

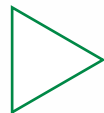
► WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE MEDIA SECTOR

PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND LABOUR RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS



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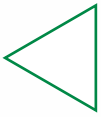


▶ WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE MEDIA SECTOR

PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND LABOUR RIGHTS OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS



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Working conditions in the media sector: professional status and labour rights of journalists and media workers

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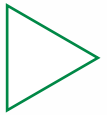
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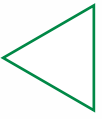
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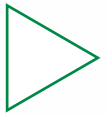


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Preface

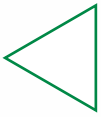
Macedonia's independence and its development as a pluralist democracy went hand in hand with the development of freedom and pluralism in the media system. The early years of the liberalization of the media system in the country saw the flourishing of a large number of private print and broadcast media. However, this large number of media outlets, did not, in itself, signify quality, professionalism and diverse content. On the contrary, the huge number of media outlets intensified the competition for the already scarce advertising funds in the country. The public broadcasting service, on the other hand, despite going through several attempts aimed at transformation, remained marginalized, and barely a few media outlets have managed to survive in the non-profit sector. Digital technologies, the internet and the social networks further complicated the situation, fundamentally changing the habits of the audiences, further deteriorating the already weak business models of the media outlets and leading to a series of questions about the negative consequences of these changes on the employment status and the labour rights of journalists and media workers.

Over the past several years, the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers has continuously worked on a series of issues related to the improvement of the employment status and labour rights of journalists and media workers. However, one of the main problems in developing an appropriate strategic approach to these issues was the absence of precise data, primarily on the number and structure of employees in all media sectors, followed by the absence of relevant research findings on what journalists and media workers themselves know and think about their employment status and the conditions in which they perform their work assignments on a daily basis, together with their fellow camera operators, photojournalists, directors, producers and other staff. As a consequence, it was difficult to design and set up any policy or activity to improve their professional and socio-economic status.

Therefore, in 2023, the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers, together with the Institute on Social Development Research - RESIS, took on the task, for the first time, to conduct comprehensive mapping of the population of journalists and media workers in the country, which then formed the baseline for a survey research through which a huge amount of important data was collected about their social, economic and professional status, as well as the perceptions they have of their own work surroundings, but also of the broader media environment.

The data from the conducted survey showed that some aspects of the employment status of journalists and media workers have changed for the better over the years, but some have remained the same as they were during the 1990s. For example, it is significant to note that hiring journalists and media workers on a freelance basis has become a much rarer occurrence compared to before, but the fact remains that a huge part of journalists and media workers receive a salary below the threshold of the average salary in the country. Furthermore, although the level of compliance with labour rights differs from one media outlet to another, research shows that some basic labour rights are very frequently violated, such as, for example, the right of journalists and media workers to daily and weekly rest, as well as the right to compensation for overtime work and work during national holidays.



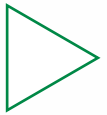


The readers, those who will show interest in this topic, will have the opportunity to find a large number of interesting and important pieces of data in this report. Moreover, this publication can be useful not only for those who do research on this topic, but also to the organizations dealing with the protection of the rights of journalists and media workers.

The Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers will certainly proceed to ground its further action on the knowledge gained from this research and will try to use it to the best of its ability to advocate in solidarity for a better socio-economic status of journalists and in defence of the freedom of expression and information.

Free and professional journalism is not possible without a secure socio-economic status.

In solidarity,
Pavle Belovski,
President of SSNM



1. Introduction and methodological notes

1.1 Purpose of the research

This research was conducted within the framework of the “Labour Rights for Independent Journalism” Project, implemented by the Independent Trade Union of Journalists and Media Workers (www.ssnm.org.mk) together with the RESIS Institute (www.resis.mk), financially supported by the European Union. In its broadest sense, the main aim of the research is to help journalists’ associations, media and journalism researchers, practitioners and policy makers to better understand the position and role of journalists and media workers in the professional setting that they work in, and in the ever-evolving media environment.

One of the earliest project activities was to conduct a survey on the journalists and media workers in the country, which would make it possible to obtain precise data on: (1) the socio-economic status and compliance with the labour rights of journalists and media workers, and (2) the attitudes and perceptions of journalists from newsrooms toward editorial autonomy, influences and professional ethics. This report provides an overview only of the findings from the first part of the survey.

1.2 Population and sample

The questionnaire for the survey, in the section that refers to labour rights, was prepared based on a detailed analysis of the previously conducted similar surveys in other countries of the region and on the international and European standards in the area of labour rights, especially taking into account the Charter on journalists’ working conditions of the European Federation of Journalists. In order to ensure utmost precision and clarity of the questions, before the survey started, the questionnaire was tested with a certain number of journalists and media workers.

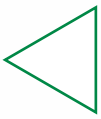
To design a representative sample for the survey, based on a number of different data sources¹, first a sample frame was created consisting of a list of positions (jobs) for journalists and media workers in the media outlets from the different media sectors. For each position in the framework, data was provided on the type of job according to the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services categorization of jobs, and on the gender of the employee.

The list of positions (jobs) was then divided into nine sections: MTV, national (concession) private television stations, regional and local private television stations, the Macedonian Radio, national (concession) private radio stations, regional and local radio stations, print media, online media, and the Media Information Agency (MIA). Next, journalists’ and media workers’ jobs to be included in the survey were randomly generated from the list for each section. The journalists-interviewers (conducting the survey) were given that list with detailed instructions on how to randomly select the journalists and media workers who should be included in the survey within each media outlet.

The total number of journalists and media workers that was determined with the mapping of this population carried out before the survey began, amounts to 3,146 positions, 1,694 of which were journalists and 1,452 were media workers. The randomly selected sample in the survey

¹ For the audio-visual sector, the data of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services were used, and for the print media, MIA and the online media, data was requested from all separate media outlets. The list of online media was determined based on the data from the voluntary Register of Professional Media Outlets “Promedia”, obtained by the Council of Media Ethics. Finally, for those media outlets that did not submit data to SSNM, the data published in the impressum of the specific media outlet was used.





consisted of a total of 343 respondents, 206 of whom were journalists and 137 were media workers. Based on the standards of sociological research this is considered to be a solid sample, with a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval (margin of error) of 5 percent.

1.3 Method of conducting the survey

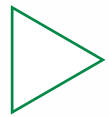
The data presented in this report were obtained based on in-person interviews, which were carried out by a team of 17 journalists-interviewers, who had previously gone through a special training and received detailed instructions on how to approach and interview their colleagues. It was crucial to reduce the number of refusals and to establish good and honest communication with the journalists and media workers who were included in the sample. In some cases, when it was not possible to organise an in-person interview with the respondent, an online interview was conducted (via Zoom, Skype or a similar platform). The interviews were conducted in the period between 1st July 1 and 31st December 2023.

While conducting the survey, special attention was paid to the transparency and the protection of the respondents' personal data. A separate information sheet was prepared, and the interviewers were tasked with informing their colleagues in detail about the purpose of the survey, the organizations conducting it, the duration the interview, as well as the fact that the participation in the interview was voluntary and anonymous. All the collected data on respondents were anonymized, and their answers were processed and presented in an aggregated form.

1.4 Data on the total population of journalists and media workers

To conduct a survey successfully, the first step is to provide data that is as accurate as possible about the population that the researcher aims to draw generalizations on from the survey findings. Each survey is conducted on a selected sample of the population, which should adequately represent the heterogeneity of that group. Prior to this research, there were only estimates about the number and structure of the population of journalists and media workers in the country. Therefore, the first task of the research team, before starting the design of the sample of respondents needed to conduct the survey, was to collect data that would be as accurate as possible on the population of journalists and media workers in the different media sectors.

The first step in mapping of the population was to determine the number and type of media outlets in the country. For traditional media (radio, television, print media), the data on the number and type of media outlets were taken from the registries of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services. However, it was much more difficult to prepare such an overview of online media outlets because there is no official registry of online media outlets in the country. Consequently, the list of online media from the voluntary registry of professional media outlets "Promedia", under the Council Media Ethics, was taken as a starting point. Later on, this list was supplemented with data on the local online media outlets collected with the help of the activists from SSNM and the data from the time.mk aggregator. Finally, the research team conducted a review of each of the outlets on the list, in order to check whether the media outlet was in operation, that is, whether it was publishing information.



Media type	Number of media outlets
Public Service (MTV)	5 services + The Assembly Channel 2 satellite
National (private) TV stations (11)	5 through DTT 4 via cable + 2 via satellite
Private, regional and local TV stations	10 reg. through DTT, 6 reg. via cable, 14 local via cable
Public service (Macedonian Radio)	3 stations
National radio stations	4 via terrestrial transmitters
Regional and local radio stations (58 private and 4 non-profit)	17 regional and 45 local via terrestrial transmitters
Print media outlets	17 (daily newspapers, weeklies, etc.)
Online media outlets	122 private and 7 non-profit
Information agencies	1 (MIA)

Table.1 Number and type of media outlets by different media sectors

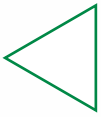
The second step in the mapping process consisted of collecting and checking the data on the number and structure of regularly employed and temporarily hired journalists and media workers. In this stage too, the research team used multiple sources and techniques to collect data. Data obtained from the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services were used for the audio-visual media sector, referring to the situation in December 2022. Then the research team additionally verified the data in order to check whether in the first half of 2023 there were changes in the number and structure of journalists and media workers in the radio and television stations.

