



CS1. Studies on national media research capability as a contextual domain of the sources of ROs

The aim of the **first case study** is to describe and analyse the **countries' monitoring capability**: the ability and possibilities of various agents to observe the developments of the media and the changes in society emanating from the media transformations, as well as related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication, and applying the obtained knowledge in making media political decisions.

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SLOVAKIA

Risks and opportunities related to media and journalism studies (2000–2020). Case study on the national research and monitoring capabilities

By Slavomír Gálik, Norbert Vrabec, Sabína Gáliková Tolnaiová, Ľudmila Čábyová, Hana Pravdová, Zora Hudíková, Ján Višňovský, Juliána Mináriková, Jana Radošinská, Magdaléna Švecová, Peter Krajčovič, Andrej Brník – University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

Executive Summary

Slovakia with a population of 5.3 million is one of the smaller countries in the Mediadecom project, so the authors were able to identify and describe almost all relevant publications that contributed to the scholarly reflection on the four media domains in 2000 – 2020. The researchers mapped 865 publications, which included 707 academic and 159 non-academic outputs. Within the academic outputs, the project participants found that the most represented are academic articles, then academic books and finally academic book chapters. Most publications are written in Slovak and then in English. A smaller part of the body of literature is indexed in WoS or Scopus databases. Within the non-academic outputs, the project participants found that non-academic articles, books and research reports have the largest representation. Most outputs are published in Slovak and without indexing in WoS or Scopus databases. Based on these findings, the authors claim that the media studies field has a well-established tradition in Slovakia, which is constantly evolving.

1. Introduction

In Slovakia, today's transition of print media toward online journalism and the heyday of social media expand the sphere of the 'traditional' mainstream media. One of the important junctures in the development of Slovak media environment was also the economic crisis in 2008, which caused financial problems experienced by all major media outlets; some of them eventually fell into the hands of multinational corporations. These tendencies deepened due to the major political corruption case (called 'Gorilla') which became publicly known in 2011 and involved both media moguls and prominent political figures. The affair was related to the Penta Investment Group, which wanted to improve its public image, so its representatives started to acquire important media outlets, such as the daily newspaper SME. The assassination of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée in 2018 had severe political consequences (the resignation and replacement of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic) as well, shocking the media scene and general public. At present, i.e., since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has represented an unprecedented global event with a major impact on the life of society, including the media. All these events are the point of bifurcation of the media development; in other words, they pose both an opportunity and a risk to Slovak media and society.

Considering the Slovak media system in the context of legal norms, it should be noted that Slovakia did not have its own media law until 1993 but was governed by the laws of the then joint Czechoslovak Republic. Important changes took place within the federation's legislation frame-

work after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 and the subsequent end of the communist regime. More than two decades of Slovak media legislation can be characterized by the gradual adoption and regulation of new types of media such as cable television and the Internet. At the same time, the digitalization of television broadcasting was completed in 2012 (full transition to digital radio broadcasting should be carried out by 2026, but it is already known it will be impossible to meet this deadline); the latest amendments had to reflect these changes as well.

The internationally recognized inquiry conducted by the Reuters Institute for Digital News included Slovakia in its scope in 2017. The institute regularly evaluates various parameters regarding media monitoring and media credibility, which means that annually updated data on Slovak digital news production and reception are available. However, Slovakia did not participate in the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) led by Hanitzsch prior to 2019, unlike other V4 countries. This shortcoming may pose a risk that complicates continual and accurate evaluation of Slovak media environment as a whole.

The critical transformation of academic studies and research in the field of media and communication studies began in 1989. The Center for Independent Journalism was established in 1993 and operated as a training facility with the assistance of American journalists and media theorists until 2004. Journalism research has developed mainly in the academic environment since the mid-1990s. University departments focused on training of media professionals began to emerge, especially at faculties specializing in humanities and social sciences. Key works in the field were realized by departments or faculties specializing in media studies and journalism – i.e., the Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Arts of the Comenius University in Bratislava, the Department of Journalism at the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, the Institute of Slovak and Media Studies at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prešov, the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, or the Faculty of Media at the (privately financed) Pan-European University in Bratislava, founded in 2004.

In 1990s, the capacities of media research were considerably underestimated in Slovakia, and democratically elected governments did not pay enough attention to this area, which led to a gradual slowdown in the activities of the then most prominent publicly funded research and monitoring body, the Journalism Study Institute and, eventually, to its demise. The competencies of the Journalism Study Institute were briefly taken over by the National Center for Media Communication, which, however, ceased operations in 2001. At present, there is no publicly funded research institution in Slovakia which would focus on media and/or journalism research. The public broadcaster Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) does not operate any research bodies. The notable absence of publicly funded research on journalism and media is partially substituted by privately owned agencies, particularly Median SK, which was established in 2002 as a local branch of the Czech agency Median CZ (est. 1996), the license partner of the worldwide survey Target Group Index (TGI). The non-governmental organization INEKO (the Institute for Economic and Social Reforms) which evaluates the media and their ability to contribute to democracy is important as well.

