



**World Trends  
in Freedom of  
Expression  
and Media  
Development:**

**Regional overview of  
CENTRAL AND  
EASTERN EUROPE**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Communication and  
Information Sector

# World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development:

## Regional overview of **CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**



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# INTRODUCTION

Freedom of expression in general, and media development in particular, are core to UNESCO's constitutional mandate to advance 'the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication' and promoting 'the free flow of ideas by word and image.' For UNESCO, press freedom is a corollary of the general right to freedom of expression. Since 1991, the year of the seminal Windhoek Declaration, which was endorsed by our Member States, UNESCO has understood press freedom as designating the conditions of media freedom, pluralism and independence, as well as the safety of journalists.

The present text is part of a compendium of regional overviews produced as a supplement to the 2014 publication *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development*.<sup>1</sup> The *World Trends* report, along with its supplemental regional chapters, examines progress as regards press freedom, including in regard to gender equality, and makes sense of the evolution of media actors, news media institutions and journalistic roles over time. The global report also contains an in-depth examination of the gender-related aspects of press freedom, through dedicated sections in each of the four thematic chapters.

*World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* was prepared as the basis of a summary report on the global state of press freedom and the safety of journalists, presented to the General Conference of UNESCO Member States in November 2013, on the mandate of the decision by Member States taken at the 36<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of the Organization.<sup>2</sup>

The overarching global trend with respect to media freedom, pluralism, independence and the safety of journalists over the past several years is that of disruption and change brought on by technology, and to a lesser extent, the global financial crisis. These trends have impacted traditional economic and organizational structures in the news media, legal and regulatory frameworks, journalism practices, and media consumption and production habits. Technological convergence has expanded the number of media platforms, and access to them, as well as the potential for expression. It has enabled the emergence of citizen journalism and spaces for independent media, while at the same time is fundamentally reconfiguring journalistic practices and the business of news.

The broad global patterns identified in the report are accompanied by extensive unevenness within the whole. The trends summarized above, therefore, go hand in hand with substantial variations between and within regions as well as countries. It is these variations that are explored in the chapters that follow.

1 Available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/world-media-trends>

2 37 C/INF.4 16 September 2013 "Information regarding the implementation of decisions of the governing bodies". <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002230/223097e.pdf>;  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002230/223097f.pdf>

**CENTRAL AND  
EASTERN EUROPE:  
MEDIA FREEDOM**

## OVERVIEW

The Central and Eastern European region has presented a diverse and dynamic media landscape as progress made in securing press freedom that was evident in most of the region's 25 countries in the early 2000s has been replaced by stasis.<sup>1</sup> The momentum of progress has slowed, especially in some countries in South-East Europe, meaning the past six years has seen a shift to stasis or decline of media freedom rather than improvement. There has been a visible trend towards improving media legislation, particularly the decriminalization of defamation and access to information, to bring it in line with international standards. However, efforts have not yet been coherent or harmonized, implementation has been problematic, and impunity has remained common. Furthermore, civil codes with excessive financial penalties have increasingly been used to limit media freedom.

The legacy of difficult historical experiences and the transitions of the 1990s appear to persist and exert a restrictive influence on media freedom by facilitating the adoption of restrictive laws related to protection of national security or anti-terrorism, which conflict with legislative progress in other aspects of media freedom. Legal and institutional protection of media freedom has tended to be strong and effective in Baltic States and most of Central Europe, inconsistent and insufficiently effective in most of South-East Europe, and relatively weak in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Other factors impacting on media freedom in the region include that nine countries in the region are members of the European Union (EU). Such membership, or aspirations to join the EU, has inspired a number of countries to attempt to bring their media legislation in line with EU standards.

The more recent economic crisis has negatively influenced the media landscape with repercussions for press freedom in the form of a climate of insecurity among journalists amid rising job losses, and with the result of greater self-censorship [see CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MEDIA INDEPENDENCE]. The rapid spread of the internet and social media has broadened opportunities to enjoy media freedom, even as it has resulted in increased pressure against online journalists through digital control.

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1 According to a comparative analysis of data aggregated by the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), in the period 2007-2012, *Freedom of the Press* rankings indicated that in 17 countries of Central and Eastern Europe the situation of media freedom had deteriorated, it had improved in five countries, and it had not changed in three other countries. Most of these changes, however, had not been significant enough to warrant a change in the report's categorizations of given national media systems as 'Free', 'Partly Free' and 'Not Free'. According to the same comparative analysis, Reporters Without Borders rankings indicated that in 13 countries the situation of freedom of expression had deteriorated, in 10 countries it had improved, and it had not changed in two of them. Meanwhile, IREX's Media Sustainability Index, which also measures freedom of expression, (although covering only 17 out of the 25 countries of the region) showed a deterioration of media freedom in 10 countries and improvement in seven others.

