



CS2. Country case studies on critical junctures in the media transformation process in Four Domains of Potential ROs (2000–2020)

The aim of the second case study is to provide analysis of risks and opportunities concerning the diachronic changes in four domains defined by the project in the 21st century.

Excerpt:



An option for reference of this particular report:

Lauk, E.; Harro-Loit, H.; Kõuts-Klemm, R.; Parder, M.-L.; Loit, U. (2022). ESTONIA. Critical junctures in the media transformation process. In: Country case studies on critical junctures in the media transformation process in Four Domains of Potential ROs (2000–2020). *Approaching deliberative communication: Studies on monitoring capability and on critical junctures of media development in 14 EU countries*, CS2, D-2.1, pp. 166–201. Mediadelcom. <https://www.mediadelcom.eu/publications/d21-case-study-2/est/>



ESTONIA

Critical junctures in the media transformation process

*By Epp Lauk, Halliki Harro-Loit, Ragne Kõuts-Klemm, Mari-Liisa Parder, Urmas Loit
University of Tartu*

Executive summary

The structural conditions (media laws and organizations, general and professional education) provide good preconditions for deliberative communication in Estonia. Since the 1990s, Estonia has been characterized by a high degree of freedom of expression and information, rapid technological development in terms of media consumers as well as news providers, and a relatively high degree of media literacy as well as efficient education system (e.g., high results in Pisa tests; **University of Tartu has reached among the top 250 universities in the world in 2022**).

The critical junctures that have the strongest impact on the developments in journalism domain relate to Estonia's independence in 1991 and consecutive transformation of the whole media system. The next critical juncture took place in 2004 when Estonia joined the European Union. There are also other major changes concerning journalism and media, that have determined the Estonian path of development.

Estonia's small media system and journalists' job market are vulnerable as the number of employers is limited; resources are also scarce for investigative journalism and thorough data processing.

In the second half of the second decade of the 21st century, pressure on freedom of expression and transparency has increased step by step. Changes occur gradually and may go unnoticed. In particular, journalists are standing for the transparency of society.

The risks are increased by a situation where data on the situation is collected not in the public interest but in private interests. The data on media usage are collected by private companies with the purpose of selling it to advertisers and media companies. Therefore, the existing data consist of the statistics about the consumption of various programmes and channels. There is no knowledge about the other aspects of media usage, for example, the composition of media repertoires of diverse groups of media users, which is vitally important from the perspective of deliberative communication.

At the same time, since the second half of the second decade of the 21st century, the press has overcome the economic crisis, the number of digital orders has risen, and many agents are involved in supporting the development of children's and young people's media literacy.

1. Introduction

Estonia regained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet regime in 1991, as did the other former Soviet occupied countries. This historical juncture created a completely new geopolitical situation in whole Europe, and started a political, economic and social-cultural transition in the post-socialist (also named ‘post-communist’) countries towards democratic political order and market economy. During the last decade of the 20th century, these countries lived through all-embracing changes in every field of life. The speed and depth of the changes differed depending on peculiarities of the countries. The ten countries⁵¹ that joined the EU during the first decade of the 21st century have been regarded as successful in their economic, political and societal transition. Within less than two decades they acquired the status of fully fledged consolidated democracies. The second decade of the 21st century, however, has demonstrated a growing popularity of ultra-right and populist political forces in several of these countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia), as well as in Europe at large. Within this context, Estonia has been regarded as a transition prodigy of democratic reforms, succeeding relatively well in societal democratisation and economic transformation. Estonia is the smallest among post-socialist countries by its territory (45 340 km²) and population (1.33 million), as well as by the media system. After the economic crisis of 2008-2010, the economy and financial sector have recovered relatively well, the GDP being 84% of the average of the European Union in 2020. The unemployment rate has stabilised to 6–7% in 2020-2021. In 2021, the Estonian general government deficit was 2.4%, and the debt level was 18% of the gross domestic product.

Estonian social scientists Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vihalemm (2020) describe Estonia’s post-socialist transformation in four cycles: 1) The first cycle in 1988–1991 began with Singing Revolution and ended with the restoration of Estonian Republic; 2) 1992–2003 was the period of reconstruction of the nation state; 3) The third cycle in 2004–2017 embraced EU integration and structural and cultural adaptation to the transnational system; 4) The critical re-evaluation of the transition and rise of the populist countermovement started in 2018, clearly reflecting the same trend in elsewhere in Europe.

In the 1990s flourishing number of media channels provided unprecedented diversity of content. In 1995 media companies launched their online news platforms and because of strong competition for the attention of audiences the biggest news providers started to offer a lot of free news. In 1997 the Estonian government launched the ‘computerisation’ programme for schools “Tiger Leap” that pushed forward digital education in Estonia. Digitalization in the media sphere reached its highest level during the period of 2004-2017. The usage of traditional media channels decreased while the usage of digital channels increased, and fragmentation of audiences speeded up (Kõuts-Klemm & Lauristin, 2020, 81). Simultaneously, a widespread and quick launch of e-banking, e-voting and state e-services took place. Today, Wi-fi covers practically all populated areas. According to July 2020 data of Statistics Estonia (the state statistics agency), 89.1 percent of households have internet connections, while 98 percent of people aged 16 to 44 use the internet daily or almost daily (Estonia: Freedom on the Net 2021 Country Report, 2021). Public wi-fi access is non-limited. There are no significant digital divides in the country. The 2019 Inclusive Internet Index report ranks Estonia as the 20th out of 100 countries in terms of the affordability of prices for connections. In 2022, Estonia holds the second position in the world after Iceland in terms of internet freedom. (Estonia: Freedom on the Net 2019 Country Report, 2019; 2022). The government does not exercise technical or legal control over the domestic internet. The exception is to prevent the spread of hostile propaganda and false information in connection with sanctions against Russian media. Since the beginning of

⁵¹ Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia.

Russian aggression in Ukraine, the Estonian Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority (TTJA) has ordered communications companies to block media and web channels related to the Russian state in order to prevent the spread of war propaganda. Together with the EU sanctions implemented, more than 40 TV channels and more than 50 websites have received bans (Estonia: Freedom on the Net 2019 Country Report, 2022).

Although the reconstruction of the nation state also included an ‘integration programme’ (for the Russophone minority who made up about one third of the Estonian population at that time), the integration practically failed in two different aspects. The governments of the first two decades of the independence did not make much effort to support local Russian language media, and the Russophone population continued to consume Russia’s media channels. In addition, during the economic crisis of 2008–2010, the local Russian language media completely shrunk. Gradually, two different information spaces were developing, divided along the linguistic lines: a locally produced one for Estonian speakers and another, produced abroad, for Russian speakers. This division has begun slowly levelling along with the appearance of the younger Russophone generations who are able to consume media in Estonian, and also the launch of a Russian language TV channel ETV+ on Estonian public broadcasting in 2015. The transmission of television channels from Russia was stopped in the beginning of the Ukrainian war in 2022.

In 2001 social scientists launched public debate about the cost of the transition. They claimed that the country was divided into “two Estonias”. The “first Estonia” was enjoying the fruits of reforms which provided them with a better living standard. The “second Estonia” felt deprived of opportunities to fulfil their basic needs and felt estranged from “success story”. The existence of the “second Estonia” is a source of risks for deliberative communication, and not only in terms of the media.

The Mediadelcom Estonian case study on monitoring capabilities demonstrates that Estonian data sources and published studies unevenly cover the four defined domains (legal and ethical regulation, journalism, media usage patterns, media related competences). Some information on media regulation can be found in the studies on media policy (e.g., Loit, 2018) and Estonian National Broadcasting (e.g., studies of Andres Jõesaar 2017, 2021, 2022 and Hagi Šein 2005, 2021). However, there is only one research report on the implementation of the legal framework of the media and transparency culture. On the other hand, the existing research covers relatively well media accountability mechanism and related issues.

The issues of economic and social sustainability of journalism domain are best covered because journalism has been a research discipline at the University of Tartu since 1954 and in Tallinn University for the past decade. The acquired knowledge clearly reflects the interests of different researchers and journalism students. As journalism research has not received any state grants since 2014, the PhD and MA theses (as well as some excellent BA theses) make an important source of empirical data on the various issues of journalism in Estonia. Fortunately, Estonia has been engaged in several EU funded research projects during the past two decades (MediaAct, Mediadem, Media Pluralism Monitor and Worlds of Journalism Study;). Due to these projects, media accountability and democratisation issues, diversity and pluralism, as well as aspects of journalism culture have been studied in historical and comparative perspectives.

Academic audience research was systematic and rich of data until 2014. After that the media usage data is produced and used only by private companies. University can afford qualitative studies on media usage practices with the help of students. Qualitative research (e.g., diaries of media usage) can reveal some significant changes especially concerning risks and opportunities for deliberative communication. The Covid-19 experience revealed that there is lack of knowledge on what kind of networks people trust, how media messages are received by different social groups etc. In the context of the increasing diversity of available media (incl. social media) it is important to study media usage ‘repertoires’ of different audience groups.

Media related competences have been covered by the projects that either focus on defining the media related competences, or support teaching specific skills. During the second decade of the 21st century the focus has been on digital literacy (EU Kids Online; CORE; REMEDIS etc.). There is no evidence that any project (except the EU funded ones that include children and teenagers) focuses on measuring media-related competences of adult population.

The research on professional competencies of Estonian journalists has been sporadic. So far, one PhD thesis and some other students' works contain empirical data on journalists' competences. Some information of what competences are taught in the Universities, can be found in journalism curricula.

The current (second) Estonian case study will provide an analysis of critical junctures, trends and evolutions in the four defined domains in order to identify risks and opportunities for deliberative communication in Estonia in the 21st century. For analysing changes in media system, in addition to the conceptual and operational variables of the four domains, we use a theoretical approach developed in Margaret Archer's works (1995, 2003). Archer's model contains three stages of change. First, the existing structure has been established as a result of the actions and interactions of different *agents*. Second, within a certain period the action and interaction of the agents changes the structure. Third, the outcome of these changes either reproduces or transforms the structure (morphogenesis). Archer defines two types of agents: primary agents (which do not have structural forming) and corporate agents (organized interest groups in society). In the current study, journalists, citizens/media users, and editors are the primary agents. Corporate agents are for example, Data Protection Inspectorates, courts, media organizations and corporations, etc. This approach is useful because the paths of risks and opportunities of deliberative communication become visible only if the actions and interactions between different agents are revealed.

In cases of insufficiency of analytical studies and empirical data we use our expert knowledge to find key instances that represent interaction/struggle between agents, as well as examples of public discourse related to ROs for deliberative communication. On some occasions, for assessing ROs, we fill gaps in research with information from non-academic sources, such as court cases and explanations of the Data Protection Inspectorate. Sometimes, the only available information can be found in the media coverage, as for example, in the news on scandals related to freedom of expression and access to information. The analysis of these sources clearly demonstrates how important it is to focus on the roles and (inter)actions of primary and corporate agents for discovering the actual ROs for deliberative communication.

2. Risks and opportunities in the legal and ethical domain

2.1 Development and agency of change

Freedom of expression and the right to information are constitutionally endorsed in Estonia since the independence in 1991. The Eurobarometer survey (2020) exposes the high importance of the guaranteed freedom of expression for Estonians: 54% of respondents prioritized this freedom to the other values.

Freedom of expression as well as freedom of information should support **transparency** in society – an important precondition for anti-corruption behaviour and informed citizens. In Estonia, from 2018 onwards, we can detect a tendency of diminishing transparency due to the attempts by politicians and state officials to curb journalistic investigations of corruption.

The legislation, including media regulation and media policy, rests on state authorities and state officials as the main agents within the legal framework. After joining the EU, Estonia has accommodated the general EU laws and regulations and established respective framework for their implementation. The courts are important corporate agents in interpreting the cases of violations of freedom of expression and access to information. In the 21st century (starting from *Tammer vs Estonia* 1997 /2003 ECHR) the Supreme Court cases are well balanced between protecting press freedom and rights of individuals (privacy and honour). After that case, since 2002, defamation has been decriminalized.⁵² Defamation is now regulated under the Law of Obligations Act⁵³.

According to the report on the access to public information (Pild, Turk, Kose, Lehemets 2022), "Since 2001, there have been numerous restrictions on public information, including an increase in the number of information containing personal data."

The Data Protection Inspectorate (DPI) has become an essential agent responsible for the implementation of the GDPR and privacy protection. However, the role of DPI is controversial: the organization must guard the protection of personal data while also protecting public access to information. Media companies as employers are responsible for job security and working conditions of journalists, and they are representing their employees in the courts and in the Press Council. Currently, their role in protecting journalists in cases of SLAPP is noticeably growing.

In a small country like Estonia, the actions and public discourse of every single stakeholder who is involved in implementation of freedom of expression and freedom of information laws, is visible and has noticeable effect. The main agents are the leaders and members of political parties, journalists and editors-in-chief and media owners, lawyers working for Data Protection Inspectorate, Supreme Court as well as District Court, attorneys and data officers.

The Ombudsman of the National Broadcasting ERR has a potentially influential position of an agent able to shape editorial culture and the quality of journalistic performance. However, there has not been rotation for 15 years since the establishment of this post in 2007, and it has become almost a lifelong job for one person, The duties of the Ombudsman have been limited to cases of ERR and the Ombudsman's duties do not include the network building and cooperation with various actors that shape the journalistic culture.

⁵² This matter has been erroneously presented in the *Monitoring Media Pluralism In The Digital Era* report on Estonia for several years. E.g., see the edition of 2021 (section 3.1) at <https://cmpf.eui.eu/mpm2021-results/>.

⁵³ RT I 2001, 81, 487.