For the other two sectors - print and online media, separate forms were sent to all the media outlets on the list. In order to achieve data consistency across all media sectors, the categorization of jobs (positions) adopted by the media regulator was used. It should be emphasized here that the data collection for these sectors was very complex because a certain number of media outlets, especially from the online sector, did not submit the requested data, although they were sent several reminders. In those cases, in order to get at least some kind of approximate data, the research team turned to other sources: the published impresses with the names of the persons hired in the editorial offices; or estimates indirectly obtained by SSNM activists who were familiar with the journalists employed in those media outlets.

Section	Positions of journalists	Positions of media workers	Total	%
MTV	218	270	488	15.51%
National TV stations	338	642	980	31.15%
Local and regional TV stations	139	101	240	7.63%
Macedonian Radio	96	59	155	4.93%
National radio stations	23	38	61	1.94%
Local and regional radio stations	177	75	252	8.01%
Print media	123	72	195	6.20%
Online media	520	161	681	21.65%
MIA	60	34	94	2.99%
Total	1694	1452	3146	100.00%

Table.2 Jobs (positions) held by journalists and media workers





As a result of the conducted mapping, a list of a total of 3,146 positions in all media sectors was made, 1,694 of which were positions for journalists, and 1,452 positions for media workers. Of the total number, 2,111 were regular employments, and 1,035 were temporary positions.

There are two important caveats here. First, the total number of jobs does not mean that an equal number of journalists or media workers were hired for them. During the data verification process, the research team found that a significant number of individuals occurred as employed in different media. This applied to freelancers in particular. Consequently, accurate data on the actual number of hired journalists and media workers can only be obtained for regularly employed persons, while when it comes to the actual number of part-time or temporary employees we can only rely on estimates. Second, during the data collection, the team found that the number and structure of the workforce in the media sector is constantly changing: several local and regional television and radio stations stopped working, journalists from one media outlet moved to another, or some media outlets (especially the local ones) laid off employees due to their poor financial standing.

1.5 Profile of the interviewed journalists and media workers

In order to obtain responses from journalists and media workers working in different media sectors, the entire population was divided into nine sections. Then, based on the list of positions (jobs) in each section, a random sample of journalists and media workers was computer generated for each section.

At this point, it is important to emphasize the need for careful interpretation of the data obtained from the survey. As it can be seen from the mapping data, the entire population of journalists and media workers is a heterogeneous multitude consisting of many sub-sectors. Each of these sub-sectors has its own specificities and, consequently, the position of journalists or media workers may differ significantly from one sector to another. However, the survey data only provide a picture of the situation at a general level - for the entire population of journalists and media workers included in the sample, which may be different from the situation in a specific sector. For example, the socio-economic status of journalists and media workers in local radio stations is far worse than that of their colleagues in the public service or some of the private TV stations operating at a national level. However, the number of respondents included in the survey is too low to be able to draw statistically relevant conclusions for all the journalists and media workers working in this sector. Relevant generalizations can only be drawn at the level of the entire population of journalists and media workers and for those sections that yield a larger number of respondents, namely: the public service, national TV stations and the online media sector.



Section	Journalists	Media workers
MTV	29	27
National TV stations	54	64
Local and regional TV stations	9	5
Macedonian Radio	11	5
National radio stations	4	4
Local and regional radio stations	12	3
Print media	16	9
Online media	67	14
MIA	4	6
TOTAL	206	137

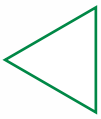
Table.3 Structure of respondents included in the sample by sections

The structure of the sample, according to gender, age, education and ethnicity, is as follows:

- Among journalists, the number of male journalists (49%) and female journalists (51%) included in the survey is almost equal. Among media workers, there is a higher number of male respondents (68%), which mirrors the actual situation. The mapping data shows the ratio to be 70% (males) to 30% (females).
- The educational profile of the respondents reflects the specificity of the two professions: most of the journalists²- respondents have completed undergraduate (72%) or master's studies (14%); while respondents with secondary education dominate among the media workers (63%).
- According to age, the age group between 41 and 50 has the highest representation among journalists, although the representation of younger age groups is not negligible. The population of journalists under the age of 40 is 38.3 percent. Media workers are dominated by older age groups, and the population under 40 years of age amounts to 30.8 percent.
- According to ethnicity, journalists and media workers from all ethnic groups were included.

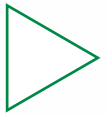
² It should be taken into consideration that these data were self-reported by the respondents. The data of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services paint a slightly different picture of the educational structure of the entire population of journalists in the audiovisual sector. Thus, at the end of 2022, a total of 827 journalists were employed in television and radio stations, 80.5 percent of which had completed higher education, and 19.5 percent had secondary education. According to the survey, the percentage of interviewed journalists with secondary education is somewhat lower - 13 percent.





Socio-demographic characteristics	Journalists	Media workers	Total
Sex			
Male	49%	68%	56%
Female	51%	32%	44%
Education			
Doctoral studies	5%		3%
Master studies	14%	7%	11,4%
Undergraduate studies	72%	29%	55,1%
Started university, but did not obtain a degree	7%	26%	14,6%
Secondary school diploma	6%	37%	18,4%
No secondary school diploma		1%	3%
Age			
19-30	16,5%	13,2%	16,5%
31-40	21,8%	17,6%	21,8%
41-50	34,0%	33,1%	34,0%
51-60	19,4%	32,4%	19,4%
60+	8,3%	3,7%	8,3%
Ethnicity			
Macedonians	78%	72%	76%
Albanians	17%	20%	18%
Other	5%	8%	6%

Table. 4 Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of respondents



2. Employment status and workload

2.1. Types of employment

The type of employment relationship is extremely important to the exercising of labour rights of journalists and media workers. Regular (indefinite period/permanent) employment, obtained through a valid employment contract, makes it possible for journalists and media workers to exercise all the rights stipulated in the Law on Labour Relations and the other regulations in the area of labour, as well as the rights that guarantee them social insurance (health insurance, pension and disability insurance, unemployment insurance).

The employment relationship, regulated through an employment contract, is a contractual relationship between two parties - the employee and the employer. This means that the employee voluntarily participates in the work process organized by the employer, performs regular work according to the employers' rules and guidelines and receives a regular salary and other benefits for his/her work. These are the key indicators distinguishing an employment relationship as opposed to other types of contractual relationships, such as temporary service contracts or copyright contracts. Persons hired based on such contracts are not entitled to the rights guaranteed by the Law on Labour Relations and the other legal regulations.

According to the Law on Labour Relations, an employment contract may be concluded for a fixed or indefinite period of time³. An employment contract for an indefinite period of time provides the most reliable employment status to an employee, along with the possibility to exercise in full all the rights arising from the employment relationship. A fixed-term employment contract can be concluded for a fixed period of time to perform the same work, with or without a break, for a up to 5 (five) years⁴. The purpose of this provision is to prevent the exploitation of the employee through subsequent conclusion of multiple fixed-term employment contracts, and after the expiration of this period of time, the employer is obliged to transform the fixed-term employment into an indefinite-term employment contract.

Other types of employment contracts, based on which it is possible to hire journalists and media workers, are the so-called flexible or atypical contracts, which include: the permanent part-time employment contract and the fixed-term part-time employment contract (which can be concluded with one or more employers).

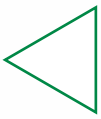
It is a fact that in the past there was a prevailing belief that there is a large number of journalists and media workers who do not have regular employment, i.e. that they were often hired either through fixed-term contracts or as freelancers (temporary service contracts) and, therefore, they had a precarious employment status⁵. However, as a result of the strengthening of the measures taken by the relevant institutions and the activities of the trade unions, including SSNM, over the last few years, this situation has significantly improved.

3 Article 14 of the Law on Labour Relations stipulates that (1) an employment contract may be concluded for a period of time the duration of which is not determined in advance (a regular/indefinite employment contract), as well as for a period the duration of which is determined in advance (a fixed-term employment contract). In addition, this provision adds that if the employment contract does not specify the duration that is concluded for, then it shall be considered as regular/indefinite period employment.