## LEGAL/STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

All countries of Central and Eastern Europe have guaranteed freedom of the press and expression in their constitutions. Twenty-two of the region's 25 countries were members of the Council of Europe (CoE) and have signed and ratified the Council's European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which recognizes the right to freedom of expression and opinion (Article 10). At the same time, media-related legislation has continued to be problematic in a number of countries. Although positive steps have been taken in many countries, especially in South-East Europe, contradictions among media-related laws and constitutions and international obligations have underscored the continuing challenges to media freedom.

The predominant trend in Central and Eastern Europe over the last six years has been improvement of legislation combined with insufficient implementation in practice. Case law in the region has indicated that courts in many countries have been less inclined to promote freedom of expression and have tended to favour its restriction, resulting in many journalists perceiving the judiciary more as an opponent than an ally in protecting and enforcing freedom of expression.

Furthermore, a series of countries that on one hand passed protective media laws concurrently approved other laws related to protection of national security or anti-terrorism that negatively impacted press freedom. The past six years has seen a trend of using the latter laws, rather than those related to media, to intimidate journalists with the aim of limiting press coverage or forcing journalists to reveal their sources of information. Legal harassment has been used to constrain critical journalism and press freedom advocates through threats that include defamation lawsuits, losing a broadcast licence, encountering a selective tax investigation, or facing loss of revenue when advertisers learn an outlet has been in disfavour with the government. These trends have been most noticeable in some CIS and South-East European countries where defamation and libel have remained criminalized and journalists have been said by politicians to undermine 'national interests'. In these countries, cases of undue detention have also been reported and legal censorship has been used. Reports show that in some countries, restrictions on freedom of movement and the denial of accreditation have been used to limit journalists' independence.

The trend towards decriminalization of defamation, which started in the early 2000s in Central and Eastern Europe, has continued over the past six years as four more countries fully decriminalized defamation and an additional four countries abolished prison sentences for defamation convictions, although the offence has remained in the criminal code. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media has continued to campaign for the decriminalization of defamation in its 56 member countries, and Central and Eastern Europe has been one of the regions where the decriminalization trend was strongest.



At the same time, an emerging trend has been the disproportionate use of financial fines and sanctions to restrict media freedom, including those cases in which defamation has been classified as a civil tort. This has eroded some of the significance of the decriminalization of defamation in the region. Civil defamation cases have increasingly been used to harass and intimidate journalists and media outlets, as evidenced by the number of civil lawsuits and disproportionate fines against journalists and media critical of governments.

In at least four countries, defamation laws have been used by public officials, including Heads of State, to restrict critical media across all platforms and to discourage media scrutiny. However, media and civil society in the region have increased pressure on authorities to adopt standards that would exclude granting a higher degree of protection to public officials against defamatory speech in the media. Blasphemy laws have not been a widespread phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe, where only one country still had such a provision. Over the period, 17 countries have had laws that penalize religious hate speech, according to the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life.

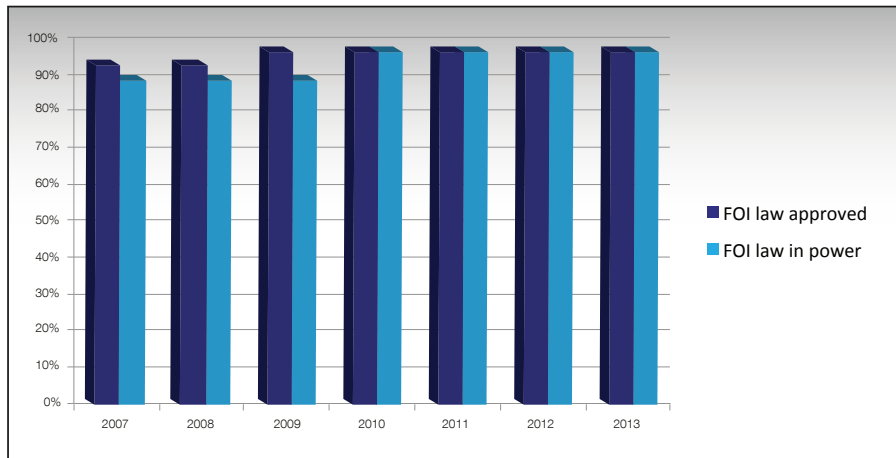
The blocking or banning of media outlets, regardless of platform, has largely been a phenomenon of the past, with the exception of five countries in the CIS that have continued to apply restrictions and prohibitions on critical media. Two of these countries have also applied bans and obstacles to the circulation of foreign press or reception of foreign television stations and six countries in the region (24%) restrict, control, filter and/or monitor the internet. Three of these countries also require registration for internet use.