2.2. Freedom of expression

It is important to distinguish the freedom of expression as an individual right and the press freedom as a corporate right. In the 1990s, Estonian courts afforded a remarkably high level of protection to press freedom. In the beginning of the 21st century, Estonia was among the 10 top countries in the world in the World Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders. In 2020, the country was on the 14th place.⁵⁴ The regulations on **defamation and moral damage** have not been restrictive for the press freedom until the growing number of SLAPP cases within last 3-4 years.

There is no analytical research on changes in legal environment concerning freedom of expression. Hence, the following analysis relies on cases published in the Estonian media, on single court cases and a few reports that illustrate the main changes and trends during the 21st century.

During the past three to four years there has been an increasing pressure against press freedom and freedom of expression from politicians, especially from the populist party EKRE. For example, in March 2019, the vice-chair of EKRE, Martin Helme who sits on the Board of the public broadcaster ERR, called his fellow Board members to castigate some employees of the ERR for criticizing his party (ERR, 2019). Also, there have been cases of the owners' interference in the editorial work and personnel policy of some news organizations (Beltadze, 2019). Under the conditions of an extremely limited job market in Estonia with a low job security such interventions are a serious threat to journalistic autonomy and press freedom.

A largely discussed case of this kind concerns former Minister of education and science Ms. Mailis Reps. On October 17, 2020, Estonian daily *Õhtuleht* published an investigation revealing her misuse of taxpayers' money. She used the Ministry's car and the driver for daily driving her children to school and kindergarten. She also admitted having used the Ministry's car for a family trip to Croatia (Kuznetsov et al., 2020; Mihelson et al., 2020). Even more details of corrupt behavior were discovered later (e.g., paying for her birthday party from the Ministry's budget, and taking an expensive coffee machine from the Ministry for private use at home) (Berendson, 2021). The court is adjudicating the possible corruptive behavior of Ms. Reps, scheduling the end of court hearings to March 2023 (Mihelson, 2022).

A striking aspect in this story is that then Minister of Justice, Mr. Raivo Aeg, requested the Prosecutor's Office to assess the work of the authors of the article based on a suspicion of secret private surveillance over Ms. Reps. This kind of activity is a criminal offense under the Penal Code in Estonia (§ 137), and if found guilty, the punishment could be up to three years of prison (Riik, 2020a). The Estonian Journalists' Union (EAL) condemned the actions of the Minister of justice for attacking press freedom (Paju, 2020a). The Estonian Association of Media Enterprises in an open letter condemned Prime Minister Jüri Ratas for not reacting to the action of the Minister of justice. Mr. Ratas stated that Mr. Aeg did not attack the press in his request to the Prosecutor's Office, and Mr. Aeg argued the same (Riik, 2020b; Riik & Voog, 2020). When journalists of *Õhtuleht* asked the Prosecutor's Office to show the document of Mr. Aeg's request, they were answered that this request was not documented (Riik, 2020c).

The described case demonstrates how the agents with power make attempts to influence judiciary in their interests, and simultaneously emphasizes the importance of the watchdog role of journalists in the present-day Estonia. Also, in comparison with the situation in the first decade of the 21st century, the courts have started paying more attention to the protection of individuals than to press freedom.

⁵⁴ Fourth in 2022.

In Estonia the threat of **SLAPP** has remarkably increased within recent years.⁵⁵ The targets of SLAPP are most often investigative journalists, but also freelancers and even people who have written comments on the internet or social media. SLAPP has become an economic means of harassment of journalists as well as bloggers and people who express critical view as the legal proceedings are expensive and time consuming. Even when a journalist wins in court her normal life and work become disturbed for a long time, let alone the stress to cope with.

Both investigative journalists At *Eesti Espress* Holger Roonemaa and Martin Laine pointed out that SLAPP cases are often focused on juridical nuances more than discussions on truthfulness of journalistic content. The economic aspect of SLAPP cases is very important. The initiators are usually people of money and power who, for some reason, are interested in silencing a journalist. Media companies have lawyers to deal with the allegations and lawsuits against journalists, but freelancers must cope independently, and pay the costs. According to an Estonian investigative journalist (Interview with H. Roonemaa, July 2022), the cost of a lawsuit can be about 10 000 Euros.

In addition, in the case of some persons with economic power, journalists already know in advance that a legal action will be brought against the journalist and media organization. Therefore, journalists and editorials consider carefully whether it is worth reporting on the corrupt activities of this person. Hence, this person has gained some kind of “protection” from the coverage of his or her own actions (Laine, 2022).

On the personal vulnerability of journalists in SLAPP cases, Laine gives an example on a lawsuit that was filed 3 years afterwards (one can file a lawsuit 5 years after the publication) when the journalist had already gone to work for another media organization. Luckily, the employer at the time came to the journalist's aid but this aid is not guaranteed. In addition, each SLAPP case means that journalist must learn all the material “Well, a month of my work time has definitely been robbed” (Laine 2022).

Most frequent claims against Estonian journalists include demands of removing some illustrations, especially if they are taken from social media; removing certain information or facts, or to remove the whole article/interview, etc. These claims are often produced by lawyers or lobbyists, who most frequently argue that the topic or issue of the story is not of public interest.

Journalists are worried about the tendency that instead of journalists the courts and Prosecutor's Office are beginning to define what is of public interest and what is not as well as who is the public person and who is not (Laine, Roonemaa, 2022). In the Estonian political establishment, no agency exists to protect journalists and their freedom of expression. (Roonemaa 2022). When journalists are sued to court as revenge for their work, how can they stand for transparency?

According to two journalists interviewed (Roonemaa and Laine), the increase in SLAPP cases over the past few years is related to both GDPR and copyright. Laine: "If you follow the defamation lawsuits over the last couple of years, the tendency is that people are suing other people. ... We are still in a good position as journalists because we have economic support behind us."

In sum, Estonia is developing a risk where freedom of expression is reduced by various legal mechanisms. Such shifts in Estonia have taken place in the form of small incremental changes. Only an extensive analysis of the cases relating to freedom of expression will allow for a shift towards increasing pressure on freedom of expression. As Holger Roonemaa points out:

“I think this fourth place concerning the press freedom in 2022 is a disservice to the Estonian press. This creates such a fake sense of our freedom while you actually see all the processes working in the background.” (Roonemaa 2022)

⁵⁵ See Estonian cases: <https://et.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

2.3. Freedom of information

Freedom of information was turned from passive right (declared by the Constitution) into active right in 2001 when the Public Information Act (PIA; AvTIA in Estonian language) was passed. While GDPR is implemented via Data Protection Law, information transparency is regulated via PIA and the Restriction of Unfair Competition and Protection of Business Secrets Act, adopted in 2018.

In their yearbook, the Data Protection Inspectorate highlights some problems related to **access to public information**. For example, although Estonian PIA states there are no reasoning needed for accessing public information, there are cases where access has been denied because a person making the request has not provided a justification or because the holder of the information has found the person making the request does not need the requested information (*Andmekaitse Inspektsiooni Aastaraamat 2020, 2021: 37*). Concerning trade secrets as a basis for classifying information PIA allows to classify only these parts of documents that meet the criteria of trade secrets.

Access to the information is gradually decreasing. If upon the adoption of PIA, subsection 35 (1) of the PIA contained eight clauses, when the holder of information is required to declare information intended for internal use, then subsection 35 (1) of the PIA currently in force sets out 25 instances (Pild, Turk, Kose, Lehemets 2022, 10). There is a growing practice in the offices of public institutions and local governments to label their **documents “for internal use only”** (“**AK**” in Estonian). Often AK-labelled documents do not contain any sensitive information or only part of them is not publicly accessible, but they have been made inaccessible just because it is more convenient for the officials. In addition, another self-contained definition has begun to frequently appear on government documents: “passively public”. This indicates that the information can be provided when requested, but by default the content of the document is not visible in the register (Pärli, 2021). The qualitative study (legal analysis and 14 interviews with experts regarding implementation practices) carried out in 2022 (Pild, Turk, Kose, Lehemets), commissioned by the Foresight Centre of Estonia (an independent think-tank at the Parliament of Estonia) indicated three key problems related to the public information. Firstly, the controversial role of the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate in carrying out supervision of State information holders, and at the same time monitoring compliance with personal data protection.

Secondly, the wording of PIA encourages the frivolous imposition of restrictions on access, since the wording of the law emphasises only the balancing of the rights and freedoms of the data subject and not of those requesting access to the documents. The risk is that the consideration ends only with an assessment concerning the privacy of a person and the right to freedom of information is excluded.

Thirdly, the balance of safeguards implemented by the State to protect personal data as too restricting to the right of access to information. ... It emerged from the interviews that not all holders of public information have a set of rules in place to give access to public information, therefore officials fear responsibility for the unlawful processing of personal data (Pild, Turk, Kose, Lehemets, 2022, pp. 68-69).

Both the holders of information and the persons requesting information noted that there are major difficulties in **defining trade secrets**. The holders of information do not wish to take responsibility for accidentally disclosing a trade secret, and thus everything is declared a trade secret lightly (op. cit 52). GDPR has increased the role and responsibility of data officers. Concurrently the rules and practices for the release of public information vary widely in organisations or the concrete rules are missing at all (Pild, Turk, Kose Lehtmet 2022).

In Estonia the implementation on the protection of journalistic sources have not been an issue. However, **whistleblowing** cases (published in media) reveal certain risks concerning the application of the EU whistle-blower regulations to a small society. While whistleblowing is often viewed as archetypical form of organizational loyalty (Kleinig, 2014, 190), in Estonian organizational culture there is a tendency to prioritize loyalty to the organization to the public's right to know (see e.g., the draft of the Code of Good Conduct of State Officials). In other words, the value of workplace loyalty overrides freedom of critical speech, and it becomes difficult to protect whistle-blowers.

A recent case of the communication manager of the Health Authority illustrates the risks related to whistleblowing despite of respective protective regulations in force. In December 2020, the manager gave an anonymous interview to a journalistic TV magazine where he revealed that the state still did not have a plan for vaccination against Corona virus, although it should have been implemented already in January 2020. Two days after the program was aired the communication manager was fired. He had been quickly identified as the whistle-blower and requested to resign (Mõttus-Leppik, 2020). The Estonian Journalists' Union condemned the breach of the freedom of speech by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Health Authority and criticized them for pressuring the whistle-blower to resign. The whistle-blower himself stated that he did not regret blowing-the-whistle and believed there should be more such courage amongst citizens (Hussar, 2020b). Some journalists tried to find out how the whistle-blower was identified, but all the parties involved refused to talk to them (Pau, 2020).

This case gave a message to the civil servants not to express their concerns or criticism in public media channels, even if something very important for society is at stake. Two other similar cases have been recorded from pre-Corona period, where state-employed experts lost their jobs because of whistleblowing (Arumäe, 2015).

Only in 2021 the Estonian Supreme Court clearly defined (**in the context of press freedom**) that there is a public interest in **administrative and civil court proceedings** (RKHKm 14.06.2021, 3-17-62).

Priit Pärnapuu one of the leading data journalists in Estonia, who has wide experience in asking data form different public data holders in Estonia. He represents journalists who do not accept refusals regarding disclosure of the data. For Pärnapuu, the Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate has been more supportive in fighting for transparency. Pärnapuu describes a problem that often public servants do not rely on law but create rejection argumentation from their "common mind":

"I wanted to get statistical forest inventory data from the Environmental Board - which working group has measured which plot. I was not interested in the names of the working groups, but only what pieces were measured by the same working group. The Environmental Board replied: if such data were to be released, then these working groups made public. would start to set their measurements accordingly. The official assumed that I, as a journalist, will make a critical story about how some working group is measuring incorrectly." (2022)

Pärnapuu provides also an illustration on how organizations create hiding practices:

"All letters and documents moving between authorities must be registered in the public register of documents. But in addition, the authorities have internal document management systems. I know some of these document management systems where there are separate boxes where an official can tick "do not show in public view." In such a case, no notation concerning the existence of the document shall remain in the public document register. And if I or anyone goes to the public document register, it is not possible to know that such a document has ever been created. And if

there are several documents in the public document register with a restriction on access, which does not actually have to be a restriction on access, then this double document management is likely to do the same. So, there's a lot of things that might be of great public interest, but you don't even know what to ask. For example, we have a permanent representation of Estonia to the European Union in Brussels. It is a sub-office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which does not have separate document management, they use the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If you now go to the Foreign Ministry's public document register, then the Estonian Permanent Representation in the European Union has prepared exactly a comp document in the last decade." (Pärnapuu 2022)

These examples illustrate the importance of the role of data and legally competent journalists in Estonia. The recent tendency is that Estonian reporter also report about the refusals from public organizations. Now-and then this helps, and the documents are made public.

Pärnapuu also points out that that disputes with the Data Protection Inspectorate are free of charge, just the time of work of the journalist costs, but if you file an action in court, you should already think about the costs. Environmental organisations are also wondering whether it is (economically) worth suing Eesti Energia, for example. The problem is that the authority of the Data Protection Inspectorate will cease from a certain limit.

Regulation of Audiovisual Media Service (will be passed in 2022)

The upgraded Media Services Act will regulate video sharing platforms and social media channels (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion) in addition to the traditional audiovisual media, affecting a few dozen companies in Estonia. The Act adapts the regulation of the law, including the licensing system, to new audiovisual media services, such as online television on major news portals. The providers of the respective services must apply for an activity license, submit reports on the structure of the program, and disclose the ownership.