4 Article 46 paragraph 1 of the Law on Labour Relations.

5 Freelance work: An army of journalists are forced to work "on the black market", states the "White Book on the Professional and Employment Rights of Journalists", Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers - SSNM, Skopje: 2014. Available at: eprints.ugd.edu.mk

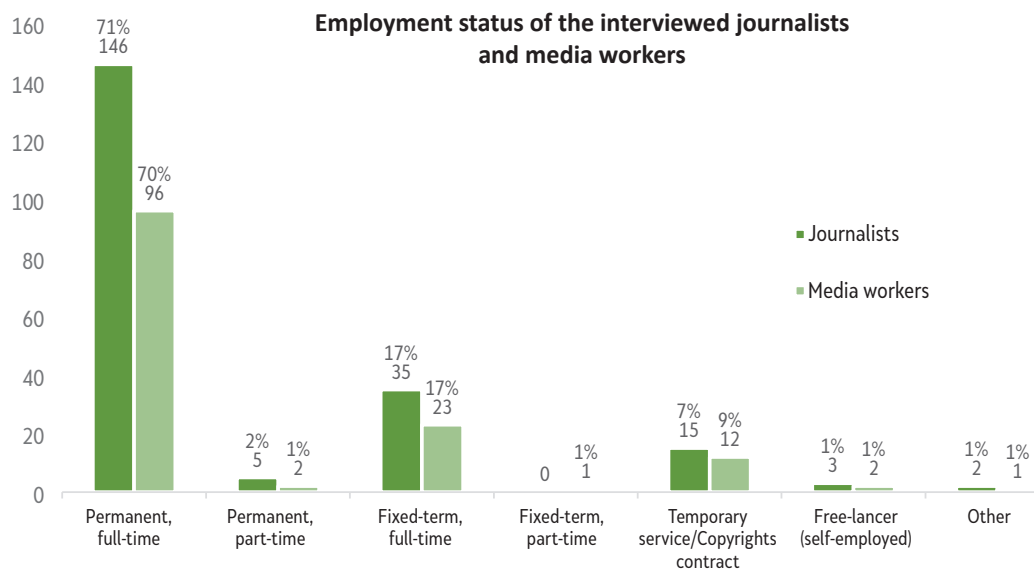




Out of the total number of journalists and media workers that were included in the survey, in both categories, about 70 percent of the respondents stated that their employment contract is for an indefinite period of full-time work, 17 percent had a fixed-term (full-time) contract, while 7 percent and 9 percent respectively were hired as freelancers through a copyrights contract or a temporary service contract. This means that about a quarter of journalists (24%) and media workers (26%) did not have an employment contract which would grant them a stable and reliable employment status. Indeed, the most vulnerable group, in terms of employment status and labour rights, are journalists and media workers, who during the survey’s implementation period were hired based on temporary service contracts or copyrights contracts.

Fixed-term employment is the most common among television stations - out of a total of 58 respondents, 39 reported working for a TV station through a fixed-term contract, followed by online media (15 respondents).

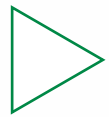
Freelance work is most common for online media, or out of a total of 27 respondents, 11 answered that they worked for online media outlets based on a temporary service contract, or a copyrights contract.



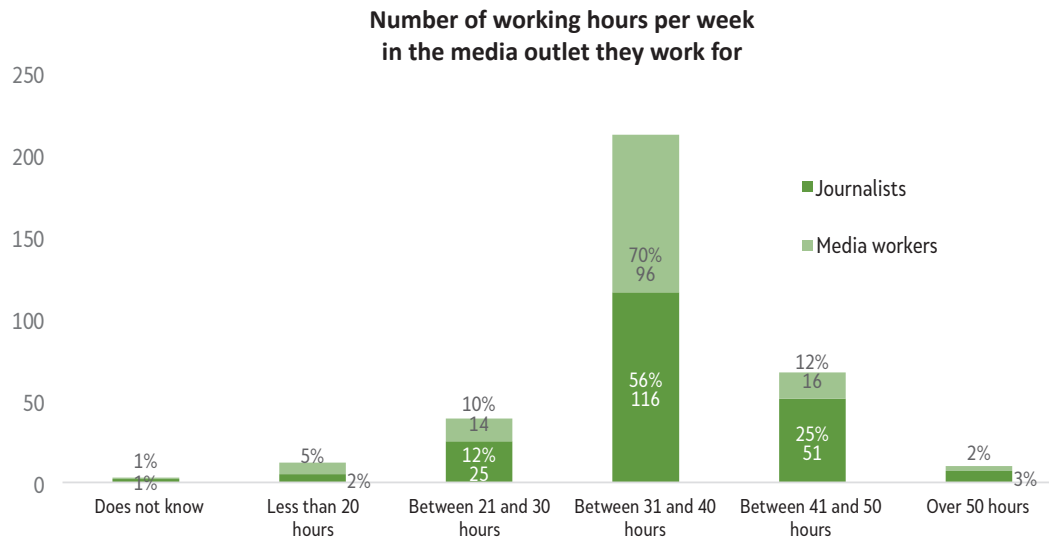
2.2. Workload (working hours, right to rest, work-related stress)

Principle 5 of the Charter on the Working Conditions of Journalists establishes that every journalist and media worker has the right to rest and free time, which implies an adequate number of working hours on working days, the right to rest, etc; right to disconnect, which implies that after the end of the working hours, a journalist has the right to rest and be present in his/her private life, i.e., not be at the service of the editor/employer. These rights are guaranteed to journalists and media workers in accordance with the Law on Labour Relations and should be included in employment contracts. This means that the employer has the obligation to organize the work within the legally specified number of working hours (Article 116), and allow the workers to use breaks and daily, weekly and annual rest and to minimize or completely eradicate overtime work (Article 164)⁶.

⁶ Maja Atanasova, Labour rights of Journalists and Media Workers in the Republic of North Macedonia, p.12, Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers - SSNM and Research Institute on Social Development - RESIS, Skopje: 2024. Available at <https://cdn.ssnm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/mkd-pravna-ramka-na-republika-severna-makedonija.pdf>



Several questions in the survey were aimed to gauge to what extent these rights of journalists and media workers were exercised in practice: the total number of hours that journalists and media workers spend working during a typical week, work outside of the established working hours (work at the request of the employer), work outside the specified job description and the right to two days off after a five-day working week.

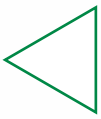


Of the interviewed journalists, more than half (56%) answered that they work within the legally stipulated number of working hours, and among media workers, this percentage is higher (70%). More than a quarter of journalists (28%) and about a tenth of media workers (12%) work longer hours than the legally set limit of 40 hours.

One specificity of the work in the media sector is that it is hard to harmonise the schedule of the working hours (and consequently the time off) with the legally prescribed rules. Consequently, both, the working hours and the practices in the media sector differ greatly from those in many other sectors. The need for regular monitoring of news and rapid processing of content imposes a hectic pace of work, especially during periods when unusual events or situations occur. Under those conditions, journalists and media workers often have to work outside the established working hours, that is, report to work at an urgent call from the editor or the employer.

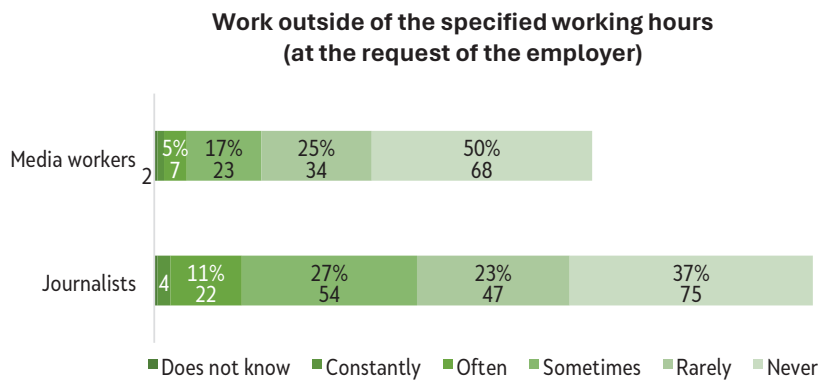
Here it is important to make a distinction between the real professional needs of the media outlet (the employer) and excessively burdening (labour exploitation) of the employees. For example, if some events require full-day coverage, this cannot be an excuse for a reporter or cameraman to be engaged at work all day, without any rest. When situations like that occur, the employer must introduce shifts, that is, hire two or more journalists or technical staff. It is widely known that many news outlets, even the large ones, have an insufficient number of employees in the newsrooms and journalists are asked to work on various tasks and outside of the set working periods. However, the uniqueness of media work cannot be used as an excuse for journalists and media workers not to be granted their legally mandated rest during the day or the working week. No legal provision gives media employers the right to require journalists or media workers to be available at all times.