Academic inquiries related to media studies and journalism at the national level are supported by publicly funded research agencies, similarly to other fields of domestic scholarly research. These institutions are Cultural and Educational Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (KEGA), which provides research grants focused on education, the Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (VEGA), which supports academic research activities, and the prestigious Slovak Research and Development Agency (APVV) supporting research and development projects. Non-academic publications and research activities are less numerous and in specific subdomains even scarce or non-existent. In particular, there

are no research studies that would make it possible to compare the media system in Slovakia with other countries of the European Union.

The most important domestic periodical is the Slovak academic journal *Questions of Journalism* (in Slovak *Otázky žurnalistiky*), which is published jointly by Comenius University in Bratislava and the Catholic University in Ružomberok. The Faculty of Mass Media Communication at UCM in Trnava is the only faculty in Slovakia (regardless of specialization and academic field) publishing four scholarly journals registered in the prestigious citation database Web of Science, all of them focused on media and communication studies: *Communication Today*, *European Journal of Media, Art and Photography*, *Lege Artis: Language Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* and *Media Literacy and Academic Research*.

The total number of published works focused on media and communication studies related to the examined domains includes 707 academic bibliographic records. The largest number was recorded in 2020. The recent influx in publication activities in the field of journalism, media and communication studies is probably caused by the natural development of the given spheres of interest and is also closely associated with the increasing need to reassess the existing terminological axis due to significant systemic changes within the media market driven by the Internet and digital media and their increasing social importance and economic prominence.

2. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of legal and ethical regulation domain

In the legal and ethical domain, there are totally 211 outputs which were published during the last 20 years (from 2000 to 2020), most of them were published during the last 10 years, with the most outputs coming from 2020 (40). Based on those numbers, we can assume that the legal and ethical domain is a relatively young in the field of scientific research.

Most publications is in domain No. 6: Normative perspective (journalistic ethics, media responsibility), a total of 152 outputs. In general, there is greater public and media interest in these topics in 2020, which naturally reflects the academic environment and rise of the academic articles in his field. It can be considered positive that the authors address these issues in the context of traditional media (Rončáková, 2020; Bajanič, 2020, Hatala & Greguš, 2020), as well as new media (Hacek, 2020).

The second highest number of outputs is in domain No. 5: Other instruments of media accountability, a total of 44 outputs and domain No. 1.3: Disinformation, also 44 outputs. The second one is consequence of the rising attention to the misinformation, especially in the context of the pandemic. The domain No. 2: Codes of ethics, a total of 37 outputs and the domain No. 1: Freedom of expression, a total of 36 outputs, also had a more significant representation compared to other domains.

Most of the outputs come from an "academic article" category but only a minimal number of studies are published in the Web of Science or Scopus journals. Only one research report was found while the majority concerned theoretically oriented research on the dominant news sources for Slovaks. Of the total number of outputs, almost 57% were theoretical or normative studies.

Access to individual outputs is relatively limited. We found open access to 40% of outputs. Individual sources were searched through university libraries, the central register of records of publishing activities and on the website of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Most sources contain only the name of the outputs (article, book, etc.) and it was not possible to click to this output and read the study (or book). The reason might be, that mostly of sources are still available not online or only in libraries.

Regarding the representation of areas: opportunities and risks, the largest number of studies covered both areas (opportunities and risks) - almost 70% of studies. On the contrary, the opportunities included the fewest studies (6.6%).

2.1. Freedom of Expression

The scholarly attention is paid to the issue of disinformation, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several authors have focused on the occurrence of false news reports, the possibility of their identification, prevention against hoaxes, such as media literacy (Višňovský & Radošinská, 2021; Mičuda, 2020; Kapec, 2020; Bulganová, 2020b; Kačínová, 2020; Graca, 2020). Some authors also point to modern phenomena associated with media responsibility, such as deepfake (Greguš, 2020), debunking (Kvetanová, Kačínová Predmerská, & Švecová, 2021), gatekeeping (Greguš & Budová, 2020) and fact-checking (Bulganová, 2020a).

In the context of the current situation, which is characterized by a massive spread of disinformation and hybrid threats, a key role play also non-academic sources. The most important sources include the final report from the research Perception of Conspiracy Theories by Generation Y (Median SK, 2019) and two books: Infodemic in Slovakia 2020. Disinformation-Conspiracy Scene in the Era of COVID-19 (Mesežnikov & Bartoš, 2020) and False Reports and Internet Threats – A Manual (Not Only) for Seniors (Zajac, 2020).

2.2 Freedom of Information

In the field of media legislation, it is mainly the media system, legal regulation of media operating (broadcasting, retransmission, etc.) and selected issues in the field of media law, such as freedom of speech, the right to information, or the regulation of television broadcasting from the perspective of national and European law. In this regard, we need to mention publications written by scholars affiliated with the Faculty of Mass Media Communication UCM in Trnava, where special attention is paid to media legislation issues (Botík, Miščíková & Vojčík, 2004; Chovanec, 2015). These outputs can be considered as the first systematic and comprehensive works in the field of media legislation research in Slovakia. The publication by Zemková et al. (2018) can also be considered key, as it contains court verdicts concerning media law, broadcasting and retransmission, as well as an analysis of verdicts imposing sanctions for violations of legislation regulating broadcasting in the Slovak Republic.