The Act harmonizes the rules applicable to television services, on-demand audiovisual media services (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, iTunes, etc.) and to domestic video rental, for the protection of minors and for ensuring morality and legality. In order to improve access to audiovisual media services for people with disabilities, service providers are required to produce accessibility action plans. The deadline for objecting to allegations made on television or radio will be extended to 30 days instead of 20 days.

2.4. Accountability system

2.4.1. Development and agency of change

Estonia was the first among the former Soviet bloc countries to establish a self-regulation mechanism for the media in 1991. On the initiative of then Estonian Newspaper Association (now the Estonian Association of Media Enterprises), a Press Council was established as the opposing force against the attempts at special legal regulation by the state. Four different media law drafts were worked out and debated during the independence movement in 1988-1991, but finally, none of them was passed. The other motive for establishing a self-regulatory mechanism was the vacuum of moral and professional values, in which journalists found themselves after Soviet censorship was removed (Lauk, 2014: 182-183).

After 50 years of Soviet censorship, any proposals to establish conventional regulation for publishing or broadcasting were seen as attempts to reinstate censorship. Therefore, the example of the Nordic countries was followed instead, and Nordic expertise used. The Press Council was founded with the participation of Finnish colleagues and even the name of it (Avaliku Sõna Nõukogu – ASN/ Council of Public Word) was a word-by-word translation from Finnish.

Self-regulation has ever since served as a tool to keep media specific statutory regulation away. Politicians have abided to this principle despite some heavy criticism towards journalism every now and then. It has provided an opposite effect in cases media managers have applied for the state's assistance in protecting their interests. E.g., the newspaper association considered publishing gazettes with advertising published by municipalities unfair competition and turned to the parliamentary committees to initiate banning such advertising. The committees did not uphold the request leaving the issue with self-regulation (Loit 2017, 48-49). In that case, the media was hit by its own tool. It also revealed that democracy gains only from *autonomous* news media and the state might have a policy to foster this (Loit 2018, 33).

The Code of Ethics of the Estonian Press was formulated and adopted in 1997, on the basis of about 100 cases ASN had dealt with during the first six years of its existence. By the end of the 1990s, along with the increasing competition in the media market, the number of the complaints increased, and the owners and editors-in-chief began viewing ASN's adjudications as a threat to the commercial success of their outlets. The dissatisfaction grew into a conflict between the ASN and the newspaper association, and the latter established a separate Press Council (Pressinõukogu – PN) in 2002 for dealing with the complaints concerning its member publications (Lauk, 2008: 62). In fact, the reason for establishing their “own” press council was the ambition of the media elite to control the self-regulation process and monopolize the right to set professional standards and interpret the principles of good journalism. The ASN defines itself today as an independent centre for media analysis, which also adjudicates the complaints from the people, but it has no procedural measures to oblige the media outlets to publish its decisions.

2.4.2. Existing media accountability instruments and an evaluation of their effectiveness

The code of ethics has not been revised since 1997 although amendments are needed. The reason is that both press councils should amend it in cooperation, but there is no communication between the two councils. PN has declared that it was established to replace ASN, and therefore, does not recognize ASN as an equal party of negotiation and cooperation.

The Estonian Code of Ethics combines organizations' accountability and the individual accountability of a journalist. Article 1.4. of the Code declares: “A journalist shall be responsible for his or her own statements and work. Media organizations shall undertake to prevent the publication of inaccurate, distorted, or misleading information”. However, the responses to the complaints are usually written by editors-in-chief, therefore one risk that is related to the media accountability system is the marginalization of individual accountability of journalists. This, in turn, undermines the public's trust in the news media and in the accountability mechanism.

The Estonian media accountability system includes only one ombudsperson – the ethical advisor/ombudsman of the ERR (since 2007). The tasks of the ethical advisor are dealing with complaints from the listeners and viewers, monitoring the programs, and making appropriate proposals to resolve problems. The ombudsman is directly accountable to the Broadcasting Council and should act independently from the broadcasting management. The analyses and decisions made by ombudsman about the complaints are not public and not easily accessible, which makes the process opaque. The business paper *Äripäev* regulates accountability by using the in-house editorial guidelines. It is not known, however, how these rules are implemented in daily practice.

The media accountability situation in Estonia well demonstrates how a critical juncture – democratic transition – opened a pathway for the transformation of the whole media system and created conditions for journalistic professionalisation. Self-regulation is regarded as an element of professionalisation as it is based on professional ethics and values. In Estonia, introduction of a self-regulation mechanism offered an opportunity for higher quality journalism and improve-

ment of journalistic culture. On the other hand, a risk has realised: the media managers and owners do not support enough the authority of the accountability mechanism, especially what concerns publicly deliberating accountability issues in their outlets.

2.4.3 Market accountability

In February 2022, communication expert Raul Rebane raised the issue that the composition of the basic packages of Estonian cable television providers did, by default, include channels with clearly anti-Estonian content. The subscribers did not even have the freedom to opt out of these Russian hate-speech channels. This situation raised the question of the accountability of telecommunication companies. On 28 February 2022, Estonian largest telecommunication companies Elisa and Telia suspended the show of Russian-language channels PBK Eesti, Dom Kino Baltic, Karusul, Muzyka Pervogo, Vremja, Telekafe, Bobjor, Dom Kino Premium, O!, Pojehali!, REN TV. Telia also suspended the transmission of CTC Media (STS).

Estonia does not have public accountability and political accountability instruments.

Risks: The pressure on freedom of expression has gradually increased over the last five years. Attempts by lawyers to define what is of public interest have put especially the investigative press under pressure. Widespread implementation of GDPR has given officials and public authorities an opportunity to classify rather than disclose documents. Estonian whistle-blowers and sources are not protected, and planned legislation may not improve protection either.

Estonia's self-regulation system is outdated. The code of ethics for journalism is from 1997 and has not been updated. The voice of journalists is not represented in matters relating to complaints that are discussed by the two councils. Media scandals that include public debates on media and communication ethics reveal that there is a wide gap between the moral awareness and moral reasoning capability between professional journalists, politicians and lay members of society. This risk could be turned into opportunity if the professional community would be more open to discuss public communication ethics in 21st century.

Opportunities: There is a strong community of journalists in Estonia who are responding openly to attempts to restrict freedom of expression by lawyers, politicians, and economic figures. Estonia has legislation supporting freedom of expression and information, there is no overregulation.

3. Risks and opportunities of journalism domain

3.1. Development and agency of change

In the following, the basic conditions for sustainability of journalism will be discussed from the perspective of economic and social sustainability. We see these two broad conceptual variables subsuming a diversity of factors that enable or disable public deliberation, and consequently, deliberative democracy. The economic sustainability comprises: the size of the market for journalism, resources for journalism, and public service media conditions. The social sustainability is reflected via conditions for producing original journalism, organizational working conditions and working atmosphere, and diversity of organizational/human resource (gender, age, class and cultural background, education).

3.2. Market conditions and resources

Economic sustainability

Estonia's small population in combination with a small economy only allows a limited number of players in the market (oligopoly), as well as restricts the options of choice in the journalistic job market.

Advertising is the main source of income for the commercial media. The Public Service Media (PSM) are mainly funded from the state budget and do not sell advertising. The lion share of the total advertising turnover comes from television (ca 25%). The price of the TV advertising in Estonia is too low according to experts, and this hampers the possible growth of advertising revenues in other fields of advertising. A big economic risk for the Estonian news media emanates from the competition with foreign advertising giants, esp. Facebook and Google. There is no exact data available for Estonia, but in Latvia, foreign advertising sellers make €250 million per annum, compared to €80 for domestic advertisers. Even if Estonian figures make a half of Latvian ones, the loss of advertising money to the global competitors is substantial. The scarcity of financial resources makes a serious risk for sustainability of journalism, especially quality/news journalism, and the news media's ability to support public deliberation.

A media policy report by a team of authors (Kõuts-Klemm et al., 2019) summarizes the main aspects of economic sustainability:

- The Estonian media system is institutionally diverse and consists of private enterprises, publications/channels of the state or local government, and public media of different purposes, sizes, and channels. As a result of a significant concentration among private enterprises two large companies of domestic capital compete in the widest segment of media consumers, the Ekspress Grupp and the Postimees Grupp. Their activities are complemented by the Estonian Public Broadcasting, the third largest organization. Risk: these enterprises employ the best journalists as they can pay higher salaries than the small media organizations. Consequently, the best expertise and knowledge in a limited journalistic job market concentrates in the largest companies. These two largest domestic private media groups occupy a dominant position in the media market of the Baltic states and earn a significant proportion of their income outside Estonia.
- Excluding the investments in the Latvian and Lithuanian market, export of TV-programs is no source of income for the Estonian media industry.
- The Estonian advertising market as a main source of income for the private media is slowly recovering since the crisis in 2008-2010 and is beginning to reach the pre-crisis level. An intense competition in the field of television advertising and an internationally low price of online advertising are hampering the recovery of the advertising market. A gradual increase of digital subscriptions in 2020-2021 has not yet compensated the shortage of advertising income. The print media that mainly exists on the subscriptions

and advertising is losing their readership (by 20% during 2020) and this trend continues. During 2020, circulation numbers of the dailies and weeklies declined by 18%.

- Since 2019 there are 20 local or regional news outlets in Estonia. Local media and community media are experiencing the most substantial hardship. Local governments also publish news sheets at least once a month (in 2019 there were 83 outlets). The Media Services Act and the procedure for issuing broadcasting licences do not favour the development of communal radio channels or their position as a communal enhancer. The number of local radio stations has been decreasing during the past two decades.
- The regional, and especially local press cannot fulfil their potential of critical observation of the execution of economic and political power, because they are funded by local governments. Thus, we can observe a high risk emanating from the scarcity of economic resources: the local and community news production and critical debate are severely hampered.
- A decrease of overall income has forced media enterprises to diversify their sources of income. The expansion of media enterprises to other sectors and their economic interests may reduce public trust in journalistic content because the formation of content and the principles of financing are not transparent or publicly declared. Decreasing transparency, related to the scarcity of resources results in the decrease of journalistic content and the more frequent bias of news.
- In addition to the traditional content providers, there are now many new ones, including those who are not subject to Estonian law. This has allowed hostile foreign forces to influence the Estonian public, and such information operations (foreign propaganda, creation of a social divide) may become dangerous to the Estonian statehood and culture.

3.3. Public Service media conditions and investigative resources

The percentage of funding for PSM from the national budget compared to the budget growth has been nearly halved during the past few decades. Although the financing is stagnating, the production offered by ERR (Eesti Rahvusringhääling/ Estonian National Broadcasting) is expanding (Jõesaar and Kõuts-Klemm 2020), which signals certain risks. The disproportion between resources and expansion of programming raises a question about the quality of the broadcasts and the proportions of diverse types of broadcasts in the programming. According to Jõesaar and Kõuts-Klemm (2020), there is a remarkable decrease of educational and cultural programs since 1997 on the public service radio, and “currently, music comprises a half of the programming aired on the public radio stations” (Jõesaar and Kõuts-Klemm, 2020, 102).

Since ERR is financed from the state budget, there is a certain risk of political influence on the programming and personnel policy. The Board of the ERR consists of 9 members, five of whom are appointed by the Parliament (*Riigikogu*). Four members are nominated from among the recognized experts of the broadcasting field. It has been, however, difficult to maintain political balance, because of continuous attempts by politicians to amend the Broadcasting Act to suit better to the interests of political parties.

So far, there is no research on **investigative journalism** in Estonia. Two investigative teams of journalists are working today in the Estonian media. The best staffed team with a good potential seems to be the team of Estonian Television’s *Pealtnägija* [Eyewitness] of the ERR. However, a lack of special journalistic education and knowledge is palpable, as well as certain orientation to entertainment, especially in the style and form of their broadcasts.

The other team consists of five press journalists and works at Ekspress Meedia corporation as the Investigative and Fact-Checking Department, which was established in 2020/2021.

Strengthening the investigative teams would be an important opportunity for keeping authorities on account and watch the use of power and public money. The risk is the lack of finances, and the resistance of public officials to cooperate with journalists. Another clear obstacle that investigative journalists in Estonia are facing is the ambiguous interpretation of the privacy protection regulation. State officials and other bureaucrats tend to refuse to deliver requested documents using protection of privacy as the pretext, even if the document is regarded to be accessible by law.

Social sustainability of news production

In Estonia, journalistic human resources are an important source of risks and opportunities emanating for the deliberative communication from the media. Social sustainability of journalism depends on human capital (journalists and journalism profession) and professional values shared by the majority of the professional community. Strong, well educated, autonomous and dialogue-oriented professional community is an opportunity for enhancement of deliberative communication. On the contrary, the worsening working conditions and decline in professional standards, limited career options and decreasing autonomy create risks for social sustainability of professional journalism.

3.4. Production conditions

One of the important production conditions is the structure of the media organization, which undoubtedly influences working culture and journalists' job satisfaction. Each structural change for whatever reason affects journalists' working conditions and routines, sometimes the whole working atmosphere. According to a recent study on the structural changes of the four largest Estonian newspapers during 2010-2020 (Puustaja, 2022), there is a clear growth of the units of advertising and subscription sales, while the size of content production units remains nearly the same throughout the decade. All these newspapers established online news units in the early 2000s, which have all disappeared by 2020. This refers to the change in the division of labour in the newsrooms: journalists are producing content simultaneously for both paper and online versions of the newspapers. At the same time, the newspapers have established various units producing specific web-based content (e.g., lifestyle site, pet-portal, traveling portal, Tallinn-city.ee, and others).

