



Country Report

Journalists in Kosovo

Abit Hoxha *LMU Munich*, Kenneth Andresen & Arbesa Hoxha-Dobrunaj, *University of Agder*

22 December, 2016

Backgrounds of Journalists

The typical journalist in Kosovo is male, in his thirties and holds a university degree in journalism or communication. Of the 206 interviewed journalists, 95 were women, making for a proportion of 45.5 percent of the overall sample. On average, Kosovar journalists were 30.83 years old ($s=8.99$); half of the journalists were younger than 29 years. The Kosovar journalists tend to be well educated: 86.2 percent of the respondents hold a university degree and 67.0 percent have specialized in journalism and/or communication.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The majority of journalists interviewed in Kosovo held a full-time position (86.4%), whereas only 8.7 percent of respondents have part-time contracts and 2.9 percent of the respondents are freelancers. The majority of Kosovar journalists do not have permanent positions in the newsrooms. 70.4 percent of the journalists have temporary positions (29.6% permanent positions), which is the highest in the world.

60.6 percent of journalists declared that they work on various topics and subjects in the newsroom as oppose to the rest, who are specialized in a specific beat or subject area such as politics, economy or sports. 20.2 percent work on hard news beat, while 13.8 percent work on soft news. 18.1 percent say they specialize in politics, economy and current affairs, and 7.4 percent report on culture and entertainment.

Kosovar journalists are not very experienced. On average, they had worked as journalists for 7.51 years ($s=5.98$); about half of them had more than six years of professional experience, which is an indication of the young country that did not have pluralist and independent media prior to 1999, apart from a couple of newspapers that were established through international donor funding.

The short experience of Kosovar journalists is also reflected in the number of newsrooms they have worked for. Nine out of ten journalists (92.5%) have worked for only one newsroom. 15.2 percent have other jobs besides journalism.

Furthermore, only 46.6 percent of Kosovar journalists belong to journalism organizations or associations.

Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional role orientations, Kosovan journalists found it most important to report things as they are, to be a detached observer, to provide analysis of current affairs, and to promote tolerance and cultural diversity (see Table 1). The relevance of these “classic” roles was fairly undisputed among the interviewed journalists as the relatively low standard deviations indicate. Likewise, there was a strong consensus among the respondents over the little importance of supporting government policy and conveying a positive image of political leadership.

Still, a majority of journalists in Kosovo found it important to provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life, to educate the audience, to tell stories about the world, and to provide information people need to make political decisions. Politically more assertive roles, on the other hand, were supported by only a minority of respondents. Following traits belong to these roles: setting the political agenda, motivate people to participate in political activity, convey a positive image of political leadership, and support government policy.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very important”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	202	98.5	4.83	.47
Be a detached observer	198	94.9	4.67	.68
Provide analysis of current affairs	201	92.5	4.50	.74
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	200	87.5	4.51	.81
Let people express their views	199	75.9	4.15	1.14
Educate the audience	199	74.9	4.15	1.02
Influence public opinion	192	74.5	4.04	1.19
Be an adversary of the government	200	74.5	4.09	1.08
Advocate for social change	195	72.3	4.05	1.23
Support national development	199	70.4	4.01	1.10
Tell stories about the world	201	65.2	3.87	1.18
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	197	63.5	3.75	1.19
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	199	62.8	3.76	1.16
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	198	62.1	3.80	1.18
Provide information people need to make political decisions	192	50.5	3.46	1.36
Provide entertainment and relaxation	193	48.2	3.26	1.33
Monitor and scrutinize business	192	46.4	3.36	1.23
Set the political agenda	186	38.2	2.92	1.40
Motivate people to participate in political activity	191	34.0	2.88	1.45
Convey a positive image of political leadership	190	25.3	2.71	1.32
Support government policy	185	13.0	2.20	1.17

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

Kosovar journalists generally demonstrated a strong commitment to professional standards of ethics. The respondents almost unanimously agreed that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). Furthermore, only three out of ten journalists agreed with the view that their ethical decisions are a matter of personal judgment and that sometimes it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it. However, slightly less than half of the interviewees subscribed to the idea that journalists’ ethical decisions depend on the specific situation.

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	202	96.5	4.76	.58
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	198	47.0	3.22	1.29
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	190	31.1	2.66	1.43
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	195	28.2	2.53	1.37

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	194	15.5	47.9
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	192	14.6	44.3
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	189	10.6	42.9
Paying people for confidential information	190	8.9	34.2
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	187	8.6	21.4
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	189	8.5	2.6
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	191	8.4	9.4
Claiming to be somebody else	192	6.8	29.2
Publishing stories with unverified content	191	6.3	4.2
Altering photographs	192	5.7	2.1
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	192	5.2	3.1
Accepting money from sources	191	4.7	4.2

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

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Journalists in Kosovo reported a fairly high degree of professional autonomy. Many of our respondents (67.0%) said that they had complete or a great deal of freedom in their selection of stories. With a total of 71.4 percent, the number of respondents who had complete or a great deal of freedom in deciding over what aspects to emphasize in a news story was even higher. Still, a majority of journalists reported that they participated in editorial coordination activities (such as meetings and news management) “always” or “very often” (80.7%).