2.3 Accountability system

In this section, most of the information comes from non-academic sources (made up of laws and codes of ethics) which have not been reviewed and most of them had open access. These resources are valuable documents because they directly influence the activities of the media.

The sources were found in institutions such as the Broadcasting and Retransmission Council, the Slovak Radio and Television, the Advertising Council, the Slovak Broadcasters' Association, the Independent Media Association, the Slovak Journalists' Syndicate, the Association of Periodicals as well as publishers' websites. All sources were national in nature and published in the Slovak language. One of the most important documents in the field of ethical self-regulation is the so-called Codes of Ethics issued by the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists (SSN, 2011), but also by Radio and Television of Slovakia, which relate to communication on the Internet (RTVS, 2018). In this regard, the basic source is the monograph Ethics in the Media (Hradiská, E.), which comprehensively deals with the issue of media ethics. This publication is followed by the work of other authors who, in independent scientific studies, examine other specific areas of ethics in media practice.

3. Publications, Data Sources and Main Monitoring Actors of Journalism Domain

3.1. Market Conditions

The most important fact that changed the whole media legislation was the creation of a dual system of broadcasting – efficient coexistence of private media companies and public service media within the national media market. New media outlets, which were operated and financed by domestic or foreign investors, began to appear on the market. The first democratically passed legal act related to media was Act No. 468/1991 Coll. on Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasting (1991), which was later preserved by the independent Slovak Republic after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Basically, we can say that during the 1990s, media legislation was focused on ‘opening’ the free, pluralist media environment and thus enabling privately owned media to operate on the market and, more importantly, ensuring free access to information. The contemporary Slovak media market is marked by the presence of foreign capital, especially in terms of electronic and online media. At present, private media players have a dominant position on the media market in terms of television and radio broadcasting. In the case of print and online media, these are exclusively privately owned entities.

Several significant changes took place on the press market after 2015. As mentioned above, back in 2014, the Penta Investment Group bought a 50% stake in the Petit Press publishing house from the German shareholder Rheinisch-Bergische Verlagsgesellschaft. This course of events led to departure of 50 journalists working in the editorial office of the elite daily newspaper SME; they subsequently founded a new elite daily newspaper titled Denník N. The Penta Group definitively left Petit Press in April 2021, when its remaining 34% minority stake was bought by the New York-based Media Development Invest Fund (MDIF). The remaining shares are still owned by the original domestic shareholder Prvá slovenská investičná spoločnosť. The most widely read Slovak dailies include Nový čas (FPD Media), Plus jeden deň (News and Media Holding), Pravda (Our Media SR), SME (Petit Press) and Hospodárske noviny (Mafra Slovakia). Most of these companies (FPD Media, News and Media Holding, Our Media SR) are domestic. Foreign capital and activities of multinational publishing companies based outside Slovakia have reduced significantly, the major Slovak online news media outlet Aktuality.sk operated by Ringier being an exception.

As for the segment of commercial television, the most watched commercial television, TV Markíza, also manages the secondary television channels Doma and Dajto and the TV Markíza International station (since 2016). The channel has maintained its leading market position since its foundation in 1996. In 2020, it was bought by the late Czech billionaire Petr Kellner, the chief executive officer of the PPF Investment Group.

The radio market in Slovakia is quite stable. The commercial Rádio Expres has been the most listened-to radio station for a long time, followed by the first circuit of the public RTVS, Rádio Slovensko, and the commercial broadcaster Fun rádio. In August 2021, Expres, after obtaining the necessary consent of the Slovak Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission, bought the competing radio stations Európa 2 and Jemné (now called Radio Melody) and their online products. These radio stations now represent the newly formed domestic company Bauer Media Slovakia, together with their online platforms. It can be said that due to this, the radio market in Slovakia is horizontally concentrated.

In terms of social networking, Slovak media market is shaped and saturated by major foreign conglomerates based (mostly) in the U.S. In 2021, research conducted by the Go4insight agency involving 1,000 Slovak citizens aged 15 – 79 claimed that the most popular social networking site in the country is Alphabet’s streaming platform YouTube (78% of the adult population visit YouTube at least once a month), followed by Meta’s Facebook (76% of the adult population visit

Facebook at least once a month) and Instagram (45%) and the most prominent Slovak social networking site, Pôkec (24%). Social media services such as Pinterest, TikTok, Snapchat or Twitter are significantly less popular, visited at least once a month by less than 20% of the respondents.