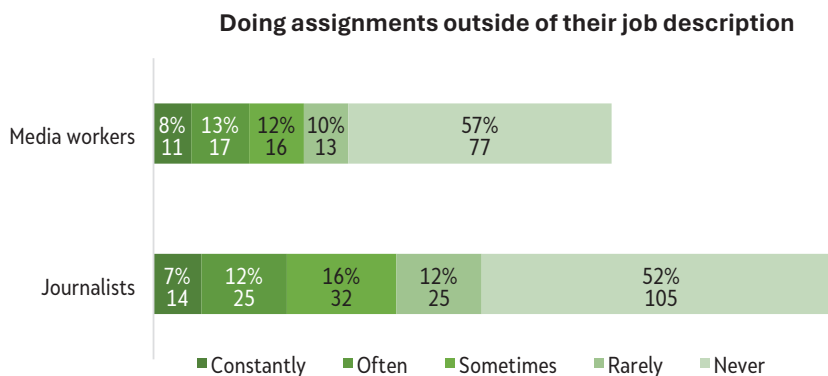


This illegal practice and its consequences on the mental health of journalists and media workers was examined in the survey through the following questions:

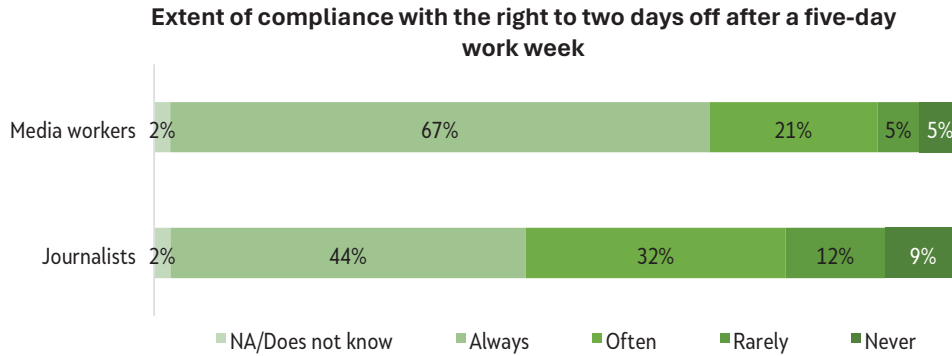
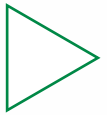
- How often do journalists and media workers work outside of their specified working hours?
- How often do they perform other assignments which are not specified in their job description?
- How often do media outlets uphold the right to rest during the work week?
- To what extent are journalists and media workers exposed to stress during their work?



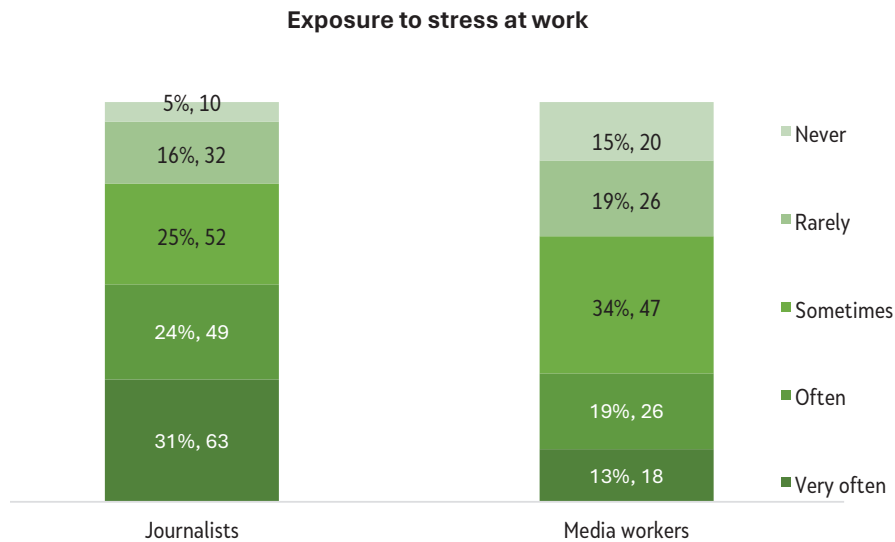
The respondents' answers to the first question - how often they work outside of their specified working hours, show that journalists are slightly more exposed to this type of pressure: 13 percent answered that they do so constantly or often, while 27 percent said that they sometimes have to work outside the established working hours. This is not so frequently required of media workers: 6 percent constantly or often work outside their regular working hours, while 17 percent only sometimes work outside their regular working hours.



Doing different assignments - outside of their job description, happens constantly or often for one fifth (19%) of the respondents who are journalists, while 16 percent of them answered that they are sometimes required to do so. The answers of media workers are similar: 21 percent constantly or often do other work, while 12 percent only do it sometimes.

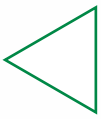


Journalists reported non-compliance with the right to a two-day rest in the working week more frequently than media workers: one fifth (21%) answered that this right is never or rarely respected in the media outlet that they work for, as opposed to 10 percent of the media workers (as respondents). However, both categories are dominated by respondents who answered that this right is complied with always or often.



Yet, the answers to the question about the exposure to stress at work gives indications about the many other factors, which, in addition to the workload, have a negative impact on the mental health of journalists and media workers. More than half of the interviewed journalists (55%) answered that they were often or very often exposed to stress at work. This also applies to almost one third (32%) of the media workers.





3. Right to a livelihood - salaries and allowances

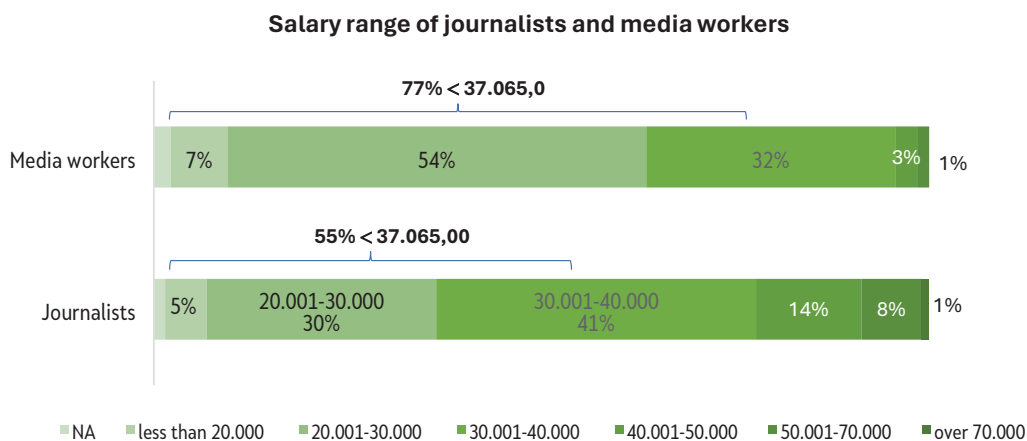
The Law on Labour Relations⁷ regulates the employee’s right to earnings in accordance with the law, the collective agreement and the employment contract. The law also stipulates that the salary consists of: a base salary, a part of the salary based on the employee’s performance and supplements to the salary. The law stipulates that the base salary is determined by taking into account the requirements of the job that the employee concluded the employment contract for. The basic salary may not be lower than the minimum wage established by law. The amount of the basic gross salary that the employee receive is specified in the employment contract.

According to the LLR, salary supplements are planned as a compensation for special conditions at work arising from the working hours schedule, and are allocated for work in: shifts, split shifts, night work, stand-by duty, overtime work, working on a day off, and work on holidays established by law. In addition, the employer is obliged to pay the employee a seniority allowance.

The salary is paid for periods that may not exceed the duration of one month, and no later than 15 days after the payment period expires. The employer is obliged to notify the workers in writing about the payment day and about any changes to the payment day. The employer is obliged to pay the employees their salary in a manner laid down by law. At each payment of the salary, the employee should be given a written breakdown (calculation) of the salary, salary contributions and salary supplements for the period in question.

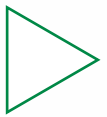
3.1. Salary range of journalists and media workers

During the survey period, about 55 percent of journalists and about 77 percent of media workers had an income below the average monthly salary in the country, which amounted to 37,065.00 MKD in the period between May and October 2023.



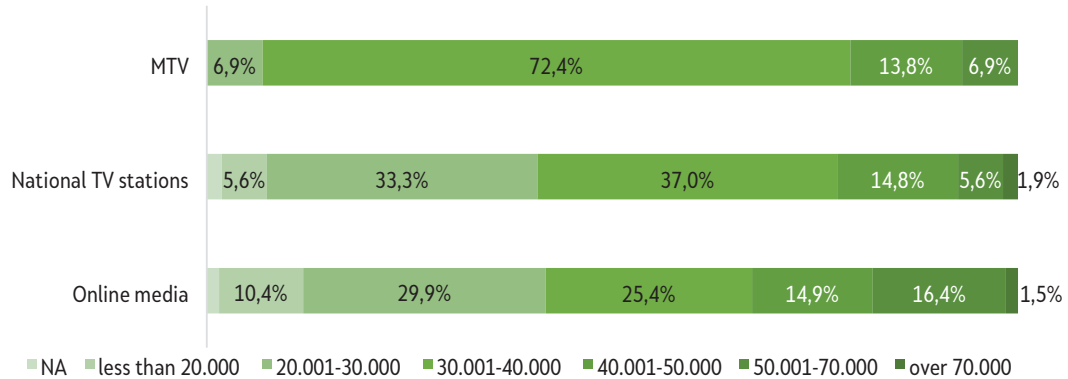
As emphasized in the methodological notes, comparative insights can only be drawn for the segments of the sample where the number of respondents is larger – from among the public service, the national TV stations and online media. Visible differences may be observed in the salaries of journalists engaged in these three segments: the largest percentage (72.4%) of the interviewed journalists in the Macedonian Television (public broadcasting service) had

⁷ Articles 105 and 106 from the Law on Labour Relations.



