in employment policies and negotiate collective agreements and social guarantees for journalists (e.g. Slovenia).

The “Europeanization” of journalism in the new EU states has been seen as a component of the general democratization of media systems in these countries. However, as numerous studies demonstrate convincingly, there does not yet exist “one European or at least European-Union journalism” (Sievert, 1998, p. 345) that would have theoretically suggested formal and structural uniformity, and would manifest itself in a unified European public sphere. To what extent increasingly similar technological conditions and working routines in newsrooms and similar requirements for competences would unify the understanding of news values and professional roles in various media systems, remains a question for future research. Democratic transformation in the new EU countries is a phenomenon of the last two decades and the changes that have taken place in all fields of life have been radical and complicated. The process of the emergence of qualitatively new journalism cultures cannot be accomplished in just 20 years. It requires a complete generation shift in the media but will continue with (unexpected) relapses hand-in-hand with the general development of democracy and civil society.

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NOTES

1. This model, also called “Anglo-American”, “professional” and “social responsibility model” is widely recognized as a universal model for journalism practice and theory all around the world (Mancini, 2000, p. 265).

2. See http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=24025, accessed 24 January 2008.
3. See <http://www.asn.org.ee>.
4. See <http://www.aim-project.net>, accessed 8 January 2007.
5. See <http://www.ejta.eu/index.php/website/projects/>, accessed 8 January 2007.

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