



Country Report

Journalists in Romania

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Backgrounds of Journalists

In the Romanian newsrooms women outstrip men. Women are not only more numerous but also much younger, being under 30. They have university degrees and, in comparison with men, are more often specialized in journalism. Thus, of the 341 interviewed journalists, 62.5 percent (213) were female and 37.5 percent (128) were male. 84.8 percent of the Romanian journalists were younger than 40, on average being 30.65 years old ($s=9.79$). A large number of journalists held a bachelor's (41.6%) or a master's degree (26.7%), while 10.0 percent had not completed their university studies. 18.8 percent of the total had attained secondary education, while 2.3 percent obtained a Ph.D. Over 80.0 percent of the Romanian journalists with university degrees had specialized in journalism and/or in other field of communication, as follows: 47.4 percent had specialized in journalism, 17.2 percent had studied other field of communication, and 15.7 percent had specialized in journalism and other field of communication. The high number of university degrees in journalism is spectacular compared to the first two decades of post-communism.

Journalists in the Newsroom

Of the 341 Romanian journalists, 87.4 percent were employed full-time, 11.1 percent occupied part-time positions and only a very small percentage of them (1.5%) were freelancers. Except freelancers, 73.5 percent of respondents had permanent work contracts and 26.5 percent held a temporary position.

Being very young, Romanian journalists are quite inexperienced. On average, they had 7.81 years ($s=7.15$) of professional experience. 93.8 percent of the total interviewees had up to 20 years of professional experience, and more than half (52.2%) worked between one and five years in journalism. Most of the journalists had presented themselves as generalists (76.2%), working on various topics and subjects. Only 23.8 percent of the respondents were specialized on one single topic tied to current affairs, politics or sport. 79.7 percent worked for one newsroom, while 19.7 percent were employed in two or more newsrooms. On average, they worked for 1.26 newsrooms ($s=0.59$). About three quarters of journalists did not have other jobs outside the profession and have never been professionally associated (22.0%).

A large percentage of journalists worked in traditional media. 32.5 percent of them have been employed by print media outlets, such as daily newspapers, weeklies and magazines, while 32.0 percent worked for public and private television channels. The lowest percentage of the Romanian journalists worked for radio (8.5%) and news agencies (4.4%). In online media, especially print and digital combined, were employed 22.6 percent of all respondents.

Journalistic Roles

Romanian journalists said that objectivity is the most important attribute of their work. They strongly believe that their job is to report events exactly the way they happened, without any external or internal intervention. The low standard deviations in these cases indicate that there is a high level of agreement (at least declarative agreement) on the most important roles of the Romanian journalists.

In addition, Romanian journalists think they have a duty to serve their public. As shown in Table 1, they believe their role is to educate the audience and provide an analysis of the current problems. However, the standard deviation shows that there is not a high level of agreement on the main roles of the journalists.

For the majority of the Romanian journalists it is essential to assume a social role in the community. They consider it important to promote tolerance and cultural diversity, to let people express their views, to support national development and to advocate for social change. The percentage of those who assume the role of watch dogs for the politicians is smaller; only half of the Romanian journalists questioned in this particular study believe it is important to monitor and scrutinize political leaders.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	337	95.0	4.80	.55
Be a detached observer	340	85.6	4.45	.85
Educate the audience	338	79.9	4.27	1.04
Provide analysis of current affairs	338	79.3	4.23	1.01
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	339	74.6	4.12	1.13
Let people express their views	339	73.5	4.06	1.09
Support national development	336	71.7	4.01	1.17
Advocate for social change	337	70.9	4.08	1.10
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	335	62.4	3.81	1.18
Tell stories about the world	339	59.3	3.65	1.24
Provide information people need to make political decisions	338	53.6	3.42	1.38
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	336	51.2	3.40	1.36
Provide entertainment and relaxation	336	46.4	3.32	1.29
Influence public opinion	337	44.5	3.30	1.26
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	339	41.9	3.22	1.24
Monitor and scrutinize business	336	38.1	3.10	1.31
Motivate people to participate in political activity	338	31.4	2.78	1.39
Set the political agenda	334	30.5	2.75	1.34
Be an adversary of the government	333	14.4	2.20	1.25
Support government policy	337	5.3	1.96	.97
Convey a positive image of political leadership	338	3.8	1.63	.93

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.