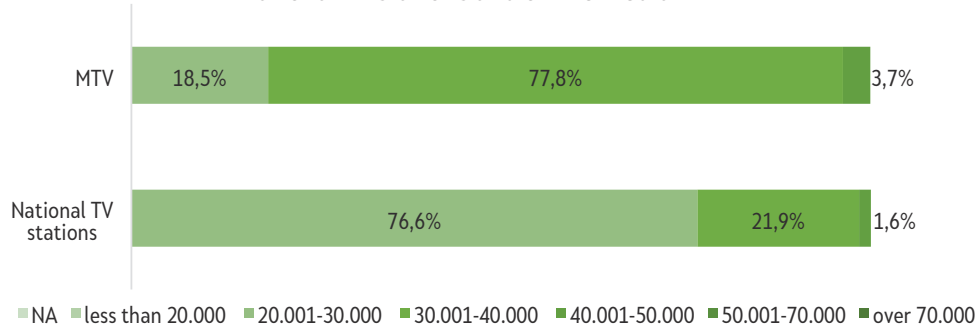
salaries ranging from 30,000 to 40,000 denars. In the private television stations at the national level, 38.9 percent of journalists had a salary below 30,000. In the online sector, there were greater variations in salaries: about 40 percent of journalists answered that they had a salary below 30,000, a quarter (25.4%) had a salary between 30,000 and 40,000 denars, and a third of journalists (32.8%) had a salary over MKD 50,000.

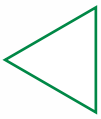
Comparison of journalists's salaries in MTV, national TV stations and online media



If we make a comparison between the salaries of media workers in the public service and those in the national television stations, a noticeable difference can be observed: in private televisions, 76.6 percent of media workers had a salary between 20,000 and 30,000 MKD, while in MTV 77.8 percent of them had a salary ranging between 30,000 and 40,000 denars.

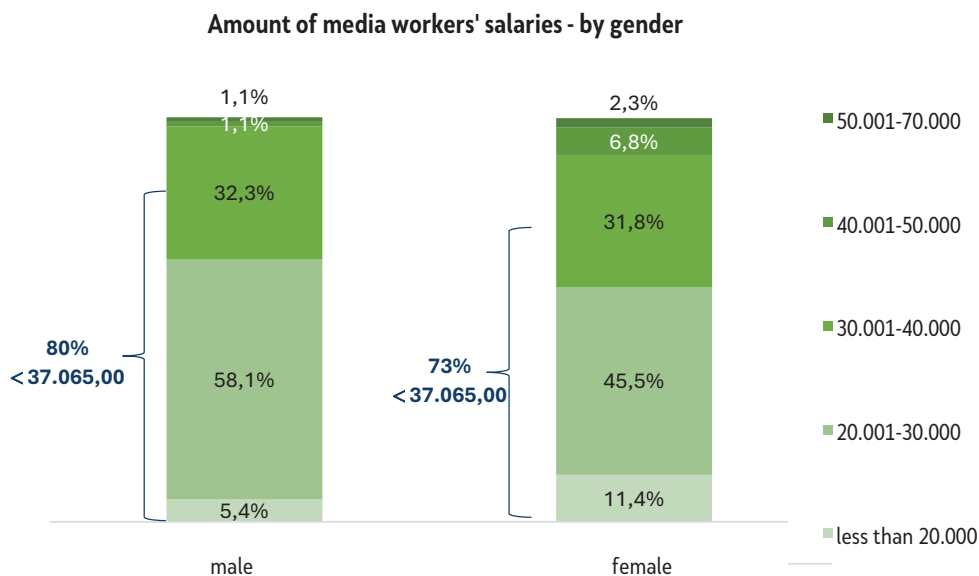
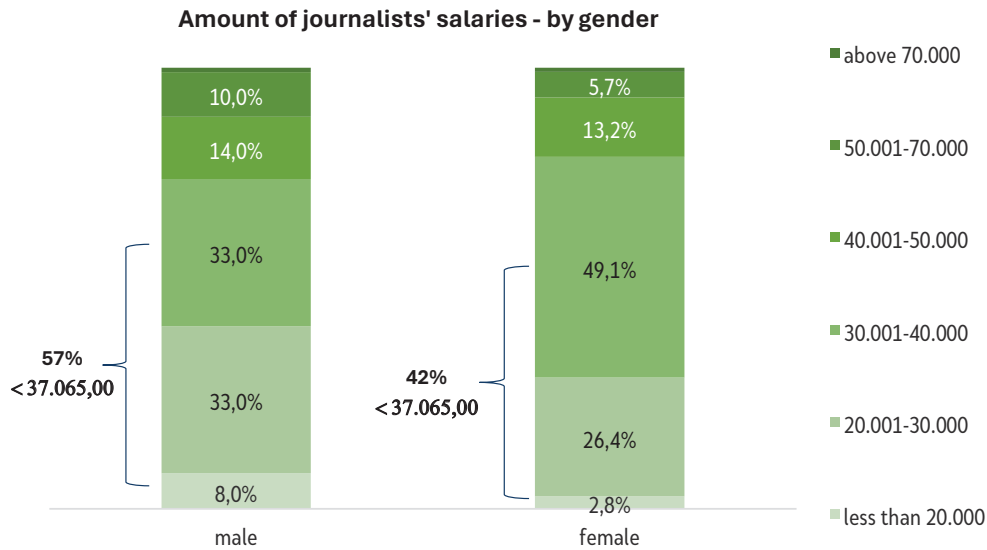
Comparison of media workers' salaries in MTV, national TV stations and online media





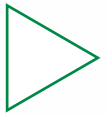
3.2. Amount of salary by gender

The Law on Labour Relations⁸ guarantees equality in the wages between men and women. The media outlet (the employer) is bound to pay the workers equal wages for equal work with equal requirements in the workplace, regardless of their gender (sex).



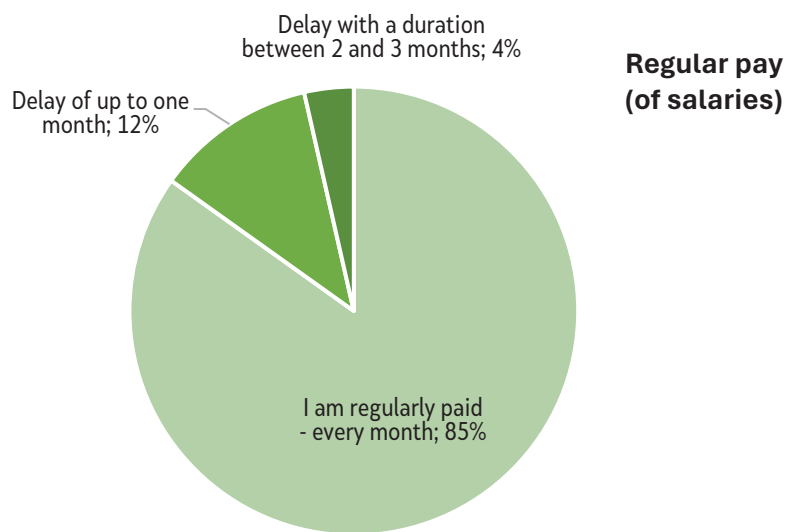
The comparison of the data on the amount of salary and the gender of the respondents shows that there were no significant differences in the amount of their salaries between men and women, neither among journalists nor among media workers. About 57 percent of male journalists and 42 percent of female journalists received a salary below the average net salary in the country calculated for the period between May and October 2023. Among media workers, the situation is worse: 80 percent of men and 73 percent of women received a salary below the average in the country.

⁸ Article 108 from the Law on Labour Relations.



3.3. Regular pay and method of payment

Regarding the regular payment, no differences were observed between journalists and media workers. The largest number of respondents (85%) included in the survey stated that their salary was regularly paid every month, 12 percent answered that it was delayed by up to one month, and only 4 percent stated that their salary was delayed by two to three months. Although the sample did not include a large number of respondents from the local media, it is a known fact is that the situation is the worst in this sector, both in terms of the amount, as well as in terms of the regularity of salaries.