3.2. Public Service Media

One of the most significant changes in the public media sector in Slovakia was the merger of previously autonomous institutions – Slovak Television and Slovak Radio – into one public media organization called Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS). This transformation was realized on the basis of Act No. 532/2015 Coll. on Radio and Television of Slovakia, as a result of which several organizational changes took place in this institution. The transformation of the Slovak media system in the context of the ongoing social changes and Slovak media and their functioning within democratic society were negatively influenced by government lead by the Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar (Olekšák & Kravčák, 2008; Kravčák, 2008, Kerecman, 2009).

Regarding the financing of Slovak public radio and television, the current mechanism is unsustainable and a new model of financing the public media needs to be considered as soon as possible. The contract with the state guarantees Radio and Television of Slovakia (RTVS) an annual subsidy of at least 15 million euros, which, however, does not cover the costs of the broadcaster's basic annual activities. According to Media Pluralism Monitor, the Political Independence area in Slovakia shows a large discrepancy between the private sector and the public service media (PSM). For the most part, private media have shown to be surprisingly resilient to political influence.

The public broadcaster RTVS's revenues in 2020 amounted to more than 113 million euros, of which 81.7 million were revenues from payments received from citizens (payments for public media services), 26 million were provided by a subsidy from the state budget and 5.9 million euros were obtained from advertising and commercial activities. In 2021, the state subsidy was expected to increase to more than 31.5 million euros. The public agency the News Agency of the Slovak Republic's revenues in 2020 were at the level of 5 million euros, of which the subsidy from the state budget amounted to 2.2 million euros.

In Slovakia, professional news and information services are provided by the public News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR) and the privately owned Slovak News Agency (SITA) which started operating in 1998. Since 2000, the private news agency has begun to gain significant clientele in the field of media business. While disseminating information, the public news agency TASR functions as a free and independent organization; its services must not support or act against any political, economic, religious, ethnic or other interest groups.

3.3. Production Conditions

Slovak media scholars and researchers express their rising interest in the Internet and social media. Becoming more and more significant publishing platforms and journalistic sources, these media are discussed from various points of view. The existing sources focus on different problems resulting from the complex relationships between 'traditional' (especially print) media, journalism, social media and digital and information competencies of media professionals (Poláková, 2007). Security issues associated with online communication and ethical aspects of the journalistic profession in terms of the digital environment are important as well. As a profession, journalism is defined as an essential driving force of today's media culture (Radošinská & Višňovský, 2013). Instead of applying this approach drawn from media and cultural studies, other theoretical works offer different perspectives of understanding the given problems by discussing philosophical (phenomenological and hermeneutical) aspects of processing and disseminating media content (Gálik & Gáliková Tolnaiová, 2015). Some authors underline the fact

that journalism is, in many ways, losing its core values (Sámelová, 2019; Sámelová, 2020). Another important line of research is represented by authors interested in the processes of shaping journalistic content (Tušer, 2010; Tušer, 2012) and various aspects bound to creative ways of processing information that is to be disseminated via different communication platforms (Tušer, 2010; Rončáková, 2011; Rončáková, 2015).

As for investigative journalism, it has gained society-wide importance after the murder of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée. Kuciak's work published by the online news media outlet Aktuality.sk gained public attention and recognition after his untimely and violent death on 21st February 2018. The following criminal investigation confirmed that the murder was associated with the young journalist's investigative work. As a result, the NGO Investigative Centre of Ján Kuciak was established later in 2018.

3.4. Working Conditions

Researchers affiliated with FMK UCM in Trnava are currently evaluating data from the third wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study research (2021–2022). 244 respondents (journalists) filled in the questionnaire, while almost 60% of them work in Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic, as editors. Considering the dominant forms of employment, 41.8% of research participants have a full-time employment contract and almost 39% of respondents are self-employed or freelancers. The results of the inquiry did not confirm any significant changes of the situation of journalists before and during the pandemic. As many as 84% of respondents stated that they were not affiliated with any professional journalistic organization. Even though the questionnaire did not monitor the average wage, the answers showed implicitly that for most respondents, journalism is the main source of income. And as for the salaries in the journalistic profession, the average gross salary of a Slovak journalist is currently 1,530 euros, the highest gross wages being located in the Bratislava Region (1,730 euros). However, the salaries of journalistic professions working outside the capital are incomparably lower. Recently, the NGO Transparency International has indicated that staff reductions in RTVS concerning media professionals specializing in news making might have been excessive and unnecessary, but no misconduct of either director-general Jaroslav Rezník or other managers has been proven so far.

It may be stated that the generally low acceptance of the journalistic profession in Slovakia is inadequate, resulting in social (mis)recognition, low social prestige and worsening economic conditions of Slovak journalists. However, a focused discussion about the opportunities and risks related to this fact was established in Slovakia, especially in 2018, after the murder of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak. The event brought a wave of protests and drove a significant political change. It also raised the issue of supporting investigative journalism and the urgent need to increase its social and cultural prestige.