Developments over the past six years also indicate an emerging trend towards greater regulation of the internet. In some countries, national security, public morals and public interest rationales have often been used as justification for greater regulation and control of the internet. Most governments have adopted policies related to cybercrime, child pornography, human trafficking, terrorist propaganda, defamatory speech etc., which have often had corollary impacts on press freedom and freedom of expression. Eighteen Central and Eastern European countries have ratified the Convention on Cybercrime, which was created in Budapest in November 2001. There have been indications that some authorities have tended to expand their internet and digital surveillance capabilities, as evidenced by recently adopted special legislation. As the news sector has expanded to the internet, so also has censorship and surveillance. CIS countries, in particular, have intensified efforts in recent years to institutionalize some of the same restrictions implemented within their own borders at the regional and international level.

Freedom of information (FOI) laws exist in all but one country in the Central and Eastern Europe region, having been in force for more than a decade. In the Global Right to Information Rating index, four Central and Eastern European countries have ranked in the top 10 in terms of the quality of the law and its implementation. A trend towards increased access to information was present in almost all countries in the region, although a discrepancy between the generally high standards of the FOI laws and their implementation has been evident. FOI laws have been in the process of being revised in order to facilitate access to information via new media platforms and to enable a more proactive approach

in offering information to the public. Civil society and media organizations have advocated for the new legislation to stipulate the principle of maximum disclosure, which in most existing laws has been either missing or vague. There has also been evidence that in many countries some public officials do not respect the law and intentionally delay its implementation, with the aim of discouraging journalists and citizens, or using it against journalists by drawing them into complex bureaucratic processes.

**Figure 1**  
**Percentage of Member States with freedom of information (FOI) laws: Central and Eastern Europe**



**Sources:** freedominfo.org. (2013, March). *Consensus list of 93 countries with freedom of information laws or the equivalent*; Vleugels, R. (2012, 30 September). *Overview of all FOI laws. Fringe Special*; Open Society Justice Initiative. (2013, March). *List of Countries with Access to Information (ATI) Provisions in their National/Federal Laws or Actionable Decrees, and Dates of Adoption & Significant Amendments*

A conflicting trend with respect to generally improving access to information has been the tendency in the last six years for authorities to use data protection laws or privacy laws to erode FOI laws. In many countries there has also been a trend towards the discriminatory release of information, meaning information has been provided preferentially to pro-government media whereas independent media experience obstruction. FOI laws have tended to stipulate a penalty for officials that hinder or refuse to release information, but this is typically small and in most cases not implemented.

Investigative journalism in Central and Eastern Europe has remained underdeveloped, and the density of organized crime coupled with weak judicial systems and close links between media, business, and politics has not constituted a favourable environment for its development. However, the rapid development of online media has also broadened the space for investigative journalism beyond the interests of media owners, and this has become an emerging trend that appears to have grown as internet access and use has expanded.<sup>2</sup> A series of civil society initiatives has also contributed to the development of investigative journalism in some countries.

Investigative journalists continue to face pressures in most countries and repression in some of them. Because of international standards and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), nearly all countries in the region have legislation for the protection of journalistic sources. At the same time, in many national laws, the right to source protection has been qualified and can be overridden. National security laws, anti-terrorism laws, state secrecy laws, and data protection laws have often been used by the courts to require journalists to disclose their sources.

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2 Examples of new investigative reporting websites have included Latvia's *IR.lv* and Hungary's *oknyomozó.hu*.

**CENTRAL AND  
EASTERN EUROPE:  
MEDIA PLURALISM**

## OVERVIEW

With a few exceptions, the 25 countries of the Central and Eastern European region have made a major shift away from state-monopolized media systems since the post-1989 political transitions in much of the region. As the media market has developed over the past decade amid liberalization, privatization and deregulation, including foreign investment of limited duration particularly from Western Europe and North America, the result has been greater media pluralism in most countries. The rapid pace of growth in a changing economic and technological context, however, has been accompanied by an increasing role for the state through advertising and influence over regulatory bodies [see CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MEDIA INDEPENDENCE]. The intervention of the state and/or government in the media, particularly through funding, has increased in the past six years in most countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In the subregion of the CIS, weak advertising markets have hampered the development of media institutions, a situation that has not changed in decades.

Taking the total number of media outlets and news sources as an indicator of structural media pluralism, along with the existence of diverse ownership patterns, the discernible trend is one of increasing overall plurality in the Central and Eastern Europe region. At the same time, while some platforms such as online media experienced growth, newspapers have seen significant declines in the number of regional and local dailies in some countries although there have been increases in others. Media pluralism has also been impacted by the dynamic changes over past two decades in the region and new challenges arising from technological developments. There are emerging trends towards greater concentration among leading telecommunication and mobile operators and the expansion of dominant telecommunications players into the areas of online content and audiovisual services.