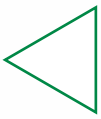


The Law on Labour Relations and the other legal regulations lay down clear rules regarding the method of payment of salaries to journalists and media workers. In the past, journalists' associations and trade unions often warned about the illegal ways of paying journalists' and media workers' salaries - a minimal part of the salary was deposited onto their transaction accounts while the rest of the amount was paid directly in cash. However, the previously conducted surveys by SSNM confirm that "unlike before, when paying a part of the salary in cash was a frequently occurrence, now it is more of an exception than a rule."⁹

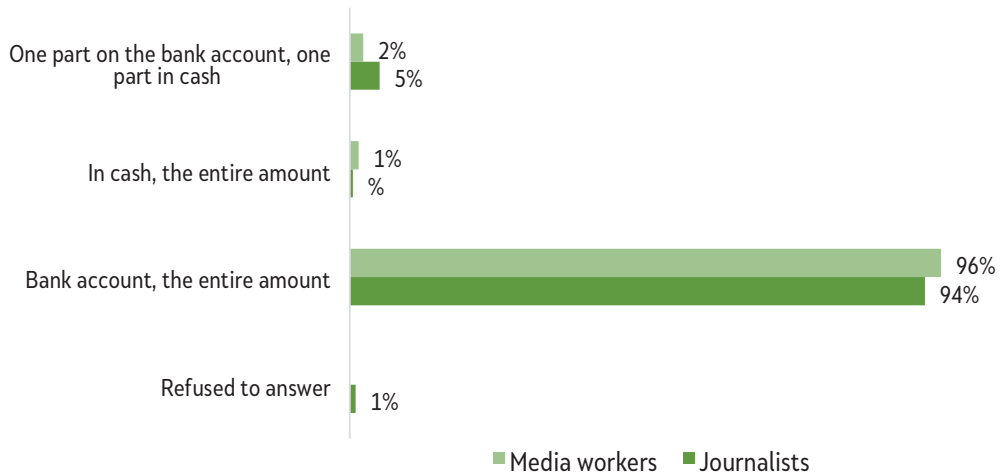
This conclusion was corroborated by the data from the survey conducted in 2023: the majority of journalists and media workers included in the survey answered that their salary was deposited in full to their transaction account.

⁹ SSNM: Media rights still on the chopping block", Radio MOF, 5 April 2017. Available at: <https://www.radiomof.mk/ssnm-pravata-na-mediumite-se-ushte-na-lazhichka/#prettyPhoto>





Method of payment of salaries

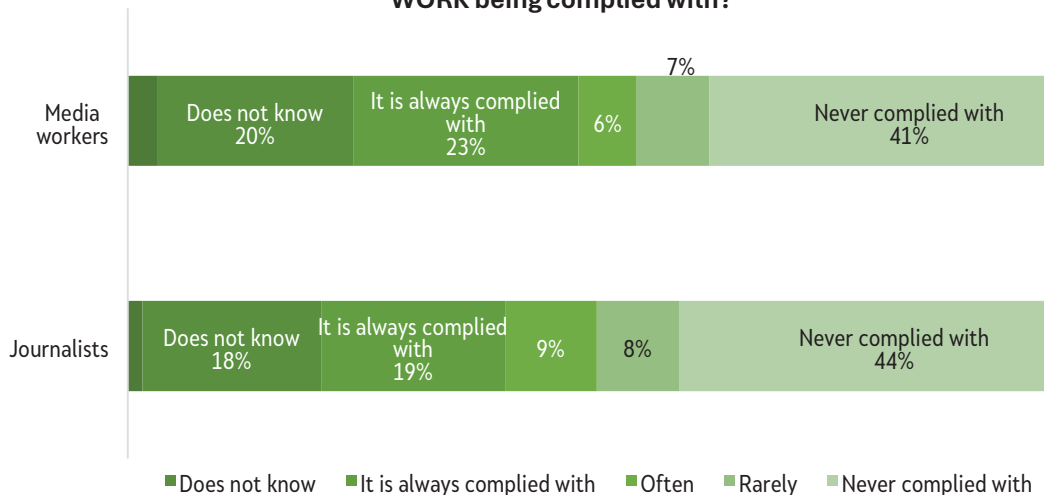


3.4. Supplements for overtime work and work on holidays

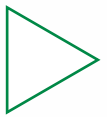
Employers in any area are required to keep records of the employees' overtime work and work on holidays in order to accurately pay the salary supplements on those grounds. Overtime work and working on holidays without additional compensation used to be considered among the most frequent and typical features of the precarious nature of the work of journalists and media workers.

The survey showed that even in 2023 this phenomenon was common in the media sector: 52 percent of journalists and 48 percent of media workers answered that the right to paid overtime hours was not complied with in the media outlet that they worked for.

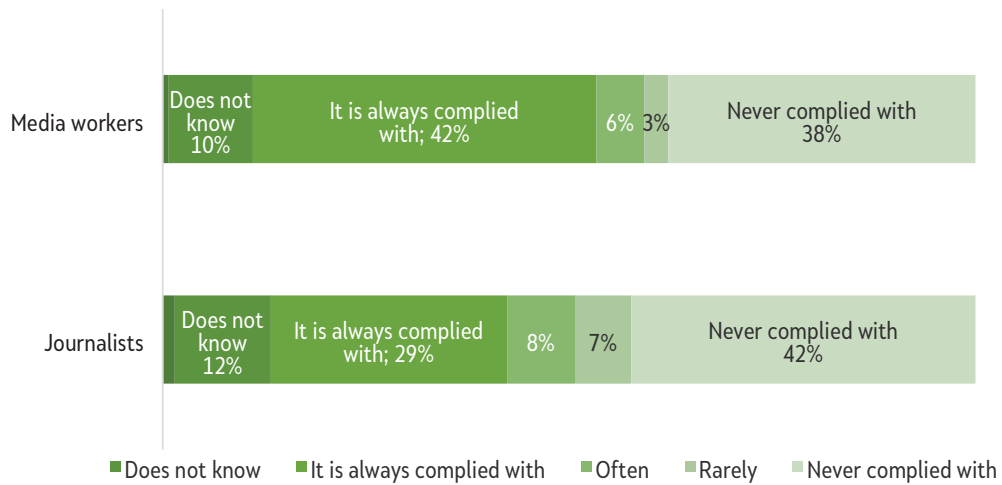
To what extent is the right to additional compensation for OVERTIME WORK being complied with?



The situation is similar regarding the right to additional compensation for work done on holidays: 49 percent of journalists and 41 percent of media workers answered that this right is rarely or never upheld. This is a more frequent occurrence in the private media and happens much less often in the public service.

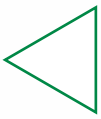


To what extent is the right to additional compensation for work on holidays being complied with?



If the employer does not provide a specific work schedule or changes it in cases of emergency without informing the employees, it is very difficult to determine the amount of overtime hours that journalists and media do. These problems in the media domain could be solved by introducing special obligations to employers (stipulated, for example, in Law on Media or in a collective agreement), to establish a schedule of working hours, inform the employees about the schedule, and send timely notification of changes in the schedule in cases of emergency etc. This would allow journalists and media workers to be exposed to less stress, but also to establish accurate records of overtime work and work during holidays.





4. Rights related to health and health care

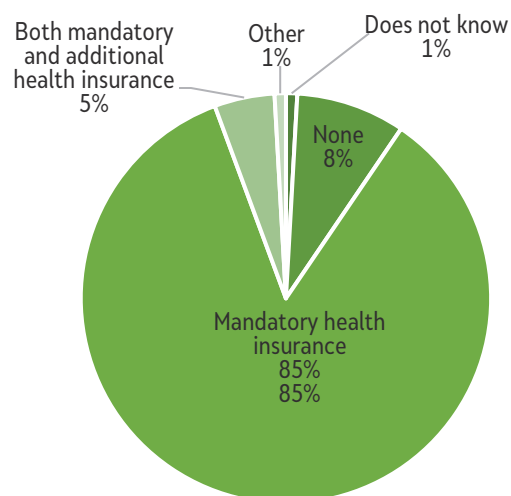
The survey also contained several questions about some of the other rights of journalists and media workers, derived from the Law on Labour Relations:

- the right to health insurance
- the right to a regular medical check-up
- the right to use sick leave
- the right to maternity/parental leave

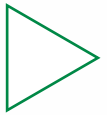
4.1. Right to health insurance

The rights related to the employer's obligations regarding the safety and protection of journalists and media workers during their work, are much more complex and should be the subject of special research. Due to the time limit, very few questions were asked in this survey related to the possibility to use the right to health care arising from the health insurance (right to use sick leave, right to regular medical check-up, right to maternity/parental leave).

What type of health insurance do you have?



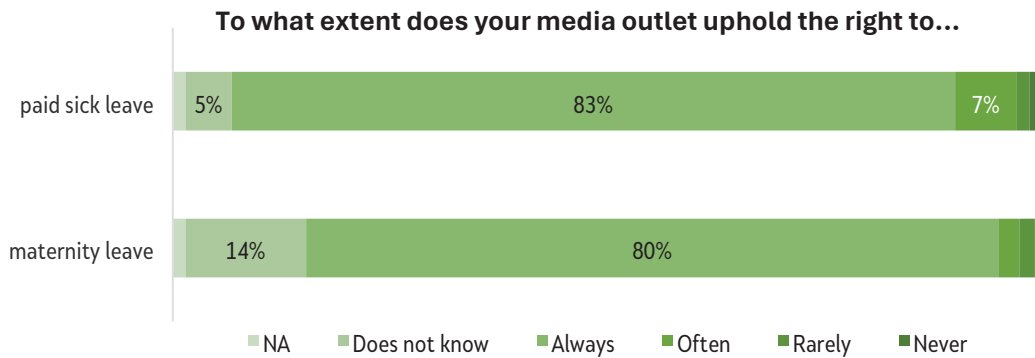
When calculating the salary of journalists and media workers, as a percentage of the gross salary, the employer also calculates and pays the social contributions for the mandatory pension and disability insurance, the mandatory health insurance and/or any additional contributions to the health insurance in case of injury at work and occupational disease. From the answers obtained within the survey, it became evident that as many as 90 percent of respondents have mandatory health insurance, which means that employers do pay for this social contribution along with their salary.