News production is influenced by a variety of factors. Among the potential sources of influences mentioned in the interview, “journalism ethics” fared on top of the list among Kosovar respondents (see Table 4). A majority of journalists found their work substantively constrained by media laws and regulation, by information access (or lack thereof), and by time limits. 43.9 percent admitted their work was influenced by their personal values and beliefs.

Overall, internal factors were found to be more influential than external constraints. Kosovan journalists felt little influenced by sources from within the political and civic realm: the government, politicians, religion, the military, police and state security, pressure groups, business people, and public relations. They also reported only minor influence from friends, acquaintances and family as well as from colleagues in other media. Likewise, economic influences – stemming from owners

and managers, profit expectations and advertising – seem to have little relevance in Kosovar newsrooms.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	191	86.9	4.40	.96
Media laws and regulation	194	73.2	4.04	1.01
Information access	192	63.0	3.77	1.11
Time limits	193	58.5	3.66	1.15
Editorial policy	190	46.3	3.35	1.23
Audience research and data	170	44.7	3.23	1.35
Your personal values and beliefs	173	43.9	3.12	1.46
Competing news organizations	191	40.8	3.08	1.31
Feedback from the audience	194	40.2	3.20	1.24
Censorship	189	37.6	2.88	1.44
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	187	37.4	3.09	1.25
Managers of the news organization	190	31.6	2.91	1.25
Relationships with news sources	193	30.1	2.67	1.32
Availability of news-gathering resources	173	29.5	2.86	1.27
Owners of the news organization	185	29.2	2.84	1.29
Your peers on the staff	192	24.0	2.63	1.25
Public relations	192	22.9	2.45	1.28
Advertising considerations	167	21.6	2.41	1.26
Military, police and state security	192	18.8	2.31	1.26
Government officials	193	18.1	2.33	1.30
Politicians	192	17.2	2.19	1.30
Friends, acquaintances and family	196	14.8	2.18	1.27
Pressure groups	193	13.5	2.10	1.19
Business people	191	11.5	1.99	1.17
Profit expectations	167	10.8	1.92	1.12
Colleagues in other media	194	10.3	2.08	1.09
Religious considerations	148	10.1	1.79	1.17

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

Journalism is currently in a state of change. According to Kosovan journalists, the use of search engines and technical skills had most profoundly changed over the last five years (see Table 5). Working conditions for Kosovar journalists have been difficult for many years, and continue to be hard. However, journalists see an increasing relevance for journalism in society, as well as credibility. This points to an increasing faith in journalism playing a significant role in society’s development. Overall, the journalists’ responses point to a slight deterioration of working conditions in the profession.

Influences on journalism and news production have changed as well. Here, it was especially the influence of social media, user-generated contents, and competition that had strengthened the most during the past five years. A majority of Kosovar journalists reported an increase of pressure towards sensational news, for market-related influences – such as profit making pressures, and advertising considerations – as well as for audience feedback. Ethical standards and audience research were the sources of influence that had substantively weakened over the years.

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 "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	97	90.7	1.0
The relevance of journalism for society	97	69.1	11.3
Technical skills	96	66.7	8.3
The credibility of journalism	97	51.5	15.5
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	98	48.0	23.5
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	93	47.3	18.3
Average working hours of journalists	99	40.4	36.4
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	95	37.9	29.5
Time available for researching stories	98	36.7	32.7
Having a university degree	96	36.5	25.0

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Kosovo. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter	93	86.0	4.3
Pressure toward sensational news	90	73.3	6.7
User-generated contents, such as blogs	91	72.5	15.4
Competition	90	70.0	8.9
Profit making pressures	84	66.7	9.5
Advertising considerations	87	65.5	12.6
Western ways of practicing journalism	89	61.8	15.7
Journalism education	96	56.3	21.9
Audience feedback	89	49.4	18.0
Public relations	86	41.9	23.3
Audience involvement in news production	88	40.9	23.9
Ethical standards	96	39.6	34.4
Audience research	84	23.8	34.5

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Kosovo. 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 it comes to trust in public institutions, Kosovan journalists turned out to have reasonable faith in three institutions: the military system, the police, and their own institution – the news media (see Table 7). Still, major political institutions – such as the parliament, trade unions, and the government – were not found trustworthy by Kosovar journalists. Remarkably, Kosovan journalists seem to have more trust in the military than in politicians, political parties and religious leaders. The interviewed journalists had relatively little confidence in the former two institutions. Overall, there was a fairly high agreement among the respondents over the question of institutional trust, as low standard deviation values indicate. Disagreement was most pronounced for religious leaders and the military.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The military	196	49.5	3.41	1.20
The news media	197	41.1	3.34	.81
The police	198	35.9	3.09	1.06
Religious leaders	193	16.1	2.19	1.18
Trade unions	197	12.7	2.32	1.09
The parliament ["national Assembly"]	197	11.2	2.39	1.07
The judiciary/the courts	196	9.7	2.21	1.02
The government ["Central government"]	195	4.6	1.97	.94
Political parties	193	2.1	1.73	.85
Politicians in general	193	2.1	1.76	.86

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>	300 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	simple random sampling for newsrooms and simply random for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	206 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	face to face
<i>Response rate:</i>	73.36%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	11/2014-03/2015