Along with the rapid development of digital media, journalists must adapt to the requirements of technology-centered newsroom practices and routines. This adaptation has been different for the older and younger generations of journalists. Estonian journalists experienced a generation shift in the beginning of the 1990s along with the transformation of the entire media system. Another generation shift is connected to the rapid technological transformation and appearance of social media as a source and platform for journalists. Older journalists feel that although the managers encourage continuous renewal of skills, the organization of work does not give them time to apply these new skills (Ivask, 2019). The young digital media privy generation feels more comfortable in the newsrooms, although their basic journalistic knowledge and skills are not necessarily very good. Young people, again, often tend to leave editorial offices in search of better working conditions and higher salaries without considering becoming life-long journalists. In Estonia, according to a qualitative study (Olgo, 2017), journalists who had left their profession revealed mostly non-material reasons for their exit: conflicts with the bosses, insufficient time for going deep into the issues and diminishing individual autonomy of journalists in newsrooms. The salary levels in journalism were regarded as non-attractive, and poor possibilities for climbing up the career ladder were also mentioned.

In 2019, Reporters Without Borders wrote that despite the favourable conditions related to freedom of the press and access to information, **pressure on journalists** in Estonia is increas-

ing, especially considering that selling advertising and advertising space is playing an ever-greater role in the business. The organization also criticises Postimees Grupp's owner, Margus Linnamäe for using the newspaper Postimees to promote his political views: "He had personally appointed leading staff and promoted a conservative worldview in a new newspaper section he opened before the parliamentary elections" (ERR 18.04.2019. 13:29).

According to the WJS data (2012-2013) journalists in Estonia believe they have a high degree of professional **autonomy**. 83.7% of respondents said they had complete or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories, and 93.1% had complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding what aspects to emphasize in a news story. However, the fact that Estonia has dropped from the 9th position in 2010 to the 15th position by 2021 in the press freedom index indicates that there may be problems with journalists' individual autonomy. As the Union of Journalists in Estonia has little authority, the autonomy of Estonian journalists mostly depends on their individual values and position. A qualitative study (Niinepuu 2012) demonstrates that although journalists claim of having enough autonomy, they describe several restrictions if asked to describe their decision-making freedom in different news processing situations. Therefore, the actual performance of autonomy should be assessed by using different sub-variables. It is also important to take into consideration the type of the media, channel, and ownership. Based on the existing research, we can point to the risk that journalists' individual autonomy is insecure, as the supporting mechanisms are for the most part missing.

Another risk related to individual autonomy emanates from the ethics practice. As explained above, Estonian journalists are not entitled to respond to the requests of the press councils in case of complaints. Consequently, we cannot view them as agents of professional ethics. To reduce the risks concerning moral sensitivity and obeying the rules, the journalists should be motivated by the employers and the public.

3.5. Agency of journalists

In a small country, like Estonia, the number of news media companies is limited, which also limits the number of jobs for journalists. The change of the number of journalists reflects quite directly the changing situation in the media market. The enormous expansion of the media market accompanying the political and economic transition in the first half of the 1990s increased the number of journalists in two ways. First, hundreds of new magazines and newspapers, and tens of new radio channels (in 1995, according to Jõesaar et al.2013:128 there was 47 of them) needed journalists. Second, the editorial offices of well-off outlets remarkably increased their staffs. By 1995, the media outlets employed about 1500 journalists (Lauk 1996, 93), which is the highest number of journalists in Estonia ever. Majority of these new journalists had no journalistic education and were professionally socialized and trained only in the process of work. The general number of journalists had, nevertheless, noticeably declined, reaching about 900 by 2014. The number of employees in the entire media field (including journalists) today is about 4 500 (Estonian Statistics Bureau). The exact number of journalists at the end of 2021, according to Statistics Estonia, was 929.

A peculiarity of Estonia's small job market is that majority of jobs are in the capital Tallinn. Only 21 regional and local newspapers are located elsewhere. All-in-all 123 journalists and 93 other staff members worked in these newspapers in 2019 (Kõuts-Klemm et al., 2019). About 90% of journalists in regional and local media have no journalism or communication education (Michelson, 2018: 101). An obvious risk factor appears here for the further decline of journalistic quality of the peripheral press and radios, since the news organizations in the capital offer better salaries and more prestigious jobs and can hire better qualified journalists. Also, when losing job in a peripheral outlet, it is practically impossible to find a new job as journalist in the same location. This, in turn, may also become a reason for self-censorship.

Several structural changes are gradually occurring. Although the overall turnover of journalistic staff is relatively low, the number of temporary jobs is gradually growing. Some newspapers have reduced their editorial staffs by terminating some of their editorial departments. For example, one of the two main dailies *Eesti Päevaleht*/Estonian Daily closed its cultural department in 2020. Because of the conflicts between the management and journalists, the whole investigative team left *Postimees*/Postman, the largest daily, in 2019. In addition, during 2018–2019, altogether 30 journalists left *Postimees Grupp*, including most of the culture and opinion staff, and several unit heads (Kõuts-Klemm et al., 2019). Most of these journalists found new jobs in the other news media, some left for communication business. Investigative journalists joined *Eesti Ekspress* (a quality weekly) and today, they work in the Investigative and Fact-Checking Department that is common for the whole Ekspress Meedia corporation. Main reasons for these movements from one newspaper to another are related to the increasing pressure by the commercial goals and marketing, and the attempts of the management to control the work of journalists to the extent that they prescribe which topics to cover and which to ignore. Both tendencies are not unusual in many news organizations, and journalists experience the danger to their professional autonomy. This situation involves a risk of generating more tensions inside the editorial offices and force journalists to opt for self-censorship.

Salaries in the media field are comparable with the Estonian average (between 892 and 2 405 after taxes) and the average salary levels in similar sectors. The average monthly salary in 2022 after taxes for editors-in-chief was between 847 and 2 631 Euros, for journalists between 876 and 1761 Euros, for copywriters between 924 and 1958 (palgad.ee). Real salary numbers depend on regions, bonuses, position in the organization's hierarchy, gender, and many other factors.

The Estonian Journalists' Union, the only journalists' trade organization in Estonia, has not been able to identify as a proper trade union even after 30 years of independence and press freedom. Journalists need collective agreements that can better safeguard their rights and salaries, but the Union is unable to function as their advocate because journalist themselves are not interested in protecting their employment conditions with the help of the union. A big part of the members belong to the older generations, and many of them have made their entire career in the Soviet media. Paradoxically, unlike in several other post-Soviet countries, Estonian journalists have not established any new professional or trade organizations during the 30 years of independence.

However, as it was pointed out before in this report, the role of Estonian journalism community watching over the transparency of Estonian society is outstanding. This is the community of (investigative) journalists who fight against decreasing transparency in Estonian society. It is also important to point out that Estonian journalists actively and publicly discuss journalism ethics in the context of controversial media scandals (e.g. 2022 a scandal concerning Estonian politician who allegedly took ethically inappropriate photos of children). In these discussions, journalists open the discourse of moral consideration at newsrooms but also provide critical opinion on unethical communication practice in Estonian social media.

3.6. Journalists' organizational working conditions

The employment and working conditions are influenced the most by the market forces: the economic situation in the country at large, concentration of media ownership and changes of owners, and the commercial interests of the owners (to a smaller extent also political interests). Accumulation of risk factors in these fields have negative impact on journalists' employment and working conditions, which, in turn, creates risks for their ability to contribute and keep up deliberative communication in society. Various studies show that the stress and distress of Estonian journalists is high.

Employment conditions are mostly researched from the perspective of job security and employment status (permanent or short-term employment and unpaid work). Journalists are legally and economically best secured if collective agreements exist between employers and journalists' organizations. Such a collective agreement indicates a high degree of journalists' individual professional autonomy and of an influential role of trade unions (e.g., Finland, Norway and other Nordic countries).

According to the WJS country report (2016), vast majority of journalists interviewed in Estonia held a full-time position (93%) whereas 5% of the respondents indicated that they had part-time employments. Of those with full or part-time employment, 87% held permanent positions.

Most of the journalists have individual employment contracts. The conditions of the employment contracts are unknown, so it is not possible to find out what is the proportion of the fixed payments and what is the proportion of performance payment in a monthly salary. Estonian news media organizations, except the public broadcaster ERR, do not have collective agreements. So, most of the journalists negotiate the employment and salary conditions individually. Less experienced journalists struggle with time-management and are in danger of becoming stressed out (Ivask, 2017), and so would be more likely to consider changing career paths, fields or newsrooms. The concept of a job-for-life is losing popularity, and one reason might be the precarious nature of newsrooms, which eliminates long-term work commitments. (Ivask 2017b).

There are not many **freelance journalists** in Estonia. However, it is not known how much the newspapers buy content from the people who do not identify themselves as freelancers. Only in the past decade, when freelancers started establishing their own companies to sell their production, did they get fixed term trading contracts. Freelancers who have a contract have revealed that the outlets that are buying their stories do not take into consideration the actual expenses a journalist has to produce a story.

“With hard work, I was able to earn quite satisfactory sums to my bank account, but I still could not pay myself the minimum salary. As the tax office started to take interest in my business in 2014, I began to pay myself 200 Euros per month. To be able to pay that sum, I had to earn an additional €103 for taxes. At the same time, I had no means to negotiate the price of my stories. The absurdity of the situation was that although I paid my salary and taxes, I still did not have any social guarantees – they start only from the minimum salary, which at that time was €350 (Nuttov, 2019, 19).

So far, there is no directly focused research on **job security** of journalists in Estonia. As mentioned above, journalists (except those working for the ERR) negotiate their job contracts, which are confidential, individually. As these employment contracts obviously do not offer equal conditions to journalists in the same position, journalists feel insecure and are more easily forced to leave when the employer needs to cut the staff. Alternatively, they must sometimes accept the employer lowering their salaries. For example, in April 2020, Estonian business paper *Äripäev* changed its print version's publication frequency from five days to once a week, and 40 journalists faced the loss of their jobs. All the employees were suggested to accept the decrease of their salaries (*Õhtuleht*, 8.4.2020).

The impact of the Covid crisis on journalists' job security is a topical issue that has not yet been studied.

There is no recent research on journalists' **job satisfaction** in Estonia. The only study on job satisfaction was carried out in 2010 by Merili Nikkolo (71 journalists answered to the standardised questionnaire). The three most important factors that decreased job satisfaction were: performance of the management, dissatisfaction with work results and unfair negative feedback

followed by dissatisfaction with acknowledgements. Regarding management, the respondents named the manager's personality, the concealed appointing of assignments and unclear line of command. (Nikkolo, 2010: 98-99). All these factors appear in the interviews with journalists frequently also today, as a recent PhD study (Ivask, 2019) confirms. Ivask (2019) explains: "In the current converged newsrooms, the managers do not know how to give the journalists clear tasks and thus no routines are created. This raises the risk of burnout.

Journalists must often work for multiple platforms simultaneously. For example, journalists frequently produce stories for online and the print newspaper in parallel, but the workflow often lacks strategic and efficient management." Poor management of the newsrooms seems to be one risk factor concerning the working conditions and job satisfaction in Estonia (Ivask 2019).

Estonian journalists have medium risks concerning the intensity of the work, as appears from the WJS analysis on time pressure (WJS Estonian Report, 2016). This applies to the staff journalists, but we do not know the situation of the freelancers.

To detect changes in job security and job satisfaction, a new study is necessary, as the working environment for journalists has much changed within the past 10 years.

3.7. Intra-organizational diversity of human resources

The average Estonian journalist is a woman in her forties. Estonia is among the countries where majority of journalists are women (according to Statistics Estonia, 58.6% at the end of 2021). This proportion has been relatively stable at least for the past 17 years – according to the WJS survey in 2014, 58.4% of journalists were women. Gender policies in the media organizations have not been of interest of Estonian policy makers. The public service media's strategy paper for 2021 to 2024 does not have any reference to gender equality. The same applies to the collective agreement of the ERR. Although there is no information or research on gender equality issues in the media sector, the fact that the difference in men's and women's average salaries in Estonia is 21.1% (according to Eurostat 2021) indicates that the gender gap most probably exists in the media field, too. Missing gender equality strategies in media organizations is a clear risk for fair employment conditions and for a balanced democratic gender policy.

The WJS country report informs that over 80% of journalists held a university degree, and 44.8% had specialized in journalism. As the university level education in journalism has suffered financial difficulties during the past 15 years, it is possible that the proportion of journalists with journalism degree from a university is gradually decreasing.

3.8. Journalistic competence, education and training

While journalism curricula in universities describe the knowledge and skills that the students obtain during their studies, there is scarcity of wisdom about Estonian journalists' perception of their competence and practical skills, the employers' requirements on journalistic competence, and how the competence is assessed.

A study by Örnebring and Mellado (2016) (based on data gathered in 2009), indicates that Estonian journalists place little value on editing skills, and valuing the highest the networking skills. A PhD thesis (Marju Himma-Kadakas 2018) deals with the realization of skills in online settings. Himma-Kadakas points out one risk that is related to wisdom and attention concerning journalistic competencies in 21st century: "In 2012, editors did not associate technological skills with storytelling at all; in 201... newsrooms are investing in hardware and software, but not in human resources and the development of technical and storytelling skills depends on the initiative of the reporter. Editors and reporters were unable to differentiate skills from competences

or distinguish journalism specific skills” from general transferable competences.” (ibid., 48) Himma-Kadakas also points out expectations of competences that online journalists should have are inclined towards media multi-skilling and technical multi-skilling as well as the ability to work independently.

There is no generally agreed criteria for assessing journalistic competence. For example, Loit and Siibak (2013, 8) explain in their study that journalistic articles are valued by the number of visitors it attracts, which often leads to flawed editorial decisions, generates misleading headlines, and publishing second-hand stories and copy-pasting PR material. Some journalists have expressed opinion that this situation has changed, but there is no systematic study about the evaluation standards in contemporary newsrooms. It is also not known how much emphasis is put on competence in job interviews and employment conditions.