3.4.1 *Intra-Organizational Diversity*

The number of journalists employed by private media companies (and other data regarding their education, gender and forms of employment) is not publicly available. The latest available data on PSM was recorded in 2020. In RTVS's annual economic report, it is stated that in 2020, RTVS employed 1,556 people in total, 41.2% of them women. Compared to 2019, RTVS's employees included more people categorized as 'artists'. Moreover, in 2020, RTVS employed more college-educated people than in 2019; in contrast, the number of employees possessing high school education without GCSE decreased. The average age of RTVS's employees was 46.73 years of age.

3.4.2 *Journalistic Competencies, Education and Training*

University education centered on journalism and media studies is highly developed and provided by publicly funded as well as privately owned universities, predominantly by Comenius Uni-

versity in Bratislava, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Catholic University in Ružomberok, Pan-European University (private university). Various courses and workshops focused on specific abilities and the development of professional journalistic competencies are also offered by NGOs. According to the third wave of WJS, 63.9% of respondents completed their university education in the field of journalism. However, data on the competencies of professional journalists in Slovakia has not been systematically collected.

3.4.3 Professional Culture and Role Perception

Research on professional culture and perception of the roles of journalists does not have a long and continuous tradition in Slovakia, which is also conditioned by the late historical and democratic development of the media system (after 1989), and by clear, unwelcome state interference in the functioning of the media and the work of journalists in the 1990s. Some studies have focused, for example, on the profession of a journalist and their desired independence from economic and political influences. Research within more specific areas of professional culture and perception of roles is notably absent.

4. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of media usage patterns

4.1. Research and monitoring that reflects access to the media and diversity of viewpoints in media system

Several university departments have been working intensively on the topic of media usage patterns since 2000 in Slovakia. The most important academic institution in this area is the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. It is the only public faculty that offers study programs which focus on media communication and media education. Other important workplaces are established at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava, the Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, and the Catholic University in Ružomberok. Rončáková (2020) and Izrael (2015) from the Catholic University also deal with the topic of media education, examining it from the point of view of the socializing and desocializing influence of the media on the family environment, ethics and Christian morality.

The largest number of non-academic sources consisted of nationwide surveys, which have been publicly available on the website of the research agency Median SK since 2012. The surveys are carried out quarterly. Median SK conducts three regular surveys:

- MML-TGI® (Market & Media & Lifestyle – Target Group Index ®),
- RADIO PROJECT,
- The Most Objective Television News.

The national MML-TGI® survey (Market – Media – Lifestyle-Target Group Index ®) has been implemented in Slovakia since 1997. The average sample size is 4,100 respondents, citizens of the Slovak Republic aged 14-79. The research's goal is to find data on television viewing, radio listening, print readings and Internet using. RADIO PROJECT is a radio market survey in Slovakia. The results are published monthly. The data contains basic information about radios, reception opportunities, last week's and yesterday's listening rates with detailed ATS and share indicators. The data is used to optimize MML-TGI. The data from this survey is the most comprehensive description of the Slovak radio environment and enable analysis of target groups. Median SK also carried out the survey Slovakia Online 2015; it was an Internet user survey. Ad-

vertising agency MARK BBDO conducted a survey of online habits of the Slovak population in 2018.

4.2 Relevance of news media

News interest can be determined from peplemeter measurement. The peplemetric measurement of viewership is the largest continuous research in Slovakia. It is conducted through the PMT. PMT was founded in 2002 with the aim of giving TV stations and media agencies access to correct TV market data. PMT members are RTVS, TV Markiza, TV Joj, TA3 and the Association of Media Agencies

The TV companies have the results of the viewership available the day after the measurement day in the morning. They can analyse the data in minute intervals and use it for commercial sales and programme planning, explained Ivan Šimek, one of the directors of TNS Slovakia.

He added that the measurement is carried out on a representative panel of 1,200 households, which is roughly 3,500 individuals. These meet demographic criteria to represent the entire population of Slovakia. One quarter of the panel is rotated annually. Currently 120 television stations are included in the measurement.

In 2021 increased public interest in information provided by audiovisual and internet media, driven by the pandemic. News channel TA3 saw its viewership rise significantly. Aktuality.sk, a paywall-free, digital-born news website associated with murdered investigative reporter Ján Kuciak, remains the most widely read online brand. 64% of respondents admitted difficulty finding a credible news in 2021.

4.3 Trust in media

Through the data presented in the annual reports and other materials concerning the public service media and their operations that are published online, it is possible to understand the public media activities thoroughly and complexly. Such documents are mainly based on internal information that these media obtain for their own needs and they are processed by the relevant departments/organizational units existing within the given media organizations.

In the case of non-academic sources, the reliability and credibility of sources and research results obtained in the field of Media Usage Patterns is guaranteed by the expertise of authors who have been interested in the domain's key topics for a long time. Regarding academic sources, multiple lecturers affiliated with the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of UCM in Trnava are academic researchers who specialize in the relevant areas of interest. The detailed description of the research methods followed by the sources, from which definitions, categorizations and insights were drawn, is thus complex and accurate.

