



Country Report

Journalists in Moldova

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Backgrounds of Journalists

The professional profile of Moldovan journalists almost resembles the one of ten years ago. A typical journalist is a woman in mid-twenties with less than five years of experience who works in television or print press and holds a university degree in journalism. Thus, the findings of this study show that of the 221 surveyed journalists, 60.6 percent were women and 39.4 percent were men. The youngest journalist was 20 years old, while the oldest one was 65 years old. The average age of all respondents was 30.26 years ($s=8.38$); half of the journalists were younger than 27 years. The great majority of them had a university degree. Thus, 54.8 percent had a B.A. degree, 26.2 percent finished an M.A. degree and 7.2 percent were still students. The journalists who completed high school did not exceed 9.0 percent of the total respondents. Nearly a quarter of all journalists had not specialized in journalism. Of those who have specialized in the field, 47.5 percent studied journalism and 20.4 percent studied another field of communication or both journalism and another field of communication.

Journalists in the Newsroom

Of the 221 interviewed journalists 86.4 percent worked full-time, 11.3 percent worked part-time and 2.3 percent practiced freelancing activities. From those with full-time and part-time activities, 80.1 percent had permanent employment contracts for an indefinite period of time, while 19.9 percent held temporary contracts.

More than half (51.8%) of Moldovan journalists had minimal working experience, between one and five years, while 28.7 percent were under 12 years of professional experience. 7.91 years ($s=6.78$) was the average professional experience of the sample interviewed in Moldova. Regarding the professional specialization of journalists, 62.9 percent of all respondents addressed various topics, depending on editorial requirements. The other 37.1 percent had specialized in current affairs, politics or entertainment. Only a third of Moldovan journalists worked in other newsrooms. On average, a journalist worked for 1.24 newsrooms ($s=0.42$). Because of lack of opportunities, they did not able to take other paid jobs. Only 33.0 percent of respondents had other part-time jobs. Out of the total, 29.2 percent were members of professional associations, while the remaining 70.8 percent were not interested in associative activities.

Most journalists in Moldova work in print and audiovisual media. 37.9 percent of respondents were employed by print press organizations, while 36.7 percent worked in television and radio. The few journalists worked in online media (17.7%) and news agencies (7.7%).

Journalistic Roles

There were three roles the Moldovan journalists felt closer: report things as they are, be a detached observer, and provide analysis of current affairs (see Table 1). According to the lowest standard deviation scores, these roles were top priority for most of the journalists. On the opposite site, the respondents were almost entirely detached from the role to convey a positive image of political leadership. Moreover, Moldovan journalists downgraded such roles as set the political agenda, be an adversary of the government and support government policy. On the other hand, a great majority of respondents considered public education role dominant in their work, compared with the roles linked to economic and entertainment functions of mass media. Educate the audience, promote tolerance and cultural diversity and advocate for social change far exceeded such roles as provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience or provide entertainment and relaxation.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	221	97.3	4.79	.47
Be a detached observer	220	82.7	4.30	.86
Provide analysis of current affairs	221	77.8	4.19	.90
Educate the audience	220	77.7	4.10	1.15
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	219	74.0	4.11	1.09
Advocate for social change	218	72.9	4.04	1.10
Let people express their views	218	70.2	4.00	1.11
Support national development	217	68.2	3.89	1.28
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	218	60.1	3.77	1.21
Provide information people need to make political decisions	216	57.9	3.59	1.36
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	221	57.5	3.52	1.33
Influence public opinion	218	51.8	3.49	1.23
Tell stories about the world	220	49.1	3.37	1.24
Motivate people to participate in political activity	217	41.5	2.97	1.45
Monitor and scrutinize business	221	38.0	3.04	1.26
Provide entertainment and relaxation	219	37.0	3.02	1.37
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	216	35.6	3.04	1.27
Set the political agenda	217	34.1	2.86	1.28
Be an adversary of the government	214	32.2	2.72	1.41
Support government policy	213	8.9	2.10	1.04
Convey a positive image of political leadership	215	4.7	1.68	.94

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

The vast majority (90.5%) of Moldovan respondents agreed that journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). The standard deviation in this case shows a strong cohesion among the interviewed journalists. In addition, one of two journalists considered that what is ethical in the profession depends on the specific situation. They demonstrated reluctance in setting aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it and accepting that journalism ethics is a matter of personal judgment.

On the other hand, these results contradict the journalists’ responses referring to some controversial methods of reporting, such as using hidden microphones or cameras, claiming to be somebody else, getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information and using confidential business or government documents without authorization (see Table 3). Their usage was “always justified” or “justified on occasion” by the majority of journalists. However, some methods were regarded as reprehensible. Among them could be mentioned altering photographs, altering or fabricating quotes from sources and publishing stories with unverified content. However, the lowest percentage obtained the practice that referred to accepting money from sources.