According to Ivask (2017) journalists also feel insecure about the journalism career path as the work in the newsroom is changing and management does not seem to offer a secure environment to work and develop in.

The results of different qualitative studies point out the problems of feedback and feedforward in Estonian journalism (Olgo, 2017; Ivask, 2019; Pluum, 2019): newsrooms have no regular feedback tradition, the feedback expressed in the staff meetings is by nature, more an evaluation of the work done. Predominantly, the feedback comes sporadically from colleagues. Sports journalists do sometimes get feedback from their sources – sportsmen. Some of them also admitted following the click statistics and accordingly, changing their work and stories (Pluum, 2019). It is worth asking what message gives to the journalists the feedback in the format of annual and other prizes and awards. Among several journalistic awards the most prestigious is the annual Bonnier prize. The aim of this prize is to value investigative journalism. However, first and foremost, the evaluation committee values the impact and appreciation of the story. The award also mostly acknowledges the quality of reporting, but leaves the editor’s input unnoticed (Salamäe, 2016).

Some journalists who have obtained bachelor’s level journalism or communication education, have chosen to continue MA level at the University of Tartu. In addition to Tartu University, Tallinn University opened a journalism and communication degree program in 2011. Eesti Meedia’s Postimees Group established its own journalism school (*Postimehe Ajakirjanduskool*) in 2018. The course lasts about a year and gives basic knowledge and skills for working as a reporter. The school had first 27 graduates in 2020 and recruited 35 to the second flow. The school admits not only journalists, but anybody interested in journalism (Aavik 2021).

The degree level education in journalism, media and communication is available in Tartu University and Tallinn University. Tartu University is the main center of journalism and communication education in Estonia, where journalism program was established in 1954, and the independent department of journalism in 1975. Further structural reforms in the University have placed journalism program into the Institute of Social Studies among many other degree programs. Curricula and requirements for internships are being continuously redefined and updated to meet the challenges of rapidly changing ways of content production and presentation. Currently, journalism and communication are taught at both BA and MA levels, whereas journalism is a stream within the communication program. Some courses are common to both streams. The curriculum contains courses on media and communication ethics, history of Estonian journalism and communication, basics of information law, practical courses on reporting and editing, audio-visual and online production, and interviewing skills on bachelor’s level. Journalism students also undertake obligatory and voluntary internships, which often pave the way to the job market. News media organizations also employ summer reporters, and for many, this is another chance to get a job. The graduates often begin their careers as journalists, but after a few years become communication experts (with higher salaries and lower stress). This confirms

that other sectors value journalistic experience and competencies. There is no lack of jobs in the media industry for university graduates with journalism degrees, which in most cases is a BA degree. Tallinn University puts more effort on teaching multimedia production skills.

During the first decade of the 21st century Estonian universities have promoted the idea that they should focus on training skills that the industry views as necessary. The universities thus were stepping into the position of service provider for the industry while the journalism teachers pointed out the needs of individual learners. The media industry in Estonia does not support or sponsor university education in any ways but tries to prove that their own (mostly hands-on) training is more effective and more valuable. Establishing *Postimees* journalism school was one of the steps to demonstrate this. The tension between academic journalism education and the industry's practice-oriented mentality is a historically continuous phenomenon in Estonian journalism, although the tension is rather discursive and most of the graduates of journalism programs find a job at media organizations.

In the universities, financing of teaching social sciences has been drastically decreasing. Journalism education lost its income from fee paying students as a result of the 2010 reform. The current financing model of the University of Tartu has put journalism curriculum under strong financial pressure. By 2016, journalism education had become the cheapest at the University of Tartu considering the expenses on teaching and infrastructure. At the same time, according to the [„QS World University Rankings by Subject 2016“](#) media education at the University of Tartu was positioned between 101-150 in the world's scale. This was achieved due to the additional resources coming from the tuition fees until 2010 and from the research projects until 2014. The teachers involved in the research projects, were often partly or fully paid from the research budget.

Scarcity and instability of funding of journalism education increases the risk of lowering professional competence among journalistic staff in the media outlets, which finally leads to lower quality of journalism overall. Also, it is becoming more and more difficult to persuade journalism graduates to choose academic career and become university teachers. The salaries are far too low considering the qualification requirements of the university and compared to the salaries in the media and communication industry.

It is estimated that about a quarter of Estonian journalists have special journalistic education. However, it can be said that journalistic education plays an important, although not directly perceived, role in perception of the professional roles and professional values of journalists. On the one hand, different “generations” of journalists have grown together in the academic community, where professional self-reflection is constantly acquired. On the other hand, journalism education also provides an opportunity to carry out research on Estonian journalism - it also supports professional self-reflection of journalism profession.

In sum, one main risk concerning professional competencies is lack of co-operation between academia, media industry and journalistic community that takes into consideration the future challenges concerning professional competencies.

3.9. Professional culture and role perception

The data about role performance of journalists is available due to the Worlds of Journalism Study second wave survey (2012-2013). To make any conclusions about the development tendencies, we need to wait until the results of the third wave (2022-2024) will be available.

We re-interpret the results of the last survey (WJS Estonian Report, 2016) from the point of view of ROs for deliberative communication.

Estonian journalists distance themselves from the political power: very few of them would support government policy or are ready to convey a positive image of political leadership. Estonian journalists tend to perceive their role as a critical but neutral observer who tries to serve as many people as possible, accepting also the right of people to express their views. Traditionally they see themselves as educators of the public. They have different views on the activist type of roles. Concerning controversial reporting techniques, Estonian respondents are most loyal to private individuals and to the value of privacy. For example, paying for information is acceptable for only 7.9% of respondents. In Estonian journalism, paying for information has never been a widespread practice. Truth is another value that is important for Estonian journalists: very few journalists accept that fabricating stories or publishing stories with unverified content is acceptable.

A slight risk is related to the result that Estonian journalists are biased towards the accommodative role (orientation towards audience members as consumers). The monitorial role, perceived as very important by the journalists of Nordic countries, is less important. This finding should be put in a wider context, and it is important to ask whether the “click counting” has influenced journalists’ role perceptions in Estonia?

The autonomy and quality of **local media** is very uneven. The study carried out by researchers at Tallinn University (Rohn et al, 2021) pointed out that the role of local and regional autonomous newspapers for local community is very important. The report focused on two regions with strong regional newspapers (*Pärnu Postimees* and *Põhjarannik*), while in some regions there are no independent publications where professional standards are practiced. At times, the lack of high-quality news is caused by the pressure of the owners on the newsmakers, and at times by ignorance.

Kadri Ugur (who has been a journalist, an editor-in-chief and a journalism teacher since 1984) worked for South Estonian regional newspaper *Võrumaa Teataja* (VT) in 2022 for three months. She described several risks concerning the local communication culture that is related to the lack of professional competencies. Ugur described some practices that illustrate how the basic functions of journalism are not even considered to be important:

“I took the position of temporary editor-in-chief with the best intentions to do as good paper as I can. As it turned out, it wasn’t easy in the newspaper where I was the only person with professional education. I was told by the main editor-in-chief that paper’s policy is not edit anything that is already written for VT. In hyperlocal newspaper the public interest or news value was often less important than personal relations. For example, the opening of another cheap, low-end baby clothes store in the local mall was front-page news, because mall’s owner had business relations with the owner of VT. The dominant source of information was Baltic News Service. Freely available press releases were edited as follows: the main source was presented as author and his/her direct quotes were edited into opinion pieces. If the news or press release was not “editable” into opinion piece or was too short, the author was mentioned as “BNS”. If editor added or deleted a part of text, the author was “VT”. I did my best, to balance the content of newspaper to the expectations of audience. I used my own contacts that were different than the sources of basic writers and brought up new themes. This was noticed. I personally got the same feedback for several times: people confessed, that reading of VT takes more and more time, and that paper is becoming more interesting. I left the position with very short notice without any back up plan in order to maintain some mental health and professional integrity. (Ugur 2022).

Risks: The oligopolistic situation in the media market today is not so much a risk for media consumers as it is for journalists. As the *Postimees* case has shown, the intervention of a large employer in the autonomy of journalists has a significant impact: the capacity of investigative

journalism increased in media organizations where journalists with the relevant expertise of *Postimees* went. Quality of local journalism varies from county to county.

Opportunities: The tradition of journalism culture in Estonia is long and has been supported for decades by academic journalism education. Estonian editorials have overcome click-journalism and other "children's diseases" of the early days of online journalism.

4. Risks and opportunities of media usage patterns domain

4.1. Development and agency of change

Domain of media usage transforms rather slowly, since the media use habits of single user are rather stable, habitual. Critical junctures in media use patterns are most probably generated by the changes in technology and its implementation. In the Mediadelcom project the technological-institutional environment will be analysed as an operational variable "access to media". Other operational variables in the media usage domain are "relevance of news media", "trust in media" and "media related competencies" and in these we cannot see rapid changes definable as critical junctures. As the following, we explain the Estonian case in accordance with four operational variables and indicate to the critical junctures if they are present.

4.2. Access to media

Digitalisation can be seen as a critical juncture in the media usage domain (even when the digitalisation is an ongoing process and not the breaking point with clear beginning and end like the understanding of a critical juncture would suggest). A critical juncture in media usage domain falls in the period when the digital media became the dominant media. Marju Lauristin presented in her article "New Media and Changes in the Forms of Cultural Transmission" (2013) the periods of implementation of different information and communication technologies in Estonia, and she shows that it happened in the beginning of the 2000s. According to Lauristin, this has caused significant changes in cultural transmission and in other social processes. More precisely, we have dated the exact change with the year 2014, where for the first time more people regularly followed news online than offline (Vihalemm, Kõuts-Klemm, 2017). The period started already from 2004 and it has been labelled as the third cycle of morphogenetic transformation (Lauristin, Vihalemm 2020: 53ff) that was characterised by the rapid digitalisation not only in the media sphere (Kõuts-Klemm, Lauristin 2020: 81) but also in the society. Nevertheless, in the media sphere the affordances of digital media are supporting the diversity of media repertoires among Estonian population (Kõuts-Klemm 2017) and weaken the integrative function of mass media (Kõuts-Klemm 2013).

The other indicator about the critical juncture related to media technologies is the generational change in the media use patterns. This has been analysed mainly by Kalmus and Opermann in several publications (Kalmus 2016, Kalmus et al 2018). Patterns of political and civic participation of media generations ground on the vertical digital stratification and different modes of participation. The patterns indicate to significant differences between those who have been born in years 1968-96 and older cohorts (Kalmus et al 2017: 644). Longitudinal data have shown that among the youngest generation the same distinctions exist that among other generations – e.g., differences are in their consumption patterns of culture (Lauristin 2013), social stratification (Lauristin 2020) and flexibility and resilience (Kalmus et al 2017). Although the youngest generation is labelled as a "digital generation" (Kalmus 2020), their composition is not so monolithic we could expect. Kalmus (2020) has found that the "digital generation" has potential to develop into the truly 'active' or even 'strategic' generation, agentive and powerful enough to begin a completely new chapter in the book of societal morphogenesis" (Kalmus,

2020: 321). There is not much information about the older generations – their preparedness for and ability to adapt with the digital turn. A survey study concludes that about one fifth of the population is not adapted well with the digital context and they are mainly the older Estonians (Kõuts-Klemm et al 2017). The number of ‘non-digitals’ can be seen as problematic – many services, including public services are provided almost exclusively as digital and it restricts access for the services and thus creates new inequalities.

One specific juncture is related to the concrete audience group – the Russian-speakers in Estonia. The changes in the media usage patterns of Russian-language audiences in Estonia have been caused partly by the development of digital technology, but not only. We need to consider the situation in the beginning of social transition in Estonia in 1990s, where Russian-speaking inhabitants lived in the Soviet information sphere that was orchestrated by the central Russian-language media from Moscow. At the same time Estonians had their distinct, Estonian-language information sphere as a supplement and for majority of them even as a replacement of the Soviet one. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the smooth changes for the Russians-speakers who remained in the territory of Estonian Republic started. Still in the end of the 1990s their media space was separate (Jakobson 2004). Survey data from 2011 showed that digitalisation reached the Russian-speaking audience too, but the distinction revealed sharply in the functionalities of the digital media use. Since the Estonian language skills among Russian-speakers have been low (28% reported to be fluent and 23% to understand and use moderately, 2011 data), this restricted their usage of digital channels for communicating with Estonian state and authorities and to participate politically equally with Estonians (Trültzsch, Kõuts-Klemm, Aroldi 2014: 200). Leppik and Vihalemm (2017) show that with the digitalisation Russians’ “media space has been broadened” with better opportunities to follow international media and new channels launched in Estonia. The opportunities broadened even more after the launch of a public service media TV-programme ETV+ in Russian in year 2015. It opened the opportunities for the diversity of their media repertoires. On the other hand, diversified media use enables development of media literacy, because it enables to compare received information and to analyse it more exhaustively (Leppik, Vihalemm 2017: 594). Still, the media usage of Russian-speakers, compared to Estonians, is more sporadic and less routine (Leppik, Vihalemm, 2017: 594). Among Russian-speaking audiences a generational turn in media usage habits is taking place as well (Jakobson 2007; Leppik, Vihalemm 2017).

Since the media environment is highly diverse in Estonia (Media Pluralism Monitoring), there are no significant barriers to access media even if one is limiting their news consumption only to the digital channels. The number of users of the online news by the public service media is in increase, and more and more Estonians are ready to pay for digital subscriptions of online newspapers (Kõuts-Klemm, Rožukalne, Jastramskis 2022). There is media offer for minorities (e.g., news of PSM and papers in local dialects) and for vulnerable groups (e.g., translation of PSM programmes into sign language).