According to results from the research agency Fokus in 2019, percipients considered RTVS as the television provider with the most reliable information. It is followed by private television channels. The credibility level of print and online media was comparable.

Only 26 percent of Slovaks trust the media. According to an international survey conducted by [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#) (2022) this is four percentage points less than a year ago. The Slovak part of the survey was conducted on a sample of 2007 respondents. RTVS and TA3 are perceived as the most trusted media. It is a public channel and news channel, and should base their contributions on materiality, objectivity and impartiality, or on tabloids, which is also confirmed by their placement in the rankings.

5. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of media-related competencies domain

5.1. Normative sources

The media education in Slovakia context is defined as a multidisciplinary concept that integrates knowledge and scientific apparatus of the wide range of social sciences (in particular mass media communication, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, information and library science, etc.) and that contributes to their application in the process of lifelong learning and the current needs of social practice. The main legal document framing media education policies is the Concept of Media Education in the Slovak Republic within the context of lifelong learning valid since 2009 (Ministerstvo kultúry SR, 2009). The document presents the main goals and strategies for media literacy policies and media education activities within the lifelong learning process.

Media education became part of the curriculum for the first time on the basis of school content reform implementation, which began in 2008 – 2009. In relevant school legislation, it is defined as a compulsory part of education, and individual schools have the right to decide about the form of its implementation into the curriculum. They can choose from three primary forms of integrating media education into educational programmes:

- (A) Media education as a cross-cutting topic integrated into the curriculum of suitable study courses;
- (B) Media education as independent subject;
- (C) Media education implemented in the form of a project, course and other practically aimed activities. (Vrabec, 2016, Kačinová & Kolčáková, 2013a, 2013,b).

Slovakia has media literacy programs implemented in formal education, but they are not widely applied. This phenomenon is mainly due to the lack of qualified and motivated teachers who could teach media education. In addition, there is no pedagogical faculty in Slovakia that has an accredited teacher's study program focused on media education. Teacher education is present in Slovakia, but in most cases, it is not provided by public institutions but rather by NGO activists and academic institutions focused on media studies.

The obligation to submit reports on the state of media literacy was, in conditions of Slovak republic, transposed to the Act No. 308/2000 on broadcasting and retransmission, as amended, while Art. 5 Sect. 1 (j) thereof establishes the obligation for the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission to submit documentation related to evaluation of the state and level of media literacy in the Slovak Republic. In Slovakia, there are roughly 18 parties involved in media literacy. Seven of these significant stakeholders are academic institutions, with a primary concentration on media and information studies and pedagogy. Two stakeholders are classified as public authorities, while the other two are classified as audiovisual content suppliers. The Broadcasting and Retransmission Council is a stakeholder in the category of media regulators. Other stakeholders fall under the umbrella of civil society organizations (Nikoltshev, Cappello, Blázquez & Valais, 2016). The opportunity concerning deliberative communication is that several non-profit organizations operating in Slovakia deal with various aspects of the development of media competencies. This is especially the prevention of the spread of hate speech and extremism in the online ecosystem (Gregussová, Drobný & Milo, 2013; Velšic, 2017); the development of media and information competencies as an essential part of critical thinking (Filo, Ivanič & Luppová, 2011; Makroš, 2019; N-Magazine, 2017) and the development of media competencies with a focus on disinformation, false reports and conspiracy theories (Slovak Security Policy Institute, 2017; Slovak Security Policy Institute, 2018; Mesežnikov & Bartoš, 2020; Kačinová, 2019, Čavojová, Panczová & Závacká, 2020; Zajac, 2020). A relatively wide range of participants, especially NGOs, deal with media competencies and media literacy in Slovakia. On the other hand, the activity of state and public institutions, which pay relatively little attention to the de-

velopment of media competencies, is deficient. Therefore, as part of our analysis of non-academic resources, we perceive media competencies as an integral part of media and information literacy development.

The thematic categorization of this group of resources includes various structured projects and publications devoted mainly to the following topics:

- Safety and preventive aspects of the Internet and digital media use, primarily focusing on the target group of children and adolescents (eSlovakia, 2010; Drobný, 2013; Drobný, 2014; Gregussová & Drobný, 2014).
- Prevention of the spread of hate speech and extremism in the online ecosystem (Gregussová, Drobný & Milo, 2013; Velšic, 2017).
- Psychologically oriented research focused on behavior of children and adolescents on the Internet and their use of digital media (Gregušová, Tomková & Balážová, 2010; Madro et al., 2015; Tomková, 2015).
- Teachers' education in the field of media education and the development of media competencies (Čuvalová, 2014; Šándorová, 2013; Haberová, 2012; Králik, 2018; Janková, 2020; Biziková, 2015).
- Development of media and information competencies as an essential part of critical thinking (Filo, Ivanič & Luppová, 2011; Makroš, 2019; N-Magazine, 2017).
- Development of media literacy and media competencies of parents (Langerová, 2014; Velšic, 2015).
- Digital literacy and development of digital competencies of adult Internet users (Velšic, 2014; Šnidl, 2017; Velšic, 2012).
- Digital literacy and the development of digital competencies of children and adolescents (Velšic, 2016).
- Development of media competencies focusing on issues of disinformation, false reports and conspiracy theories (Slovak Security Policy Institute, 2017; Slovak Security Policy Institute, 2018; Mesežnikov & Bartoš, 2020; N-Magazine, 2017; Čavojová, Panczová & Závacká, 2020).
- Legislative and conceptual documents and meetings related to media literacy (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2009).