Professional Ethics

Romanian journalists said that they should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context. Thus, only 22.6 percent answered that it is acceptable to set aside moral standards in case of extraordinary circumstances. Also, almost a quarter of the Romanian journalists consider that what is ethical in their profession is a matter of personal judgment, as shown in Table 2.

Many Romanian journalists set aside ethics when working on an important story; almost a quarter think it is “always justified” to use hidden microphones or cameras and to hide their true identity. Also, almost half of them would use confidential business or government documents without authorization or get employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information if they consider the situation requires it.

However, the situation is different in the case of justifying the use of controversial reporting methods. Only a minority (22.2% in total) said it is always justified to use re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors, to accept money from sources, to alter photographs, to modify or fabricate quotes from sources or to publish stories with unverified content (see Table 3). Thus, there is a gap between the declarative and the daily practices, journalists seemed to be ready to sacrifice ethical principles for a scoop.

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying “strongly” and “somewhat agree”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	340	91.5	4.50	.75
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	339	48.7	3.11	1.45
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	340	22.6	2.39	1.29
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	338	20.1	2.27	1.25

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying “always justified”	Percentage saying “justified on occasion”
Using hidden microphones or cameras	339	18.3	68.4
Claiming to be somebody else	336	16.7	70.5
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	339	11.8	48.7
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	340	11.5	50.3
Paying people for confidential information	340	9.4	49.4
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	340	7.1	39.1
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	339	5.3	23.9
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	340	4.7	25.6
Accepting money from sources	337	4.7	5.6
Altering photographs	336	4.5	5.1
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	337	4.5	3.3
Publishing stories with unverified content	340	3.8	8.2

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, does you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

The professional autonomy ranks fairly high in the reports of the Romanian journalists. In total, 78.9 percent of the respondents answered that they had complete and a great deal of freedom in selecting the stories, while 76.8 percent responded that they benefit from complete or a great deal of information when deciding which aspects to emphasize in a news story. A comfortable majority (57.4%) answered that they “always” and “very often” participate in editorial coordination activities, whether management decisions or newsroom meetings.

The professional activity of the Romanian journalists is influenced by a wide range of elements. Information access and journalism ethics rank first and second on the list of factors influencing news production, with 82.2 percent, respectively 81.4 percent. Other important aspects of influence, as shown in Table 4, are the personal values and beliefs (71.2%) and the feedback from the audience (69.1%). Editorial policy is a significant factor of influence for more than a half of the respondents. The political influence, whether from the Government authorities or other political persons or groups is very limited, ranging from 8.0 to 8.9 percent, very similar to the religious influence. The lowest influence comes from the economic sector, only 5.7 percent, according to the Romanian journalists. Meanwhile, private life had a restricted influence. Friends, family and colleagues were not considered important factors of influence.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Information access	337	82.2	4.33	.89
Journalism ethics	338	81.4	4.25	.95
Your personal values and beliefs	340	71.2	3.96	.97
Feedback from the audience	340	69.1	3.91	1.03
Time limits	335	68.1	3.87	1.02
Availability of news-gathering resources	338	68.0	3.83	1.04
Media laws and regulation	339	67.8	3.91	1.08
Editorial policy	337	54.9	3.48	1.18
Relationships with news sources	336	49.4	3.39	1.24
Audience research and data	334	43.7	3.25	1.16
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	340	41.2	3.19	1.14
Competing news organizations	338	40.2	3.12	1.18
Profit expectations	336	32.4	2.82	1.28
Your peers on the staff	340	30.6	2.97	1.05
Managers of the news organization	339	30.4	2.79	1.24
Owners of the news organization	334	25.1	2.60	1.27
Advertising considerations	334	22.8	2.51	1.23
Censorship	336	22.6	2.44	1.39
Friends, acquaintances and family	341	20.5	2.45	1.26
Colleagues in other media	339	19.5	2.52	1.13
Public relations	332	17.5	2.42	1.19
Military, police and state security	336	10.4	1.91	1.11
Government officials	337	8.9	1.88	1.10
Religious considerations	336	8.3	1.90	1.12
Politicians	334	8.1	1.80	1.09
Pressure groups	337	8.0	1.78	1.07
Business people	331	5.7	1.75	.99

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential and 1 means not influential.