Opportunities: Diversity of channels as a basis for higher media competencies. Diversifying the media repertoires among Estonians and among Russian-speaking audiences. Readiness of audiences to pay for the quality journalism.

Risks: Due of the low resources the programmes and journalistic content have low quality and thus do not attract local audiences. Information overload as a basis for news avoidance and need for the restricted media menus.

4.3. Relevance of news media

Considering the diversity of news media repertoires of Estonian population – we have found nine different repertoires (Kõuts-Klemm 2017), we see differences of news preferences and

relevance of news for users. They attribute relevance to different types of news. There are users who are more interested in professional journalism news from different locations, and there are users who define private sphere information in social media as news. One can be concerned about those population groups who do not attribute relevance to news media, since their connection with general matters and willingness to participate remain low (Kõuts-Klemm 2017: 377).

There are no recent quantitative estimations how big the number of “news-avoiders” in Estonia could be. In our earlier studies we have labelled this type of users as a non-active audience segment with low news interest. We have shown that low interest in news and a limited media usage has been characteristic to about one fifth of the Estonian adult population for several decades (Kõuts-Klemm, Lauristin 2020: 91). According to the last findings, the number of followers of alternative (i.e., partisan, opinionated, esoteric etc.) media channels is almost the same – at least we know it about the youngsters and students. Rämmer (2018) has shown that one fifth of youngsters are followers of alternative media and they are less interested in news generally and are less trusting as well (Rämmer, 2018).

Specifically, the relevance of news for the youngest generation has been researched by Signe Opermann. She finds that “young people’s engagement with news is still quite strong, though highly individualized, selective and interest-driven, both technically and in terms of content” (Opermann 2018: 91). Young people prefer unconventional channels “to get their news” – 89% of the 13-30 age group tell that social media is the first most common and convenient way to get news and information, 81% of the group get news from friends and family members and as the third – almost half of the group follow online news and TV daily basis (Opermann 2018: 97). On the other hand – the consumed content is not restricted to the national news only. Some young Estonians combine the foreign channels in their news media repertoires with domestic ones (Vihalemm, Kõuts-Klemm 2017); concerning entertaining content the orientation to global media is even more visible.

The interest in news among audiences has been analysed in latest years in relation to the social media usage – the question has been, whether the social media can be seen as a gate to the news. The picture is diverse again, but it seems that the entertaining and sociability dimensions are central for social media usage, whereas at least for the younger generations there are other channels for news information. Findings of some BA and MA theses show that many young people prefer social media because they can follow the content that doesn’t consist of news (Velsker 2014 and Härma 2015 about Facebook; Kask 2020 about YouTube, Tamm 2016 about apps and smart devices).

Studies about the needs of local or regional audiences are rare in Estonia. It could be more studied, since the landscape of local news providers is diverse – there are more than 15 local newspapers. The local newspapers have also online issues. They compete as information providers with information letters by local municipalities and by the hyperlocal social media groups. Relevance of the local newspapers and their online appearance has been studied recently as a part of a MA-thesis project (Parksepp 2021) and by the researchers of Tallinn University (Rohn et al 2020). Parksepp (2021) found that the readers of the local county newspapers expect that the newspapers would offer “the articles with more in-depth research, analytical pieces and exclusive content” (p 73). The local entrepreneurs were also critical about the ability of local newspapers to provide the content with high quality that would support the regional developments and local life (Rohn et al 2021).

Studies about the perceived quality of the news media have not been regular to be able to conclude, are there any critical junctures or processes towards worsening or improvement as perceived by the audiences. The demanding voice by audiences towards the news media content is not a topic of the audience research. The latent assumption seems to be that the users are

solely responsible for their media usage preferences, without asking how media literate they are to make informed choices.

Opportunities: The diversified provision of media content enables to find news in proper forms and in preferred platforms for audiences, the agency of users is developing. News interest is still high in the quality content.

Risks: The information savvy environment presupposes higher ability to select and distinguish news from fake news. Disappointment of audiences and thus the number of news-avoiders will increase if the low-quality content is dominating.

4.4 Trust in media

There is no critical juncture in the trust in media in Estonia. Trust patterns have been developing smoothly, in direction of downwards – like in other democratic countries. More trusted are traditional media channels TV, radio and newspapers and less trusted internet and social media (according to Eurobarometer). There is a correlation between institutional trust and trust in media in Estonia (Kõuts, Vihalemm, Lauristin 2013). Compared to European countries, media in Estonia is still enjoying higher trust than EU average (Kõuts-Klemm, Rožukalne, Jastramskis, 2022).

Among the traditional/ legacy media channels the public service media has the highest trust in Estonia, and it has been continuous (Jõesaar, Kõuts-Klemm, 2019; Jõesaar, Jastramskis, Rožukalne, 2022).

Trust in media can be interpreted as an assessment of the role performance and quality of media. In year 2011 the criticism towards media was quite moderate, but in some questions the audience evaluations have been polarized – e.g., different groups had opposite opinions how well Estonian media fulfils their watchdog function or are the audience members safe against the mishandling and mistakes by media (Vihalemm, Lauristin, Kõuts, 2012: 35).

The only clear change in trust patterns we can see among Russian-speakers in Estonia. A well-researched fact is the distinction between Estonians and Russian-speakers living in different media spheres in Estonia from the transitions in the 1990s; and this gap has been gradually closing (Lauristin et al. 2011, Leppik, Vihalemm, 2007). In the beginning of the 2000s Russian-speakers mainly followed Russia's mass media and were not well informed about the events in Estonian society (Jakobson 2004). The trust scores among Russian-speakers have been lower than among Estonians for all media channels in Estonian media system (Kõuts, Vihalemm, Lauristin 2013: 91). The situation was the most critical in 2007 and appeared as a "Bronze Soldier Crisis" (Juurvee, Mattiisen 2020) – where the group of Russians in Estonia, influenced by the Russia's media expressed their hostility and distrust towards the state institutions. The event was the starting point for the acknowledging the need for changes, including in media provision. As a result, the public service television channel ETV+ in Russian language was launched. Jõesaar (2017) shows that since then trust in media is slowly increasing among Russian-speaking population.

Young people in Estonia do not trust media highly (Opermann 2018). They see that the credibility of the news content can be given by the verifiability – 76% agree that all facts need to be presented in news and facts could be checked from the original or other sources; additionally, all sources had to be clearly identified and referenced" (Opermann 2018: 100). Young people do not perceive that it is always the case in news media. When we ask about their definition of news, we get criticism towards journalism: news have explicit bias in sources and one-sided news reporting, they refer to stereotypes, present inaccurate facts and present frightening information (Brites, Kõuts-Klemm 2018). We do not have quantitative studies about the percep-

tion of news performance among younger generations, but the qualitative insights enable to see that the younger generations understand the meaning of news quality and are able to distinguish news from false information. It brings us to the media related competencies of different groups.

Opportunities: Estonian audiences still trust highly traditional news providers.

Risks: The lowering of quality of journalism can undermine trust in media. The growing competition of channels for the attention of audiences can cause information overload for single user.

5. Risks and opportunities in the media related competencies domain

5.1. Development and agency of change

Media literacy as a civic competence and media education as part of national curricula emerged in Estonian in the end of 1990s. The first national curriculum of an independent Estonia (1996) mentioned media literacy explicitly in three places: as a vocabulary theme in foreign languages, as a learning outcome in high school history classes (in which students analyse information from the media), and in social studies. (e.g journalism was mentioned as the fourth power of democratic society).

The next version of the curriculum (2002) brought about change: media related competences were defined as field competences, but the curriculum only provided some possibilities for motivated schools and teachers to improve this competency area (Ugur & Harro-Loit 2010, 138)

In 2005-2006 an interdisciplinary group of researchers at the University of Tartu proposed the idea of developing and communicating the concept of cross-curriculum, as an opportunity for training key competences. The concept of media literacy and communication competences were integrated and contextualized as a substantive part of citizen education. Due to national level political upheaval, the new curriculum was not implemented. The biggest barrier to the implementation of the advanced media literacy and communications skills' concept was the lack of political decisions concerning citizen education in the information society (Ugur & Harro-Loit 2010, 134)

By 2010 the issue of media literacy and digital literacy was actively debated in Estonia. The Internet usage was high among young people, reaching 99.9 % of 11–18-year-old pupils. It is partly due to the activity of the Estonian government that brought computers and internet connection to Estonian schools since 1997 (The Tiger Leap project). National curriculum includes several topics that could support media education and communicative skills, but the teacher education is still lagging behind.

5.2. Overview of media related competencies in policy documents

The Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 focuses on improving digital skills and literacies of the total population through the efficient and effective use of digital technologies in learning and teaching. In order to implement this goal a Digital Focus program was launched (started 2015).

5.3. Information about the media literacy programs in formal and/ or in non-formal education.

In 2011-2022, there have been 6 research projects in Estonia that study the digital and media competences of children and young people. In addition, there are a number of support programmes that enable people of different ages to develop their digital competences.

The EU funded report Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28 (Siibak, 2016) reported 20 about featured projects in 2010-2016 (p. 148) that promoted media literacy. According to the data of this report, 16 out of 20 projects promoted Participation and interaction; 15 - critical thinking; 14 - creativity; 14 - media use.

Majority of the projects were related to the digital literacy. "Smartly on the Web" (2010- 2013) targeted children and their parents. "Advancing digital literacy 2014-2020" - the main target groups of the initiative include: adult population of Estonia; working specialists and practitioners; students and lecturers studying on non-ICT related subject areas; and activists promoting ICT related skills "Advancing the digital literacy 2014-2020" financed partly by the European Social Fund.

In formal education, the curricula of media education were better positioned in the early 21st century, as the functioning of the Information and Media Centre was a so-called end-to-end topic. Later, media education has been reduced to one topic of Estonian language, where the main topic of media is handled from the point of view of journalistic genres.

5.4. Actors and agents of media related competencies: risks and opportunities

The main agents are researchers and teachers. In addition, many other organizations contribute to the development of media competences and the creation of educational resources.

The Young People's Media Club NGO (Noorte Meediaklubi – NMK) is a network that consists of young professionals (mostly journalists and students of journalism and communication) The activity of NMK is designed to enhance practical journalistic skills of students and develop their media literacies as well as raising their interest in media-related matters.

Estonian Union of Media Educators brings together researchers and teachers of formal education. In 2010, the Estonian Association of Media Educators was revived. (Loit and Harro, *Mediadem*, 132), but currently the association has no activities.

In 2020 the National Library created a new card game for young people to detect fake news. The National Library also offers free media classes for young people in basic schools and upper secondary schools: "Flipping on fake news".

The Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research has created educational videos for learning media competences. ERR has implemented the Media Competence Project "Meediataip" to raise young people's knowledge of the functioning of the media (e.g., How are news stories born and how is false information spread? What is fact and what is opinion? How important are the sources and why are professional journalists needed?)

5.5. Assessment of media related competencies among citizens

According to the comparative studies of media literacy or digital skills, comparisons indicate that the media literacy level of Estonian population is rather good. Estonians are among the most media literate nations, with Finns, Danes, Swedes, and Irish people amongst European

countries (Open Society Institute Sofia 2021). A significant part of the population has well developed digital skills. According to DESI data, at least 62% of the adult population possess basic digital skills – above the average in EU (DESI 2019). The data show that there have been no significant changes during the past five years in digital skills (DESI 2019). Still, the people with higher income are more skilled than people with lower income. On one hand, digital skills are related to access to technologies – e.g., slower internet connections in rural areas hinder the usage of online services and development of digital skills. On the other hand, our research has shown that skills depend on motivation, i.e., the motivational barrier hinders the skill development (Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Kalvet 2008). Researchers relate high level of digital skills to the strength of the educational system, free media, and high trust in the media among people. Cultural and social contexts have been supportive to developing the skills, and the public discourse can even be labelled coercive (Siibak, Kõuts-Klemm 2017: 282).

The measurements of digital competences (tests for schools) were developed by the scientists of two Estonian universities in 2018. The new pilot digital competency test took place for the students of the 9th, and 12th grades in April 2019. Students of the 3rd year of the vocational educational institutions were also included in the test.

Opportunities: Digital competency that includes several aspects of media literacy is in political agenda concerning children and young people. There are several support programmes, well financed research programmes and lots of learning/teaching materials. The number and variety of agents who offer learning opportunities is high.

Risks: Media education policy in Estonia is biased towards young generation. The concept is wide and does not include moral dimension of media and communication ethics and accountability.

6. Conclusions

Opportunities for deliberative communication (that are related to transparency) include journalistic autonomy and journalists' critical- analytical abilities to fulfil the watchdog role. The latter is vital for safeguarding **freedom of expression and freedom of information**. The successful investigative cases of disclosing corruption demonstrate the potential of Estonian journalists to fight for the transparency of the society. Press freedom is under pressure, but journalists are still sensitive about the pressure and ready to react and fight. In addition, in comparison with several other CEE countries, Estonia is still a country where the culture of freedom of speech is valued. However, the risk factor is that in the second decade of the 21st century, the trend towards secrecy has gradually increased. The legal environment as well as implementation practices favor confidentiality rather than transparency.

The self-regulatory instruments of the Estonian media are associated with risks rather than opportunities. The "frozen" system of self-regulation is an indication that ethical debate has not become part of the Estonian journalism culture.