## ACCESS

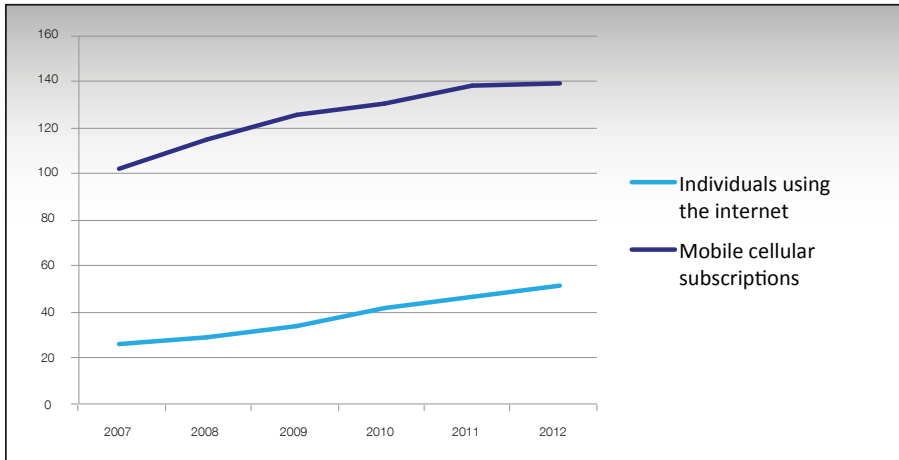
The predominant and steadily growing trend in the last six years that has had a significant impact on media pluralism has been the rapid rise of internet use in all Central and Eastern European countries. The percentage of internet subscribers has grown significantly in recent years across the region, regardless of differences in political environment or economic circumstances (e.g. GDP). The region's internet penetration rate has doubled since 2007, reaching 51% in 2012.<sup>3</sup> In some countries the number of internet subscribers has increased exponentially. Central and Eastern Europe's mobile phone penetration rate

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3 Data for internet penetration were taken from the International Telecommunication Union and for population from the World Bank.

also increased from 103 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2007 to 140 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 2**  
**Internet and mobile cellular penetration per 100 inhabitants in Central and Eastern Europe**



**Sources:** For internet penetration rates and number of mobile subscriptions, see International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2013, June). 'Individuals using the Internet' and 'Mobile Cellular Subscriptions'. *World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators database 2013 (17th Edition)*. For population, see World Bank. (2013). *World Databank: World Development Indicators*.

In most countries in the region, all types of media have been accessible to the population, with various levels of penetration. Television by and large has had the highest penetration level in all countries, according to *Mapping Digital Media* country reports, varying from 72% to 99% for the countries where data were available. Radio penetration rate is usually the second highest, followed by newspapers and the internet. While television is the medium that audiences in the region have continued to prefer, radio audience figures have been mostly stagnant or decreasing and the print media audience declining. The overall circulation of print media, especially daily newspapers, has been shrinking, although not everywhere. The impact of digitization, combined with the economic downturn, has been greatest on print media. News consumers who have preferred the internet over other media platforms have been primarily in the age group of 15 to 29 and urban. However, in some countries in the region, the rural-urban divide has become less sharp as the accessibility of the internet has spread outside of urban areas.

<sup>4</sup> Data for mobile cellular subscriptions were taken from the ITU and for population from the World Bank.

## ECONOMIC MODEL

There has been significant plurality in most countries of the region in terms of different structures of media ownership (private, public and, in some cases, community). EU member countries have adopted a two-tier media system (private and public ownership), while a number of other countries in the region have taken steps to transform their government-controlled radio and television stations into public service broadcasters over the past several years. Yet, state ownership and government control of some segments of media have continued in much of the CIS and, to a lesser extent, in parts of South-East Europe.

Over the last six years, media concentration has followed an ongoing trend similar to that of many other countries outside of Central and Eastern Europe. Horizontal, vertical and diagonal or cross-media ownership concentration has been evident in the region. The trend towards horizontal concentration has been more prominent and has primarily related to print media. Press markets have been relatively concentrated in Central and Eastern Europe, and the trend towards greater concentration has been growing in the last ten years. Competition laws that have usually been used for cases of media concentration have sometimes proved insufficient to pre-empt monopolies in the sector.

The continued concentration of media ownership and changes in media owners following the economic crisis of 2008 have had significant consequences for media pluralism and diversity. With the worsening economic situation of the media industry in the region, there has been a more pressing search for new business models. This trend has been reinforced by a concurrent waning in media development assistance to countries in Central and Eastern Europe over the past six years as donors have shifted their attention to new priorities. Also since 2008, there has been an exodus of foreign companies that had previously invested in media in the wake of media market deregulation and liberalization of media ownership rules in the 1990s. This 'divestment of ownership' had paved the way for new owners often from other sectors of the economy and with close links to powerful businesses and political interests, and whose entry into the media sector has not always benefited pluralism. In many countries in the CIS, the establishment of media outlets has more often been a political than a business decision. Affiliation with political forces and business groups threatens media pluralism in the region because protecting the media owners' other business interests becomes paramount and takes priority over the public interest and impartiality.