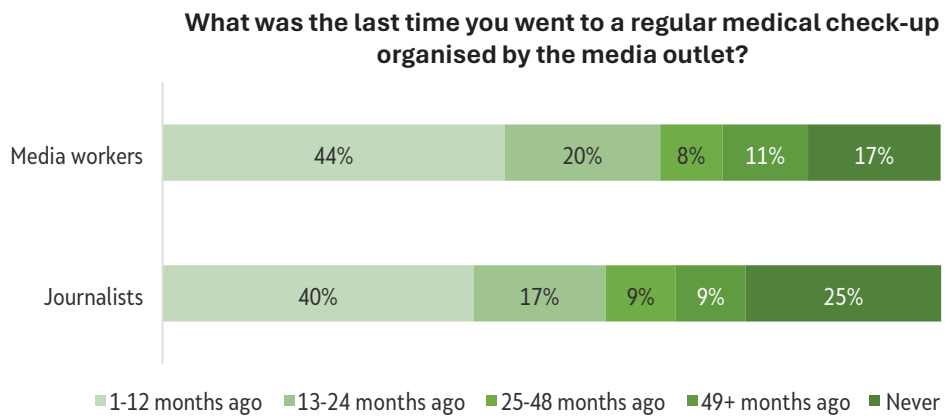
4.2. Rights arising from health insurance

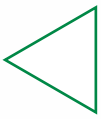
The employee has the right to a salary payment (compensation) for the entire duration of the leave of absence in cases of temporary incapacity for work due to illness or injury, such as during absence from work due to pregnancy, childbirth and maternity/parenthood, provided that it is an insured person who has a permanent employment contract.

From the responses of the respondents in the survey, it can be concluded that there are almost no cases in which this right was not complied within any of the media sectors.



However, the right to a mandatory medical check-up is complied with much less often: only about 40 percent of the respondents had had a regular medical check-up organized by the employer (media outlet) over the previous year.





5. Work (job) satisfaction and satisfaction with the broader environment

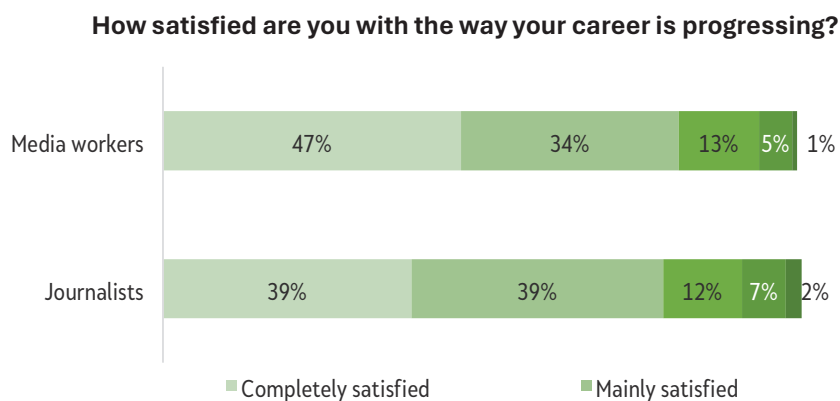
In the ever evolving and uncertain environment that media outlets work in, the motivation and job satisfaction of journalists and media workers is of key importance for the level of professionalism and quality of the content they produce.

The questions posed by the survey included several important dimensions of the journalists' and media workers' satisfaction with the working conditions and the environment that they work in:

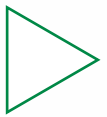
- The satisfaction with their career progress, the opportunities for education and professional development and the satisfaction with the quality of the products they create;
- The impact of their work on their private life and the appreciation of their work;
- The support they receive from colleagues and supervisors;
- The degree of personal autonomy in their work and the perceptions of the level of general freedoms in the country.

5.1 Career, education and quality of content

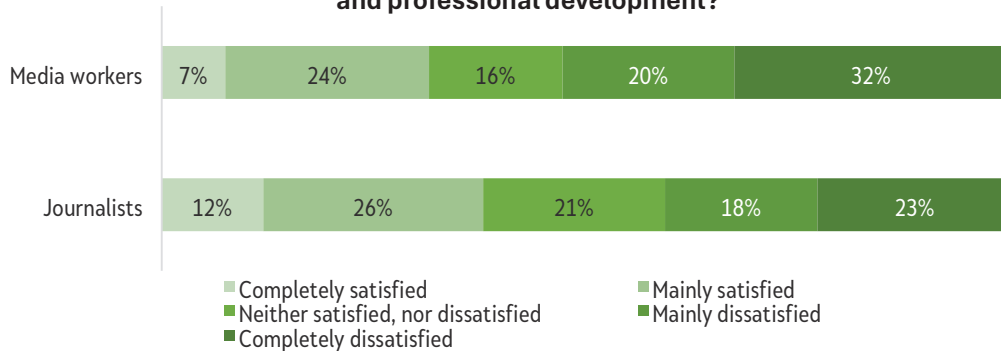
The first dimension refers to the extent to which the journalists' and media workers' job meets their expectations for personal development and professional self-realization. Thus, the survey showed that a large percentage of journalists and media workers were satisfied with the way their career was progressing: 78 percent of journalists and 81 percent of media workers are completely or mostly satisfied.



On the other hand, the experiences regarding the opportunities for further education and professional development are divided: 41 percent of the respondents who are journalists answered that they were (completely or mainly) dissatisfied, while 38 percent of them said that they were satisfied with the opportunities for professional development provided by the media outlet that they work for. Media workers, in general, expressed more dissatisfaction than journalists: 52 percent answered that they were (completely or mostly) dissatisfied, whereby 31 percent said that they were satisfied. This means that in certain media outlets this issue is taken more seriously, while in other it is not.

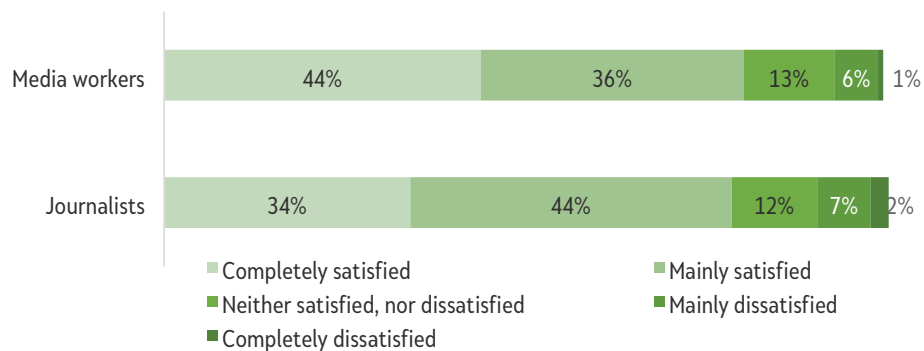


How satisfied are you with the opportunities for further education and professional development?



The third question in this segment referred to the degree of satisfaction with the quality of the professional product created by journalists and media workers during their work. The answers of the respondents indicated that they (self-)evaluated the quality of their own work as being at a high level, which may seem contradictory if it is compared to the dissatisfaction expressed by the respondents regarding the opportunities for further education and training.

How satisfied are you with the end products of your work?

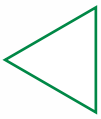


5.2. Work-life balance and appreciation of their work

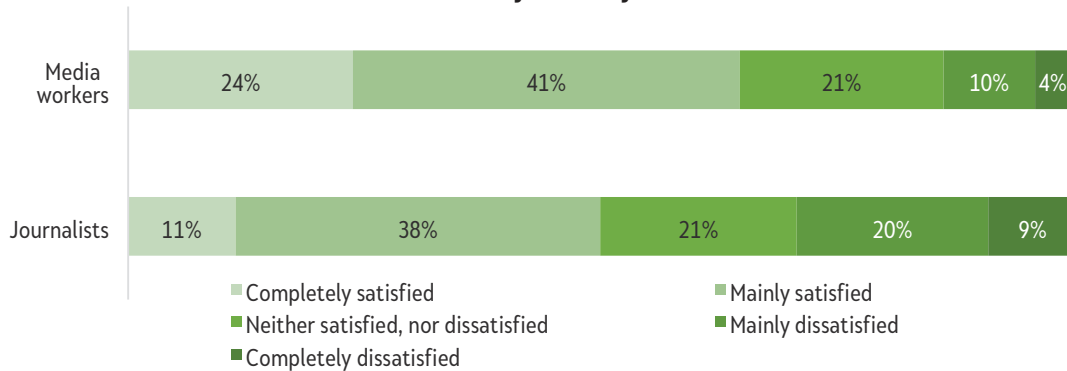
The second dimension of satisfaction with the work environment is related to the impact that the work has on the respondents' private life and their attitudes towards the extent to which their work is valued and appreciated. This, indeed, has a strong correlation to the level of compliance with the working hours, the degree to which the respondents are forced to work on holidays and whether they think their work is sufficiently paid.