Main risks and opportunities for **journalism** in such a small society like Estonia are related to resources. The outflow of advertising money into global media corporations has reduced the resources for news production. Since a society's communicative capacity is related to human capital, qualifications, efficiency, and sustainability of human resources is crucial. In the context of the current project journalists and other media content creators, media experts, researchers, teachers and politicians form the core of the agents influencing the news media's ability to offer forum for deliberative communication.

The economic crisis of 2008-2010 severely hit Estonian press. However, to an extent, the press recovered in the subsequent years due to a gradual increase of online subscriptions. A decade of

the economic struggle of the press in the search of new business model, the decay of the decades-long flagship of the Estonian media, the daily *Postimees*, the hardship of the local media and insufficiency of the funding of the public service media, pose a chain of cross-risks.

A way to strengthen analytical capacity and credibility of professional media, could be an improvement of the qualifications and career model of journalists in public service media. Like in the public universities, journalists' recruitment could be based on the evaluation of their portfolios, experience, and qualifications. The qualifications requirements for different positions may differ. The career model should provide job security and clear qualification requirements for promotion. The current "liberal" career model may be suitable for the private media, but the rapidly evolving information society needs top-level journalists-analysts.

The biggest problem with previous and current **research on media usage** is that the demanding voice by audiences towards the news media content has not been a topic of the audience research. The latent assumption seems to be that the users are solely responsible for their media usage preferences, without asking how media literate they are to make informed choices or how the structural conditions (e.g., journalism quality) support their choices. In an increasingly fragmented environment, in the context of a plurality of media content offerings, the challenge for media research is to move on to explaining specific content preferences. So far, the research has successfully covered the dynamics of people's use of various channels, programs, and preferences according to their lifestyle, civic and political activities, and worldviews.

Research on **media competencies** in Estonia is biased towards children and young people. Studies on media and communication competencies of people with various other social characteristics (e.g., Russian speaking population, old and middle-aged people living in the peripheral regions etc.) are missing. Another entirely missing segment of research concerns media and communication related values and general communication ethics.

Evaluating the risks and opportunities associated with Estonian media from the perspective of the development of **deliberative communication**, the media system, legislation and journalism culture create opportunities for public debate. The risks mainly relate to the roles of various agents, power struggle and lack of competence. Concerning the values supporting deliberative communication, the biggest risk is a gradual decrease of transparency.

References

- Aavik, M. (2021) Aruanne lugejale: Postimehe Ajakirjanduskool – mitte ainult ajakirjanikele. *Postimees*, 9.jaanuar. <https://leht.postimees.ee/7150544/postimehe-ajakirjanduskool-mitte-ainult-ajakirjanikele>.
- Archer, M. (1995) *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Archer, M. (2003) *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Arumäe, R. (2015). Arumäe: riigi majandust juhitakse Exceli tabelitega [Country's economy is managed with Excel tables]. *Äripäev*, 17 April. <https://www.aripaev.ee/uudised/2015/04/17/arumae-riigi-majandust-juhitakse-exceli-tabelitega>
- Ajakirjanike liit: sotsiaalministeerium ja terviseamet rikkusid õigust sõnavabadusele, kui vilepuhujale tehti ettepanek kirjutada lahkumisavaldus [Estonian Association of Journalists: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Board violated the right to freed. (2020, December 22). *Õhtuleht*. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1021310/ajakirjanike-liit-sotsiaalministeerium-ja-terviseamet-rikkusid-oi-gust-sonavabadusele-kui-vilepuhujale-tehti-ettepanek-kirjutada-lahkumisavaldus>

- Andmekaitse inspektsiooni aastaraamat 2020.* (2021).
- Beltadze, G. (2019). Piirideta Ajakirjanikud kritiseerib Postimehe omanikku Margus Linnamäed [Margus Linnamäe, the owner of Postimees, is criticized by Reporters Without Borders]. *Postimees*. <https://www.postimees.ee/6720777/piirideta-ajakirjanikud-kritiseerib-postimehe-omanikku-margus-linnamaed>
- Berendson, R. (2021). Repsi kahtlustatakse kuriteos: miks sattus endise ministri koju ministeeriumi kohvimasin? [Reps Suspected in Crime: Why did the ministry's coffee machine end up in the house of a former minister?]. *Õhtuleht*. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1026666/rep-si-kahtlustatakse-kuriteos-miks-sattus-endise-ministri-koju-ministeeriumi-kohvimasin>
- Brites, M., Kõuts-Klemm, R. 2018 News Definitions and Motivations: Young People and Adults in Portugal and in Estonia. *Estudos em comunicação/ Communication Studies*, 26 (2), 175-190.
- DESI. (n.d.). *Digital Scoreboard—Data & Indicators*. Retrieved 10 September 2021, from <https://digital-agenda-data.eu/>
- Eestil puudub COVID-19 haiguse vastase vaksineerimise plaan [Estonia does not have a vaccination plan against COVID-19 disease]. (2020, December 20). *Kuuuuriija*. <https://kuuuuriija.postimees.ee/7133356/eestil-puudub-covid-19-haiguse-vastase-vaksineerimise-plaan>
- ERR 18.04.2019 13:29 <https://news.err.ee/931290/estonia-ranked-11th-in-2019-world-press-freedom-index>)
- Estonia: Freedom on the Net 2021 Country Report.* (2021). <https://freedomhouse.org/country/estonia/freedom-net/2021>
- Estonia: Freedom on the Net 2019 Country Report.* (2019). <https://freedomhouse.org/country/estonia/freedom-net/2019>
- European Parliament. (2020). *A Glimpse of Certainty in Uncertain Times*. 2–103. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2020/parlemeter-2020/en-key-findings.pdf>
- Hindre, M. (2021, September 7). Riik võib varjata miljoneid avalikkusele mõeldud dokumente [The state might hide millions of documents intended for the public]. *ERR*, 9–12. <https://www.err.ee/1608331118/riik-voib-varjata-miljoneid-avalikkusele-moeldud-dokumente>
- Hussar, K. (2020a, December 22). Terviseameti juht: Simmo Saar ei tulnud oma muredega minu jutule [Head of the Health Board: Simmo Saar did not come to me with his worries]. *Delfi.Ee*. <https://www.delfi.ee/artikkel/92066075/terviseameti-juht-simmo-saar-ei-tulnud-oma-muredega-minu-jutule?>
- Hussar, K. (2020b, December 23). Terviseametist lahti lastud Simmo Saar vaksineerimiskava kritiseerimist ei kahetse: kodanikujuulust peaks meil rohkem olema [Simmo Saar, who has been fired from the Health Board, does not regret criticizing the vaccination plan: we should have more citiz. *Eesti Päevaleht*.
- Härma, K 2015 Uudiste lugemine internetis noorte ja nooremate keskealiste hulgas. Master's Thesis. University of Tartu. <https://dSPACE.ut.ee/handle/10062/46873>
- Ivask, Signe; Siil, Virgo; Laak, Brit. (2017). Factors Promoting or Preventing and Relieving the Burnout of Newspaper Sports Journalists during a Prolonged Strenuous Period: Case Study of Estonian Sports Journalists during the Rio 2016 Summer Games. *Mediální studia / Media Studies*, 02, 129–150.
- Ivask, S. (2019). *The role of routines, demands and resources in work stress among Estonian journalists*. Doctoral dissertation. Tartu: University of Tartu Press. https://dSPACE.ut.ee/bitstream/handle/10062/62768/ivask_signe.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Jakobson, V. (2004). Venekeelse meedia areng Eestis 1987-2004. In P. Vihalemm (toim) *Meediasüsteem ja meediakasutus Eestis 1965-2004*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 209-232.

- Juurvee, I, Mattiisen, M (2020) Report: The Bronze Soldier Crisis of 2007. International Centre for Defence and Security, <https://icds.ee/en/the-bronze-soldier-crisis-of-2007/>
- Jõesaar, A (2017) Day After: The impact of the launch of the Russian-Language Television Channel ETV+ On Estonian Public Broadcasting's Viewing Trends. На Следующий День: Влияние Запуска Русскоязычного Телеканала Etv + На Тенденции Просмотра Общественного Вещания Эстонии. Communications. Media. Design, 2 (2), 39–49. <https://cmd-journal.hse.ru/article/view/6949/7488>
- Jõesaar, A, Jastramskis, D, Rožukalne, A (2022) Trust in Public Service Media in the Baltic States. Journal of Baltic Studies, forthcoming.
- Jõesaar, A, Kõuts-Klemm, R (2019) Is the Role of Public Service Media in Estonia Changing? Baltic Screen Media Review, 7 (1), 96-116.
- Jõesaar, Andres; Rannu, Salme; Jufereva, Maria (2013). Media for the minorities: Russian language media in Estonia 1990–2012. Media Transformations, Vol. 9, 118–153. DOI: 10.7220/2029-865X.09.07.
- Kalmus, V (2016) “The emergence of the ‘digital generation’ in Estonia’s transition period”, in R. Nugin, A. Kannike, and M. Raudsepp (eds) Generations in Estonia: Contemporary perspectives in turbulent times. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, pp 319-341.
- Kalmus, V (2020) “The structuring role of generations in a transforming society: Reflections upon the Estonian case within the paradigms of social morphogenesis and social acceleration”, in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin, S. Opermann, T. Vihalemm (eds) Researching Estonian Transformation: Morphogenetic Reflections. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, pp. 293-325.
- Kalmus, V, Kõuts-Klemm, R, Beilmann, M, Rämmer, A and Opermann, S (2018) “Long-lasting shadows of (post)communism? Generational and ethnic divides in political and civic participation in Estonia”, in J. Wimmer, C. Wallner, R. Winter and K. Oelsner (eds) (Mis-)understanding political participation: Digital practices, new forms of participation and the renewal of democracy. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, pp. 35-56.
- Kalmus, V, Masso, A, ja Lauristin, M (2017). “Põlvkondade eristumine muutumas ühiskonnas”, raamatus P. Vihalemm, M. Lauristin, V. Kalmus ja T. Vihalemm (toim) Eesti ühiskond kiirenevas ajas: uuringu Mina. Maailm. Meedia 2002-2014 tulemused. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus, 620-664.
- Kask, K. (2020). Uudissisu tarbimise võimalused Youtube’is ja noorte sellekohased ootused. Bachelor’s Thesis. University of Tartu. <https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/67720>
- Kuznetsov, S., Mihelson, H., Berendson, R., Roots, R., & Dreimanis, H. (2020, November 17). ÕL VIDEO. Ajakirjanduslik uurimus paljastab: minister Reps laseb oma lapsi maksumaksja kulul sõidutada [ÕL VIDEO. Journalistic research reveals: Minister Reps is having her children driven at the taxpayer’s expense]. Õhtuleht. <https://www.ohhtuleht.ee/1017958/ol-video-ajakirjanduslik-uurimus-paljastab-minister-reps-laseb-oma-lapsi-maksumaksja-kulul-soidutada>
- Kõuts-Klemm, R (2013). Media-connected society: the analysis of media content and usage patterns from a systems-theoretical perspective. PhD Thesis. University of Tartu.
- Kõuts-Klemm, R (2017). High diversity in a post-socialist Nordic country: news repertoires in Estonia. Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies, 14 (2), 364–378.
- Kõuts-Klemm, R, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P, Siibak, A, Lauristin, M (2017) „Internetikasutus ja sotsiaalmeedia kasutus“ [Usage of internet and the social media], In: P. Vihalemm, M. Lauristin, V. Kalmus ja T. Vihalemm (Eds.) Eesti ühiskond kiirenevas ajas: uuringu Mina. Maailm. Meedia 2002-2014 tulemused [Estonian society in accelerating time: results of the study Me. World. Media in 2002-2014]. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus, 279-298.
- Kõuts-Klemm, R, Rožukalne, A, Jastramskis, D (2022). Resilience of national media systems: Baltic media in the global network environment, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 53:4, 543-564, DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2022.2103162