Journalism in Transition

The Romanian journalists pointed out that their profession and related activities are undergoing significant transformations. As shown in Table 5, the use of search engines has strengthened for more than 35.5 percent of the respondents, while technical skills have become essential for 22.0 percent of the Romanian journalists questioned in this report. However, the responses also show some negative aspects of the changes in journalism. The majority of the Romanian journalists report an increase in the average working hours, while the time available for researching the stories has decreased. The journalists also said that the credibility of the press has

weakened. However, the data show a high level of uncertainty; an important number of journalists did not have a clear opinion about these transformations.

Along with the transformations, the Romanian journalists reported changes in the influences they encountered in their everyday work. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, increased their influence on journalism practice, according to 22.0 percent of the respondents. Audience feedback, ethical standards and journalism education rank on top of the changes in influences on journalism. Although an increase is reported for all the variables included in Table 6, such as competition, user generated content or pressure toward sensational news, with a high of 22.0 percent for social media and a low of 7.0 percent for public relations. On the other hand, one aspect persisted in the past as well as in the present; the influence of western ways of practicing journalism has been and remains minimal.

The questions about changes in journalism were only presented to journalists who had five years or more of professional experience.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
The use of search engines	171	90.6	2.3
Average working hours of journalists	172	79.1	5.2
Technical skills	168	71.4	10.1
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	171	56.7	19.9
Having a university degree	168	41.1	29.2
The relevance of journalism for society	171	32.7	32.2
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	169	32.5	37.3
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	173	30.1	38.7
The credibility of journalism	174	18.4	56.3
Time available for researching stories	171	14.0	65.5

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Romania. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Audience feedback	170	74.7	8.8
Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter	173	72.8	9.2
Journalism education	172	64.5	21.5
Ethical standards	173	64.2	17.3
Competition	174	62.6	10.9
Audience research	171	62.0	16.4
User-generated contents, such as blogs	172	59.3	15.1
Audience involvement in news production	172	53.5	18.0
Western ways of practicing journalism	169	51.5	21.3
Advertising considerations	174	50.0	25.3
Pressure toward sensational news	174	43.7	34.5
Profit making pressures	172	43.0	31.4
Public relations	170	38.2	35.9

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Romania. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Journalistic Trust

When talking about the most credible institutions, Romanian journalists said they trust the military and the news media. However, there is a rather high level of disagreement on the two most trusted institutions, as shown by the standard deviation in Table 7. The same table indicates that there is also a high degree of disagreement in the cases of the judiciary/the courts and the police. On the other hand, journalists unanimously distrust the religious leaders, the parliament, the government, the political parties and the politicians in general. Although the military and the news media are the most trusted institutions, their percentages are still low (32.0%). It is important to point out that there isn't any particular Romanian public institution to gather a high percentage of trust.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The military	338	32.5	3.01	1.06
The news media	340	31.8	3.07	.85
The judiciary/the courts	337	22.8	2.78	.97
The police	340	13.8	2.55	.93
Trade unions	335	5.7	2.07	.95
Religious leaders	336	4.8	1.70	.95
The parliament	339	3.8	1.91	.90
The government	340	3.2	1.94	.87
Political parties	337	1.2	1.57	.76
Politicians in general	341	.6	1.60	.73

Question: Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means you have some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.

Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	3,000 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	simple random sampling for newsrooms and simply random for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	341 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	telephone, face-to-face, mail/e-mail and online
<i>Response rate:</i>	54%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	02/2014-10/2015