The exit of foreign investment in the region's media has increased the role of state financial support in the sector in the past six years, facilitating a return to governmental influence. State aid, mostly in the form of advertising and subsidy, has been identified in all the 25 countries of the region and in 17 of them, it has reportedly been used to influence or control media outlets, broadcasting in particular. Such undue government influence on the media has been seen across political systems. Other extra market sources of revenue available to media in the region include EU funds, which have been provided for content production. Limited donor funding for media development has been available in a few current and former members of the CIS.

Political control of, or influence over, the media has been exacerbated by the lack of transparent media ownership in Central and Eastern Europe. This has become an issue in parts of Central Europe and the Baltic States, where regulators have not gone beyond the first layer of owners to investigate the real ownership of media outlets. Although most countries in the region have laws regulating the concentration of media ownership and, to a certain extent, cross-media ownership, few have ownership transparency laws or requirements. This appears to be changing partly, due to pressure from civil society groups and others, and the past six years have seen the adoption of new rules governing access to information about media ownership structures in some countries. Sanctions for non-reporting of information to media regulators and company registers exist in some countries of the region, but there have not been sanctions for reporting inaccurate ownership information.

Advertising income, which was already declining for traditional media prior to the 2008 financial crisis, has shrunk significantly in the past six years. Even though there have been signs of a recovery, it has been slow, and advertising income has remained below pre-2008 levels. Advertisers have tended to prefer television, although there has been an increasing trend in some countries towards favouring the internet, to the detriment of print media. Generally, in the CIS subregion and parts of South-East Europe, advertising contracts have been awarded on the basis of political preference and threats of advertisers against media outlets have been common. In the media markets of some Central and Eastern European countries, dissenting media have been deprived of access to advertising, with the effect of eroding their economic base and forcing many closures to the detriment of pluralism.

Weak advertising markets have also been an obstacle for the development of an independent media sector in most CIS countries. Unstable political and legal environments have often inhibited the entry of advertising agencies into the media sector. Furthermore, in several countries in the region there has been little reliable market research. The market research that has been done has tended to be influenced by political and economic interests. As a result, much of the private media in nearly all CIS countries has continued to struggle with sustainability.



## CONTENT

New media owners have increasingly covered losses suffered by their media interests from the profits of their primary businesses. Thus, in some CIS countries, media businesses have often been cross-subsidized by owners from other sources of their income. This growing dependency has inclined media to protect their owners' business interests, as well as the interests of their political allies, at the expense of editorial independence and diversity of content.

Economic hardship has exacerbated the decline in quality news coverage and other journalistic forms (such as investigative journalism) across the region. The ensuing result has been a prominent trend towards trivialization and homogenization of content and a reduction in internal pluralism with respect to content formats and the range of topics covered. Politicization of media content has also been a growing trend in a number of Central and Eastern European countries. A trend of more frequent politically polarized situations that result in media content favouring particular political currents or the incumbent government has been noticeable in some countries, particularly in South-East Europe.

While traditional media have not lost their importance, digitization has had multiple effects on the whole media system. The internet has contributed to creating greater media pluralism and diversity for dissenting voices and independent media in countries where traditional media were prevented from publishing or disseminating their content freely. There has been a greater diversity of voices able to circumvent state attempts to restrict information flows, and diverse voices and viewpoints from minorities have been heard more prominently. At the same time, issues related to ethics, quality and reliability of information have often been raised in analyses related to various aspects of digitization. As for news consumption on the internet, in some countries traditional sources have been somewhat more trusted (e.g. websites of leading dailies, which attract greater audiences on the internet than their printed versions), but in a number of other countries internet-only media have taken the lead.

The percentage of women working in the news media increased steadily during the last 10 years, so that the predominant trend has been towards parity with, or even exceeding, the number of men employed in the sector. The *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media* found that women have tended to be very well represented in junior and senior news-reporting and editorial positions (60% and 56%, respectively) although they have been under-represented in senior management (41%), top-level management (43%) and governance (33%) positions.

**CENTRAL AND  
EASTERN EUROPE:  
MEDIA INDEPENDENCE**

## OVERVIEW

The emerging trends in media independence in the 25 countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the past six years were the extension of regulations governing traditional media to the online sector, the increasing role of state funding in the media, and the decline in independent monitoring and advocacy capacity. The operational independence of broadcast regulators continued to decline across the region during the past six years, with cases of political pressure, interference from the commercial sector or both. Debates about merging technical and content regulators in the broadcasting realm intensified, but actual mergers were rare. State funding in the media sector has increased during the past six years in more than two-thirds of the countries in the region and has been widely used as a tool by governments to control media outlets.

Although the past six years saw improvement in transparency of media ownership, at the same time the concentration of power in the hands of a few media owners and the frequent interference of politicians in media operations and regulatory mechanisms have negatively influenced media independence. The quality of journalism has declined in the past six years across the region, with plagiarism and unverified information becoming serious issues for the profession. Job security has been weakened by the economic downturn, which has prompted media outlets to cut costs and staff. Monitoring and advocacy capacity has remained weak in the region, and the few representative think tanks and NGOs active in this area have been confronted with sharp declines in funding.

## INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-REGULATORY MECHANISMS

Although press laws governing ethical violations by media have been in place almost everywhere, statutory management through regulation has not been in place in over three-quarters of the region. This is related to most countries in the region having not had systems in place for state regulation of print or online media, with only six States (24%) regulating print media and only three (12%) regulating online users and websites. Most of the countries that had state regulatory systems for print or online media were in the CIS. With four exceptions, mostly from the CIS countries, there have been no requirements for print media in the region to register with state authorities, and most such requirements were in place throughout the past six years. A few countries have begun in the past three to four years requiring online media to register with the state, although there are no indications that this would become a wider trend.

There were no systems of registration or licensing of journalists in Central and Eastern Europe, and thus journalism has remained open to all entrants regardless of education or experience. There were a few countries where requirements to register with state authorities has been required for blogs. However, no such requirements have been imposed on bloggers or citizen journalists.

All countries in the region have had regulatory bodies for broadcast media, with varying degrees of independence. Their main powers and tasks have been related to licensing broadcasters, monitoring their output to ensure compliance with legal obligations, and imposing sanctions for violations of these obligations. The regulation of broadcast media has been a complex and costly process for the state as well as owners. In the few countries where print media were regulated, regulation has consisted mainly of simple notification requirements. Regulatory systems in the region have typically not required regular reporting by media on ownership structures, and transparency obligations have been fragmented and limited mainly to the broadcasting sector.

Formal independence and informal dependence of broadcast regulatory authorities has been a feature in the region. Financially, bodies have been largely independent; operationally, however, their independence has been undermined in various ways such as decision-making bodies being comprised mostly of politically-appointed members, and with pressures mounted during licensing procedures. In some cases, major licensing decisions have been made directly by the government, including the head of state. In a string of Central European countries, the past five to ten years has seen growing pressures on broadcast regulators from the commercial sector, which has acted to stave off emerging competition from companies interested in obtaining digital licences to enter these markets. Another pattern, identified in a number of Central and South-East European countries, consists of reported collusion of political elites and businesses to pressure regulators into desired actions.

Civil society participation in debates about regulation and in the practice of regulation itself has been weak in most countries. Except for a few countries in Central Europe and the Baltic States, civil society organizations (CSOs) have not been involved in regulation. In half of the countries analysed in this region, the state authorities exclude participation of CSOs in regulation; in the other half, the civil society sector has been too weak to be involved effectively. There appear to have been no reported cases of bloggers or citizen journalists included in the regulatory authorities or even in the debates initiated by these bodies. There have not been quotas on equal representation of women in the media regulatory bodies.

There have been heated debates across the region in the past three to five years about new types of regulation and regulatory frameworks in response to the challenges posed by new technology. Despite increasing debate about online regulatory frameworks, no major structures have been created, and this has not translated into major changes in content regulation structures.

Although a string of self-regulatory bodies has existed in the region, these have remained rather dormant. They mostly consisted of initiatives put forward by journalists aimed at developing agreements in the profession on industry-related issues such as ethics or relations with centres of power and third parties. In roughly half of these countries, professional codes or similar tools have been adopted in the past five to ten years, although compliance has been erratic. In the half of the region that has such codes, the lack of an implementing body has remained problematic. Ombudsmen from only two Central and Eastern European countries were regular members of the global Organization of News Ombudsmen in 2013.

## JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

After an initial improvement in the early 2000s of professional autonomy in many Central and Eastern European countries, the 2007-2012 period has seen a marked slide. This has been most notable with respect to plagiarism and the inadequate verification of facts due to a tendency towards recycling online material or press releases from commercial or state entities, practices that have been made easier by the internet. In some countries in the CIS, the impossibility or difficulty in accessing information, particularly when controlled by the government, has reportedly intensified the problem. Also, close ties and dealings between media conglomerates and political groups have weakened journalistic autonomy, which had already come under growing economic pressures. A separate trend has seen sensitive issues in society, particularly related to minorities, being marginalized or treated in an unprofessional manner in traditional media. However, in most of the countries, the internet and digital media have enlarged the space for public expression of minority groups and the content that targets these groups [see *CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MEDIA PLURALISM*]. In the CIS subregion, however, citizen journalism platforms have been rare.

Job security for journalists improved significantly in much of Central and Eastern Europe during the 2000s, a trend that then changed dramatically since 2008 with the economic downturn, leading to significant cuts in advertising spending and closure of outlets. Much of the media in the region has experienced massive layoffs since 2009. Coupled with control by large conglomerates over media markets, which has given journalists little choice in changing workplaces, this has further weakened confidence among journalists as well as their actual job security. In some countries in South-East Europe, jobs in the media have been controlled by a handful of owners.