- Kõuts-Klemm, R, Vihalemm, P (2020). "Cultural involvement and media use in the context of social morphogenesis", in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin, S. Opermann, T. Vihalemm (eds) *Researching Estonian Transformation: Morphogenetic Reflections*. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, pp. 75-103.
- Kõuts-Klemm, Ragne; Harro-Loit, Halliki; Ibrus, Indrek; Ivask, Signe; Juurik, Marten; Jõesaar, Andres; Järvekülg, Madis; Kauber, Sten; Koorberg, Väino; Lassur, Silja; Loit, Urmas; Tafel-Viia, Külliki (2019). *Meediapoliitika olukorra ja arengusuundade uuring [Study on the mediapolitical situation and trends of development]*. <https://www.etis.ee/Portal/Publications/Display/f4f16115-ca83-4e50-ac69-84e6cf7ef130>
- Laine, M. (2022, June 17th) Interview conducted by Halliki Harro-Loit (over Teams)
- Lauk, E. (2008). "Freedom for the media? Issues of journalism ethics in Estonia". *Informacijos mokslai/ Information Sciences* 47, 59-65.
- Lauk, E. (2014). Similar, but so different: the practices of press councils in Estonia and Finland. In: M. Glowacki, E. Lauk and A. Balcytiene (Eds.), *Journalism that Matters. Views from Central and Eastern Europe*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 175-198.
- Lauristin, M (2013). "New Media and Changes in the Forms of Cultural Transmission", in P. Runnel, P. Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, P. Viires and M. Laak (eds) *The Digital Turn: User's Practices and Cultural Transformations*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, pp. 27-43.
- Lauristin, M (2020). "Subjective stratification of the Estonian population in 2002-2014", in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin, S. Opermann, T. Vihalemm (eds) *Researching Estonian Transformation: Morphogenetic Reflections*. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, pp. 327-350.
- Lauristin, M, Kaal, E, Kirss, L. (2011). Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011: Summary. http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine_ja_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/Artiklid/Integratsiooni_monitooring_2011_ENG_lyhiversioon.pdf
- Lauristin, M and Vihalemm, P (2020). "The 'Estonian way' of the post-communist transformation through the lens of the morphogenetic model", in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin, S. Opermann, T. Vihalemm (eds) *Researching Estonian Transformation: Morphogenetic Reflections*. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, pp. 33-73.
- Leppik, M and Vihalemm, T (2017). "Venekeelse elanikkonna hargmaisus ja meediakasutus" (Russophones' multinationality and media usage), in P. Vihalemm, M. Lauristin, V. Kalmus ja T. Vihalemm (Eds.) *Eesti ühiskond kiirenevas ajas: uuringu Mina. Maailm. Meedia 2002-2014 tulemused*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus, 591-619.
- Loit, U. (2018). Implementation of Media Governance: A Liberal Approach in the Context of a Small Market. Doctoral Thesis. University of Jyväskylä. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/59953>
- Loit, U. (2017). Estonia: searching for funding models. In M. Walter, R. Ruduša (Eds). *Baltic Media Health Check 2015/2016* (pp. 42–51). Riga: The Baltic Centre for Media Excellence. Downloadable at <https://bcme.eu/upload/projects/31/Baltic%20Media%20Health%20Check%20-%202015-2016.pdf>
- Lust, Katrin: Sotsiaalministeeriumit julgeb kritiseerida ainult rahvavaenlane [Katrin Lust: Only the enemy dares to criticize the Ministry of Social Affairs]. (2020, December 23). *Kuuuuriija*. <https://kuuuuriija.postimees.ee/7140205/sotsiaalministeeriumit-julgeb-kritiseerida-ainult-rahvavaenlane>
- Martin Helme soovib ERR-i nõukogult "karistamist" [Martin Helme demands "punishment" to be executed by the Broadcasting Council]. (2019, March 28). *ERR*. <https://www.err.ee/924371/martin-helme-soovib-err-i-noukogult-karistamist>
- Meedialiidu pöördumine: Jüri Ratase, Eesti inimesi solvav ja hirmutav valitsuskabinet on peaministri nägu [Address of Estonian Association of Media Enterprises: Jüri Ratase, the Cabinet of Ministers that offends and intimidates the Estonian people is the face of the Prime Minister]. (2020, November 23). *Õhtuleht*. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1018464/meedialiidu-poordumine-juri-ratas-eesti-inimesi-solvav-ja-hirmutav-valitsuskabinet-on-peaministri-nagu>

- Meeri küla elanik kahtlustab, et projekt «Internet koju» on petuskeem [A resident of Meeri village suspects that the project “Internet to the home” is a scam]. (2021). *Kuuuuriija*.
<https://kuuuuriija.postimees.ee/7266841/meeri-kula-elanik-kahtlustab-et-projekt-internet-koju-on-petuskeem>
- Mihelson, H. (2022, January 7). Fotod kohtust. Teravad torked: Mailis Repsi kohtuprotsessi esimene vaatus lubab tõelist tulevärki. Paul Keres vastaspoolele: “Kuule, lõpeta see rumal jutt!” [Photos from the court. Sharp acts: The first look at the Mailis Reps trial promises real fireworks. Öhtuleht. <https://www.ohhtuleht.ee/1052785/fotod-kohtust-teravad-torked-mailis-repsi-kohtuprotsessi-esimene-vaatus-lubab-toelist-tulevarki-paul-keres-vastaspoolele-kuule-lopeta-see-rumal-jutt>
- Mihelson, H., Pärnaku, E., & Dreimanis, H. (2020, November 17). Reps tunnistas: käisin ametiautoga perereisil Horvaatias [Reps admits: I went on a family trip to Croatia with the ministry’s car]. *Öhtuleht*. <https://www.ohhtuleht.ee/1017953/reps-tunnistab-kaisin-ametiautoga-perereisil-horvaatias>
- Mõttus-Leppik, E. (2020, December 22). Terviseameti kommunikatsioonijuht kaotab vaksineerimiskava kritiseerimise tõttu töö [The head of communication of the Health Board will lose his job due to criticism of the vaccination plan]. *Postimees*.
<https://leht.postimees.ee/7139066/terviseameti-kommunikatsioonijuht-kaotab-vaksineerimiskava-kritiseerimise-tottu-too>
- Mägi, K. A. (2021, April 30). Fiasko Lõuna-Eestis. Kas ülikiire internetiprojekt läheb lõplikult vett vedama? [Fiasco in Southern Estonia. Is the ultra-fast internet project finally going to pull water?]. *Geenius*. <https://digi.geenius.ee/eksklusiiv/fiasko-louna-eestis-kas-ulikiire-interneti-projekt-laheb-loplikult-vett-vedama/>
- Open Society Institute Sofia (2021). Media Literacy Index 2021. *Osis.Bg*.
<https://osis.bg/?p=3750&lang=en>
- Opermann, S. (2018). “Youth news media use in Estonia”, in Y. Andersson, U. Dalquist, J. Ohlsson (eds), *Youth and News in a Digital Media Environment: Nordic-Baltic Perspectives*. Gothenburg: Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, pp. 91-104.
- Paju, K. (2020a, November 21). Eesti ajakirjanike liit: justiitsminister Raivo Aeg ründas Eesti ajakirjandusvabadust [Estonian Association of Journalists: Minister of Justice Raivo Aeg attacked Estonian press freedom]. *Öhtuleht*. <https://www.ohhtuleht.ee/1018352/eesti-ajakirjanike-liit-justiitsminister-raivo-aeg-rundas-eesti-ajakirjandusvabadust>
- Paju, K. (2020b, December 22). Mihkel Kärmas terviseameti vilepuhujast: on koomiline, et keegi nägi keset koroonakriisi vaeva, et moonutatud helist Saare hääl kätte saada [Mihkel Kärmas from the whistleblower of the Health Board: it is comical that someone struggled in the middle of th. *Öhtuleht*, 1–4. <https://www.ohhtuleht.ee/1021331/mihkel-karmas-terviseameti-vilepuhujast-on-koomiline-et-keegi-nagi-keset-koroonakriisi-vaeva-et-moonutatud-helist-saare-haal-katte-saada>
- Palgad.ee [Salaries]: <https://www.palgad.ee/>
- Pau, A. (2020, December 30). Salatsemine: kes „puhastas” Üllar Lanno jaoks terviseameti kommunikatsioonijuhi intervjuu? [Secrecy: who “cleaned up” the interview of the head of communication of the Health Board for Üllar Lanno?]. *Delfi Forte*.
<https://forte.delfi.ee/artikkel/92122411/salatsemine-kes-puhastas-ullar-lanno-jaoks-terviseameti-kommunikatsioonijuhi-intervjuu>
- Puistaja, M. 2022 Eesti suurimate ajakirjandusorganisatsioonide struktuurimuutused 2010-2020 veebi kontaktilehtede põhjal. Bakalaureusetöö. Tartu Ülikool.
- Pärg, H. (2019, November 8). TTÜ lõpetas sisemised uurimised rahastuskandaali kohta: ajalehes esitatud süüdistused on alusetud, vilepuhujat ei teinud meiega koostööd [TTÜ completes internal investigations into funding scandal: allegations in the newspaper are unfounded, whistleblower. *Öhtuleht*. <https://www.ohhtuleht.ee/982824/ttu-lopetas-sisemised-uurimised-rahastuskandaali-kohta-ajalehes-esitatud-suudistused-on-alusetud-vilepuhujat-ei-teinud-meiega-koostood>

- Pärli, M. (2021) Analüüs: Avalik riigivalitsemine ähvardab minevikuks saada. <https://www.err.ee/1608208510/analuus-avalik-riigivalitsemine-ahvardab-minevikuks-saada>
- Pärli, M. and Lillemäe, L. (2021, February 12). 70 000 internetiühenduse eest: viimane miil jääb sageli rahabarjääri taha [For 70,000 internet connections: the last mile is often behind the money barrier]. *ERR*, 2–5. <https://www.err.ee/1608107590/70-000-internetiuhenduse-eest-viimane-miil-jaab-sageli-rahabarjaari-taha>
- Pärnapuu, P. (2022, October 14th) Interview conducted by Halliki Harro-Loit (over Teams).
- Riik, M. (2020a, November 19). Justiitsminister Raivo Aeg: palusin prokuratuuril hinnata Õhtulehe tegevust [Minister of Justice Raivo Aeg: I asked the Prosecutor's Office to evaluate the activities of Õhtuleht]. *Õhtuleht*, november, 19–20. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1018144/justiitsminister-raivo-aeg-palusin-prokuratuuril-hinnata-oh tulehe-tegevust-repsi-jalgimisel>
- Riik, M. (2020b, November 23). Justiitsminister Raivo Aeg: „Ma ei ole Eesti ajakirjandust rünnanud mitte ühe sõnaga!" [Minister of Justice Raivo Aeg: "I have not attacked the Estonian press with one word!"]. *Õhtuleht*. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1018492/justiitsminister-raivo-aeg-ma-ei-ole-eesti-ajakirjandust-runnanud-mitte-uhe-sonaga>
- Riik, M. (2020c, November 24). Telefoniõigus: prokuratuur ja justiitsministeerium varjavad minister Aegi sõnumit riigi peaprokurörile. Miks küll? [Telephone Law: The Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Justice are hiding Minister Aeg's message to the State Attorney General. Why?]. *Õhtuleht*. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1018637/telefoniõigus-prokuratuur-ja-justiitsministeerium-varjavad-minister-aegi-sonumit-riigi-peaprokurorile-miks-kull>
- Riik, M., & Voog, V. (2020, November 23). Jüri Ratas: minister Aeg ei rünnanud ajakirjandust [Jüri Ratas: Minister Aeg did not attack the press]. *Õhtuleht*. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1018522/juri-ratas-minister-aeg-ei-runnanud-ajakirjandust>
- Parksepp, L (2021). Lugejate ootused digisisule: Saarte Hääle, Sakala, Vooremaa ja Võrumaa Teataja näitel. [Readers' expectations towards digital contents: on the example of ...] Master's Thesis. Tartu: University of Tartu. <https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/72527>
- Rohn, U, Ibrus, I, Jõesaar, A, et al. (2021). *Eesti sõltumatu kohaliku ajakirjanduse loodavad väärtused, väljakutsed ja arenguvõimalused: uurimisraport* [Values, challenges and options for development created by independent local outlets: a report]. Tallinn.
- Roonemaa, H. (2022, July 11th) Interview conducted by Halliki Harro-Loit (over Teams).
- Rämmer, A (2018). Alternatiivmeediat usaldavad rohkem need, kes on ühiskonnaelust võõrdunud. *ERR*, 18.07. <https://novaator.err.ee/847212/alternatiivmeediat-usaldavad-rohkem-need-kes-on-uhiskonnaelust-voordunud>
- Šein, H. 2005 Suur teleraamat. 50 aastat televisiooni Eestis 1955-2005. TEA: Tallinn.
- Šein, H. 2021 Digiajastu teleraamat. Digiajastu televisioon Eestis 2000–2020. Tallinn.
- Siibak, A, Kõuts-Klemm, R (2017). "Internetikasutus ja sotsiaalmeedia kasutus (Usage of internet and social media)", in V. Kalmus, M. Lauristin, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt (Eds.), *Eesti elavik 21. sajandi algul* [Life-world of Estonians in the beginning of the 21st century]. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, pp. 279-298.
- Tamm, M. (2016). Nutiseadmetest uudiste lugemine [Reading news from the smart devices]. Master's Thesis. University of Tartu. <https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/51968>
- Trültzsch, S, Kõuts-Klemm, R, Aroldi, P (2014). "Transforming Digital Divides in Different National Contexts", in N. Carpentier, K. C. Schröder, L. Hallett (eds) *Audience Transformations: Shifting Audience Positions in Late Modernity*. New York, London: Routledge, 191-209.
- Ugur, K (2022, November 4th 2022) Interview conducted by Halliki Harro-Loit (via e-mail).
- Uudam, L. (2020, November 24). Seisukoht. Kaks ühe hoobiga: Reps ees, Aeg järel [Viewpoint. Two in one fell swoop: Reps before, Aeg after]. *Õhtuleht*. <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/1018557/seisukoht-kaks-uhe-hoobiga-reps-ees-aeg-jarel>

- Veetõusme, R., Pajuste, T., & Susi, M. (2018). Estonia - raising high the roof beams of freedom of expression. New media environment in Estonia. In M. Susi, J. Viljanen, E. Jónsson, & A. Kučs (Eds.), *Human Rights Law and Regulating Freedom of Expression in New Media. Lessons from Nordic Approaches* (pp. 41–58). Routledge. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Velsker, L (2014). Kontaktid traditsiooniliste meediakanalitega Facebooki kaudu. [Contacting the traditional media over Facebook]. Master's Thesis. University of Tartu.
<https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/42372>
- Vihalemm, P and Kõuts-Klemm, R (2017) Meediakasutuse muutumine: internetiajastu saabumine [Change in media usage: arrival of the internet age]. In P. Vihalemm, M. Lauristin, V. Kalmus ja T. Vihalemm (Eds.) *Eesti ühiskond kiirenevas ajas: uuringu Mina. Maailm. Meedia 2002-2014 tulemused*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus, 251-278.
- Vihalemm, P, Lauristin, M, Kõuts, R (2012). Trends in Estonian media landscape in 2000-2012. *Media Transformations*, 6, 12-63.
- WJS Estonian Report, 2016 https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/29706/1/Harro-Loit_Lauk_Country_report_Estonia.pdf