As part of the analysis of the participants involved in the issue of spreading awareness of media competencies and media literacy, we identified the following NGOs:

- eSlovakia (focused on safety and prevention aspects of Internet and digital media use, primarily focusing on the target group of children and adolescents).
- Institute for Public Affairs (focused on digital literacy, the development of digital competencies and the spread of hate speech on the Internet).
- Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (focused on research on children's and adolescent behavior on the Internet and in the use of digital media).
- OZ Žabky (focused on the development of media literacy and media competencies of parents and teachers).
- Slovak Security Policy Institute (the development of media competencies with a focus on disinformation, false reports and conspiracy theories).
- Institute of Strategic Policies (the development of media competencies focusing on issues of disinformation, false reports and conspiracy theories).
- Slovak Center for Communication and Development (the development of media and information competencies as an essential part of critical thinking).
- OZ IPČKO (research on the behavior of children and adolescents on the Internet and interest in their use of digital media).

- Denník N (development of media competencies with a focus on critical thinking, issues of misinformation, false reports and conspiracy theories).

The state and public institutions sector is represented only by the following institutions:

- Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (legislative and conceptual documents and meetings related to media literacy).
- State Pedagogical Institute (teachers' education in media education and the development of media competencies).
- Methodological-pedagogical centre (teachers' training in media education and the development of media competencies).

5.2. Assessment of media related competencies among citizens (e.g. research tests, research, monitoring reports)

As an opportunity in the context of deliberative communication, we can see that research focused on media competencies in the educational context has a strong tradition. IMEC – Centre of Media Literacy at Faculty of Massmedia Communication UCM – conducted two surveys targeted on the scale and the form of the representation of media education in the educational system in Slovakia. These surveys focused on comparing the level of media education strategies at different schools in the country. The main aim was to map the current status of the implementation of media education into the curriculum in elementary and secondary education in the Slovak Republic. The first survey carried out in 2011 was focused on the current status of media education teaching at secondary schools. The research team collected data from 631 schools – this represents 82% of all schools in Slovakia (Kačínová & Kolčáková, 2013a). The second survey was conducted in 2012 on the representative sample of 567 elementary schools from different municipalities and regions in Slovakia. In both surveys, data collection was carried out by the method of a telephone interview with teachers or school directors. This method was combined with curriculum analysis (Kačínová & Kolčáková, 2013b).

Further research has focused on various aspects of teacher education in the field of media literacy and the development of media competencies (Biziková, 2015; Kačínová, 2015; Magová, 2016; Kačínová, 2016; Vrabec, 2017; Petranová & Burianová, 2014, Vrabec, Graca & Mazáková, 2015, Hekelj, 2017). Another part of the research in this area focused on the media competencies of the students themselves (Vrabec, 2017; Prostináková Hossová & Košťalová, 2021; Hladíková, 2019). After 2016, we record a shift in Slovakia from the risks and prevention aspects of the Internet and digital media to the research of disinformation, fake news and hybrid threats (Slovak Security Policy Institute, 2017; Slovak Security Policy Institute, 2018; Mesežnikov & Bartoš, 2020; N-Magazine, 2017; Kačínová, 2019, Čavojová, Panczová & Závacká, 2020; Bulganová, 2020; Kvetanová, Kačincová Predmerská & Švecová, 2021).

We also consider the fact that a relatively wide range of research has focused on the media competencies of the senior population to be a positive factor regarding this issue (Petranová, 2013; Petranová, 2014; Velšic, 2014, Petranová, 2016; Švecová, Kaňuková & Kačincová Predmerská, 2019; Jurczyk-Romanowska et al., 2019; Švecová & Kaňuková, 2019). The risk factor in terms of deliberative communication is the fact that in Slovakia, there is no research on disadvantaged groups. The only exception is research focused on examining the media competencies of visually impaired citizens (Vrabec & Petkáčová, 2014). However, a wider spectrum of empirical examination of the media competencies of other disadvantaged groups (e.g., Roma, migrants, etc.) could be both a challenge and an opportunity for research in this area.

According to the findings of a new edition of the Media Literacy Index for 2021, Slovakia ranked 22nd among the 35 monitored European countries. The index evaluates the resilience potential to fake news in 35 European countries by utilizing variables for media freedom, education, and

trust in people. Because the indicators are of varying importance, they are given varied weights in the model. The media freedom indicators (Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders) have the most weight, followed by the education indicators (PISA), with reading literacy having the most weight among them. The indicators of e-participation (UN) and trust in people (Eurostat) have a lower weight than the other indicators. (Lessenski, 2021).