Relative gender parity in salaries has been a dominant pattern in Central and Eastern Europe. Only in senior and top-level management have men earned slightly more than women, found the 2011 *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*.<sup>5</sup>

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5 The data show a dramatic difference between women's and men's pay in governance.

Whereas the majority of both women and men in newsrooms had full-time jobs, women represented nearly two-thirds (63%) of journalists in part-time positions.

In South-East Europe, precarious economics and working conditions as well as the threat of lawsuits have been blamed for compelling many journalists to resort to self-censorship. Across the CIS, self-censorship is reportedly practised on a large scale, mainly as a result of the partisan policies of the media outlets, but also as a necessity for journalists to protect themselves against attacks, lawsuits and arrests [see CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MEDIA SAFETY].

Independent journalist associations have been the norm in the region, with 24 countries (96%) having either professional associations or trade unions. The former have operated mostly as industry bodies, encouraging professionalism. Although organizations of journalists existed in all countries in the region but one country in the CIS, their impact and relevance has varied. In some countries, they have been strong bodies that represent and fight for the profession, but in others their work and intervention has been rather inconsistent. Many of them have faced financial problems.

## PROFESSIONALISM AND THE BROADER MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

Opportunities for education in journalism have abounded in the Baltic States and Central and South-East Europe, although in the past six years, the investment of private media companies in training their journalists has fallen mainly due to the decline in funding as a result of the economic woes in the region. Education and training opportunities have increased in the CIS over the past six years. At the same time, journalism schools have been criticized for putting too much emphasis on theory, and managers of media outlets accused of restricting journalists' access to much-needed short-term training.

Most countries in Central and Eastern Europe (96%) have had NGOs that freely monitor and advocate for press freedom. In some Central European countries, there are no such relevant bodies, and the media debate has mostly taken place among market players. In all but one of the CIS countries, NGOs have some level of freedom to monitor and advocate for press freedom. The main change in the past six years has been the decline in the funding of these NGOs as a result of changes in donors' priorities, the overall economic downturn and restriction on foreign funding [see CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MEDIA PLURALISM].<sup>6</sup> The drop in funding has appeared likely to lead to the closure of a number of organizations specializing in monitoring and advocating for press freedom.

6 For example, funding for media freedom and freedom of expression programmes by the United States of America dropped 43.5% over the past five years, according to a 2013 report by D'Amour for the Center for International Media Assistance.

**CENTRAL AND  
EASTERN EUROPE:  
MEDIA SAFETY**

## OVERVIEW

There have been divergent trends in journalists' safety in the 25 countries of Central and Eastern Europe between 2007 and 2012, characterized by a mix of improvements in the Baltic States and Central European countries, while conditions for the safety of journalists have not improved in some of the CIS and South-East European countries where journalists have been assaulted and imprisoned. Intimidation of critical journalists and a culture of impunity for attacks on journalists have characterized many of these countries.

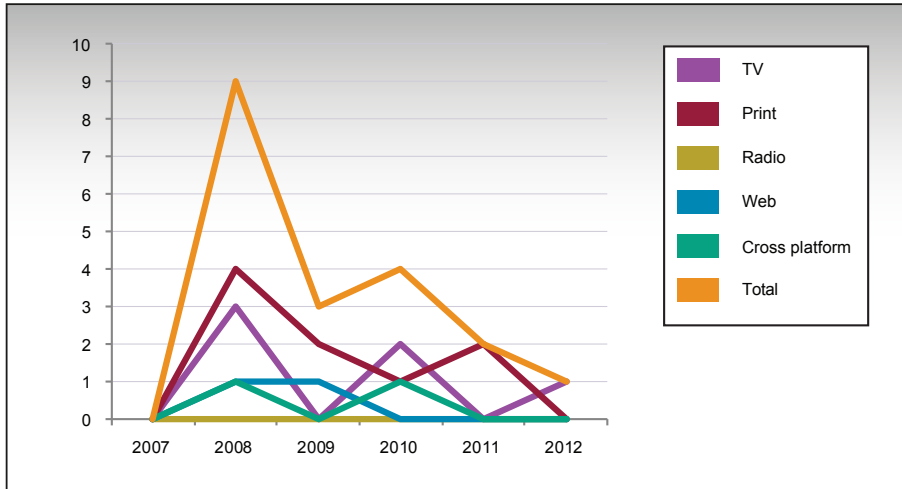
## PHYSICAL SAFETY AND IMPUNITY

The number of journalist killings in the Central and Eastern European region has remained low over the past six years, with the number of condemnations by UNESCO's Directors-General fluctuating between zero and four killings a year, except for 2008, when nine killings were condemned.<sup>7</sup> This rise was due in part to interstate conflict and also to killings linked to organized crime. Of the 19 journalists killed in the region between 2007 and 2012, only one was a woman, although women make up more than half of news reporters in Central and Eastern Europe [see CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MEDIA PLURALISM]. The killed journalists primarily worked in print or TV media, with two working on the web, reflecting the continued dominance of mainstream media institutions in the region [see CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: MEDIA PLURALISM]. After 2008, the number of journalist killings began to decrease, and in 2012 only one journalist was killed in the region.