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	221	90.5	4.48	.74
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	221	54.8	3.35	1.36
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	220	23.6	2.54	1.26
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	219	22.8	2.39	1.29

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	219	18.7	67.1
Claiming to be somebody else	220	15.0	68.2
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	216	14.8	50.9
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	218	14.7	52.3
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	221	8.6	38.9
Paying people for confidential information	218	7.3	47.7
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	220	4.5	35.0
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	220	2.7	23.6
Altering photographs	221	1.8	7.2
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	221	1.8	5.0
Publishing stories with unverified content	219	1.4	10.0
Accepting money from sources	220	.9	5.0

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

Moldovan journalists believed that they possess a large degree of professional autonomy. 76.7 percent of all respondents said that they had either “complete freedom” or “a great deal of freedom” in selecting news stories. An almost similar percentage (78.1%) declared that they were free to choose topics and the news angle in reporting news stories. Two out of five journalists always participated in editorial coordination.

Overall, Moldovan journalists were influenced by professional ethics and information access (see Table 4). Also, the editorial environment was the most powerful work factor, often determined by time limits, editorial policy, availability of news-gathering resources or certain ethical and legislative constraints. Their professional activities were least affected by external political factors, such as politicians, government officials and pressure groups or by people from their personal and professional proximity, such as friends, acquaintances, family, public relations, colleagues in other media, religious considerations, military, police and state security and business people.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Information access	221	78.3	4.20	.95
Journalism ethics	221	77.4	4.17	.94
Feedback from the audience	220	63.6	3.80	1.04
Media laws and regulation	221	61.5	3.75	1.14
Time limits	220	57.7	3.65	1.08
Editorial policy	220	56.8	3.58	1.15
Availability of news-gathering resources	216	56.0	3.62	1.05
Your personal values and beliefs	218	54.6	3.62	1.11
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	220	47.7	3.35	1.06
Relationships with news sources	220	45.5	3.37	1.16
Audience research and data	219	42.0	3.26	1.22
Competing news organizations	221	36.7	3.06	1.18
Owners of the news organization	215	30.7	2.76	1.30
Profit expectations	216	30.6	2.84	1.29
Managers of the news organization	215	29.8	2.87	1.21
Your peers on the staff	221	26.2	2.79	1.07
Advertising considerations	219	24.7	2.58	1.30
Censorship	219	24.7	2.54	1.36
Friends, acquaintances and family	220	18.6	2.35	1.19
Public relations	219	16.4	2.36	1.17
Colleagues in other media	221	13.6	2.42	1.01
Religious considerations	215	12.1	1.95	1.22
Military, police and state security	217	10.6	1.86	1.10
Business people	218	9.2	1.78	.98
Politicians	217	8.3	1.82	1.02
Government officials	220	8.2	1.92	1.04
Pressure groups	218	7.8	1.77	1.03

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

In the last five years, using the internet as means of searching for information (see Table 5) was considered the most important change in the journalists' work in Moldova. Other changes that largely linked to the use of the internet referred to their average working hours and obtaining new online technical skills. At the same time, two out of ten journalists felt a change related to lowering the level of credibility in the public eye, while one in ten journalists argued that there were difficulties to make free editorial decisions. Time available for researching stories was considered one of the most important changes that altered the journalistic practices. Journalists felt the deadline pressure, even if they did not work in online media. Other changes targeted the ethical standards (but not necessarily Western ways of practicing journalism; see Table 6), competition and profit making pressures that were not so obvious five years ago, due to an underdeveloped media

market in Moldova. The fewer changes occurred in the user-generated content, such as blogs that did not greatly influence the journalistic work because of public low internet access.

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	119	88.2	1.7
Technical skills	119	79.0	10.1
Average working hours of journalists	119	75.6	7.6
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	119	65.5	15.1
The relevance of journalism for society	118	54.2	20.3
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	117	53.8	21.4
Having a university degree	118	51.7	19.5
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	119	50.4	32.8
The credibility of journalism	118	43.2	39.0
Time available for researching stories	119	26.1	48.7

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Moldova. 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	119	75.6	5.9
Competition	118	72.0	11.0
Ethical standards	118	69.5	21.2
Journalism education	118	67.8	16.9
Profit making pressures	118	66.1	12.7
Pressure toward sensational news	119	65.5	21.0
Audience research	118	65.3	15.3
Advertising considerations	117	65.0	12.8
Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter	117	64.1	12.8
User-generated contents, such as blogs	118	59.3	16.1
Audience involvement in news production	119	58.0	20.2
Western ways of practicing journalism	118	52.5	21.2
Public relations	116	50.9	21.6

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Moldova. 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

Moldovan journalists have established a quasi-consensus regarding confidence in various institutions. There is no institution granted full trust. Four from ten respondents argued that the news media was the most credible institution. The military earned a smaller percentage of trust (32.6%). Other institutions such as the police, the judiciary/the courts and religious leaders were considered reliable by 15.1 percent of journalists. Among political institutions, only the government obtained a higher percentage, surpassing trade unions. The parliament, political parties and politicians in general were considered the least trusted institutions in Moldova.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The news media	217	39.2	3.18	.87
The military	218	32.6	2.93	1.08
The police	219	15.1	2.43	.99
The judiciary/the courts	220	14.1	2.43	1.01
Religious leaders	220	8.6	2.03	1.03
The government	220	7.3	2.20	.86
Trade unions	219	6.4	2.12	.97
The parliament	219	5.5	2.13	.86
Political parties	219	2.3	1.87	.81
Politicians in general	220	.5	1.84	.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>	500 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	stratified proportionally random sampling for newsrooms and convenience sample for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	221 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face-to-face, telephone and online
<i>Response rate:</i>	68.2%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	10/2013-12/2013

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