In 2021, Slovakia achieved the following Media Literacy Index results in individual indicators:

- ◆ Freedom of the Press (Freedom House): 26
On a scale from 0 to 100 (best to worst)
- ◆ Press Freedom Index (Reporters without Borders): 22.67
On a scale from 0 to 100 (best to worst)
- ◆ PISA score in reading literacy (OECD): 458
The higher score the better; 500 is very good and below 300 is a very poor result
- ◆ PISA score in scientific literacy (OECD): 464
The higher score the better; 500 is very good and below 300 is a very poor result
- ◆ PISA score mathematical literacy (OECD): 486
The higher score the better; 500 is very good and below 300 is a very poor result
- ◆ Share of population (%) with university degree (Eurostat): 22
In percentages from 100% to 0% (higher is better)
- ◆ Trust in others (Eurostat, EQSL): 4
On a scale from 10 to 0 (highest to lowest)
- ◆ E-participation Index (UN): 0.7024
On a scale from 1 to 0 (highest to lowest)

Slovakia ranks 22nd of 27 EU Member States in the 2021 edition of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). The country stays at the same position as in 2020. Across the human capital dimension indicators, Slovakia is just below or close to the EU average. In comparison to the EU average of 56 percent and 31 percent, 54 percent of Slovaks have at least basic digital abilities and 27 percent have above-basic digital skills. Slovakia's overall improvement in the examined sectors is limited. So far, public money used to promote digital transformation have not always had the expected effect. Education's digitalisation is falling short of its promise due to a shortage of skills and resources among schools, teachers, and students.

One of the primary pillars of the Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) is digital transformation, with an emphasis on public services, skills, and business digitalization. Slovakia is strongly connected to the major European digital efforts, and the RRP will support various multi-country projects.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted existing gaps in Slovakia's digital economy and society, including as connectivity, digital skills acquisition, and digitalization of schools, households, businesses, and public services. Slovakia has pledged to improve its DESI score and position. The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development, and Informatics published a thorough strategy and action plan¹ with actual initiatives to resolve deficiencies indicated by DESI indicators. This document reflects the core DESI elements and intends to achieve significant improvements by 2025. (Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021: Slovakia, 2021).

6. Analysis of Research and Monitoring Capabilities and Quality

As can be seen from resource research and monitoring, there are significant differences between the individual domains. The education of journalists is developed in Slovakia, which is the reason why a large part of the sources related to the Journalism Domain originate from the academic environment. After 2010, sources are also available in electronic form. Other materials

include publicly available documents issued by the government bodies, public service media and other publicly operating actors. However, the continuity of research and data is limited, as many studies only address partial problems and are not carried out continuously. For this reason, data comparison and prediction are challenging. Most of the analyzed material represents academic sources elaborated and published by Slovak journalism experts affiliated with domestic universities.

It can be stated that specific research focused on the risks and opportunities of deliberative communication does not exist; however, some outputs mention selected aspects of deliberation. These include the relationship between the media and politics or the financial aspects of journalism. Numerous studies have addressed the position, functions and problems of public service media; results of quantitative surveys of viewership, listening, readership, etc. are also available. Research into the working conditions of journalists is not systematic and thus relatively fragmented, overlooking numerous important aspects (gender, income, etc.). The assessment of risks and opportunities for deliberative communication in this area is therefore austere and relatively vague. Research results of this kind are important for the advertising and marketing industry. However, they tend to focus on nationwide media and do not monitor regional and local media outlets. Much data related to private media outlets is not publicly available. There is also a lack of relevant data on the demography of the journalistic profession in Slovakia, which makes it very difficult to monitor developments in this area.

7. Conclusions

Based on the collected data and its quantitative and qualitative evaluation, it can be stated that in 2000 – 2021, the issues included in the four examined domains were continuously investigated in Slovakia. We mapped a total of 865 publications, of which 707 were academic and 159 non-academic. However, in the first five years (2000–2005), publication activities of this kind occurred only sporadically, which was due to the fact that digitalization in Slovakia was just beginning and social media did not yet appear in the online communication space. After 2005, but especially in 2010, this situation improved significantly. Despite this improvement, the domains are not covered evenly. The most complex coverage is represented by publication outputs produced at universities. Non-academic publications are less numerous and in specific subdomains even scarce or non-existent. In particular, there are no research studies that would make it possible to compare the media system in Slovakia with other countries of the European Union. Slovakia, for example, did not participate in the Worlds of Journalism Study led by Hanitzsch prior to 2019, unlike other V4 countries. This shortcoming may pose a risk that complicates continual and correct evaluation of Slovak media environment. Another risk is related to the situation caused by the pandemic, which has decreased trust in the media and created significant polarization of opinions and ideologies in Slovakia. These are risks for deliberative communication and democracy at the same time. The given gaps in media research in Slovakia will be possible to fill through interviews with experts in the given media field.

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