<sup>7</sup> Based on UNESCO's internal database of *Journalist Killings and Status of Judicial Inquiry, 2007-2012*. Unless stated otherwise, the figures on killings of journalists that follow are taken from this database.



**Figure 3**  
Killings of journalists in Central and Eastern Europe per year by medium



Source: UNESCO's internal database of *Journalist Killings and Status of Judicial Inquiry, 2007-2012*

As regards impunity for killings of journalists, as of mid-2013, two of the four countries where journalist killings had taken place had responded to the UNESCO Director-General's request for an update on the status of judicial inquiry, with convictions reported in three of the cases. In the majority of the 19 cases overall during the past six years, the perpetrators of the attacks have not been punished. The Council of Europe found that in many cases, attacks against journalists have been followed by inadequate investigations or none at all and that this created a cycle leading to further attacks. Some countries have taken steps to improve the nature and implementation of legislation to protect the safety of journalists. The Government of Serbia established a Commission for Investigating the Killings of Journalists in 2013. Poland, along with Austria and Switzerland, organized an international conference on safety of journalists in Warsaw in April 2013 that produced recommendations for legal frameworks and best practices.

There have been countervailing trends with respect to non-fatal attacks on journalists, with some parts of the region registering increases over the last six years while other parts have seen declines. More specifically, in CIS countries, the safety situation for journalists in general has not changed significantly over the past six years, where physical attacks and death threats against journalists have been particularly noted and have increased in a few countries. In some CIS countries, violence has followed a cyclical pattern related to elections. In addition, online journalists also started to be targeted in this sub-region, and cases of beatings and threats have been reported. Attacks were also reported across South-East Europe, but have been decreasing overall. The Baltic States and Central European countries can generally be considered as having been less dangerous for journalists.

Deadly attacks against journalists have been carried out by a range of different perpetrators, including government officials, security forces and political groups. Cases of assaults against journalists from criminal and mafia groups have become increasingly frequent. These groups have sought to intimidate investigative journalists in particular (mostly in South-East Europe) and in some cases have been responsible for murders. Self-censorship of journalists has varied across the region. In CIS countries, self-censorship has been reportedly linked to the factors of fear of physical retaliation, impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of attacks against journalists, and tight state control.

## OTHER DIMENSIONS

Some of the countries in the region have imprisoned journalists. While the practice was declining until 2011,<sup>8</sup> the trend appeared to reverse in 2012, when the number of journalists that the Committee to Protect Journalists, reported to be imprisoned rose from six to 13. In some countries, the cases of journalists jailed under charges such as drug possession and hooliganism have become more frequent. In some cases, such charges have been viewed as being motivated by the intention to create a negative image of journalists. Legal harassment and undue detention have also been reported in some countries, as well as frequent arbitrary arrest and detention and summonses to police stations for questioning. There has been little change in these practices over the last six years. Cases of deportation of foreign journalists have also been registered, and these trends have not changed significantly since 2007.

Over the same period, attacks targeting online journalists and bloggers have increased in parts of the region, in parallel with the expanded access to internet. There have been reports of the hacking of email and Skype accounts, as well as physical attacks on citizen journalists, raids on cybercafés, and harassment of bloggers and freedom of expression advocates.

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8 Unless otherwise noted, the figures for imprisoned and exiled have been compiled from reports by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

# APPENDICES

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. Percentage of Member States with freedom of information (FOI) laws: Central and Eastern Europe
2. Internet and mobile cellular penetration per 100 inhabitants in Central and Eastern Europe
3. Killings of journalists in Central and Eastern Europe per year by medium

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ATI: Access to information

CIMA: Center for International Media Assistance

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States

CoE: Council of Europe

CSO: Civil society organization

ECtHR: European Court of Human Rights

EU: European Union

FOI: Freedom of information

GDP: Gross domestic product

ICT: Information and communication technology

ITU: International Telecommunication Union

NGO: Non-governmental organization

OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WAN-IFRA: World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

## LIST OF COUNTRIES IN THE REGION

As this publication was prepared for a report to UNESCO's General Conference, the presentation is organized around the six regions that make up the voting groupings within UNESCO.

Accordingly, the countries that make up the Central and Eastern Europe region, defined on this basis, are listed below.

### GROUP II. CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (25)

Albania	Estonia	Republic of Moldova
Armenia	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Romania
Azerbaijan	Georgia	Ukraine
Belarus	Hungary	Uzbekistan
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Latvia	Russian Federation
Bulgaria	Lithuania	Serbia
Croatia	Montenegro	Slovakia
Czech Republic	Poland	Slovenia
		Tajikistan