The answers to the first question - how satisfied the respondents were with the balance between their professional and their private life (work-life balance), show that journalists more often report feeling pressure on their private life due to their work, which was also in line with their answers about the workload (Section 2.2 - Workload). A little less than a third of the respondents who are journalists (29%) answered that they were mostly or completely dissatisfied with their work-life balance. Of course, this assessment differs depending on the sector that they work in - the public service or private media outlets, in a media outlet with a larger editorial office, or in a small media outlet.



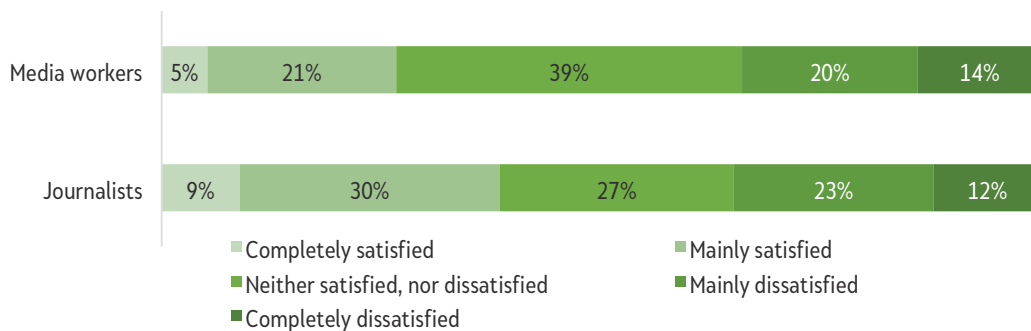


How satisfied are you with your work-life balance?



The next question in this series was about the degree of satisfaction with the amount of personal income. The answers obtained indicate divided opinions, which may be a reflection of some form of conformism or apathy among journalists and media workers due to the long-term uncertainty and insecurity of jobs in the media. In addition, this perception may perhaps also come as a result of the situation in the broader socio-political environment (the level of salaries in other sectors, the general economic situation in the country, etc.).

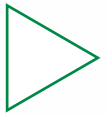
How satisfied are you with your personal income?



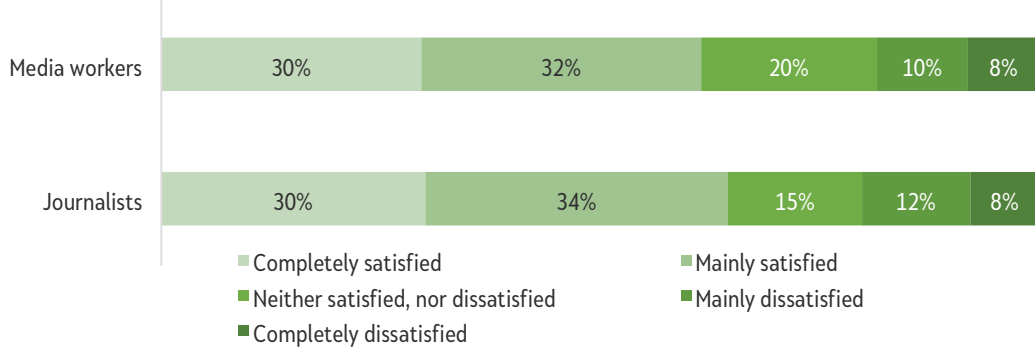
Slightly more than a third (35%) of the journalists explicitly reported that they were (mainly or completely) dissatisfied with their personal income, but more than a third (39%) are satisfied (overall). Among media workers, the percentage (26%) of respondents who expressed satisfaction with the amount of their salary was lower, but there was a significantly higher percentage of respondents who did not have an opinion on this question.

5.3. Support from supervisors and colleagues

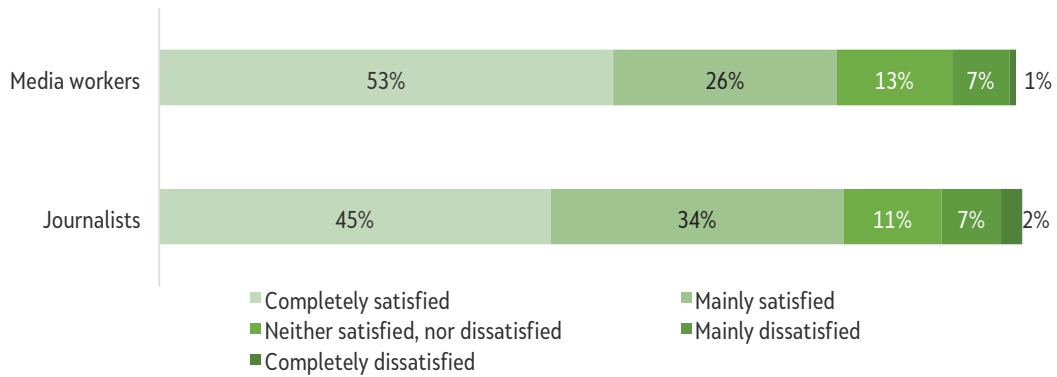
The third dimension of satisfaction are the relationships with supervisors and colleagues. Overall, the survey indicated that journalists and media workers were satisfied with the relations within the editorial offices - both with their supervisors and their colleagues. Somewhat more explicit dissatisfaction was expressed in the relationships with supervisors - one fifth (20%) of journalists and slightly less than one fifth (18%) of media workers were (mainly or completely) dissatisfied with their supervisors.



How satisfied are you with the attitude and support from your supervisor?



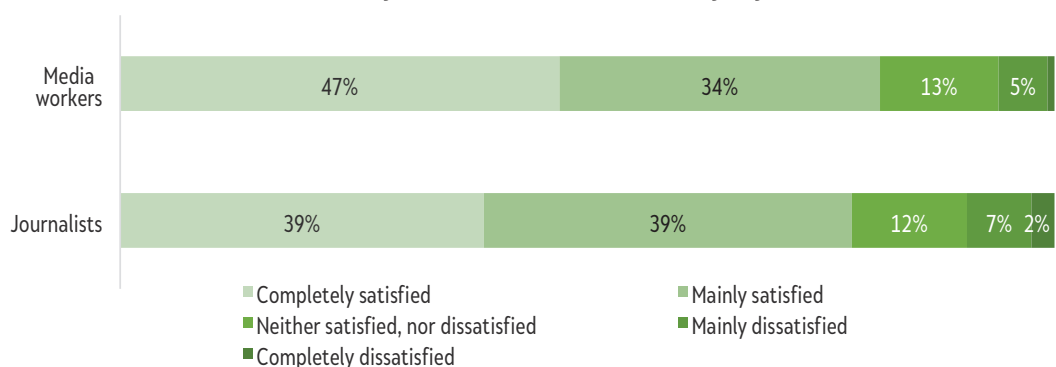
How satisfied are you with the attitude and support from your co-workers?



5.4. Personal autonomy and perceptions of media freedoms in the country

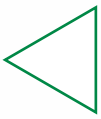
In this series of questions, at the end, the respondents were asked to rate the degree of their own autonomy in the work process, but also to rate the degree of media freedom in the country, in general.

How satisfied are you with the level of autonomy in your work?

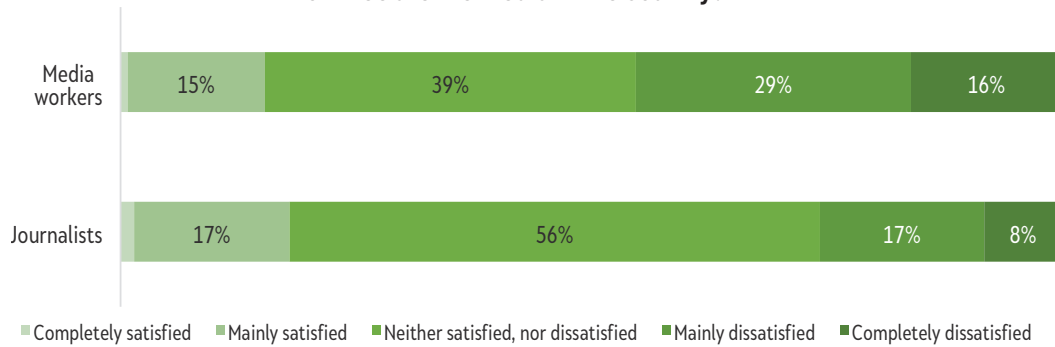


There were notable differences in the respondents' evaluations of their own freedom and the overall freedom of the media in the country. For example, the majority (78%) of respondents who are journalists were satisfied (mainly or completely) with the autonomy they had during the work process. However, when asked about the overall level, only 18 percent think that the media has full or great freedom. As high as 56 percent of respondents answered that the media is only somewhat free.

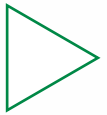




How free are the media in the country?



Media workers have a more critical attitude towards media freedom compared to journalists: 45 percent answered that the media in the country have little or no freedom at all.



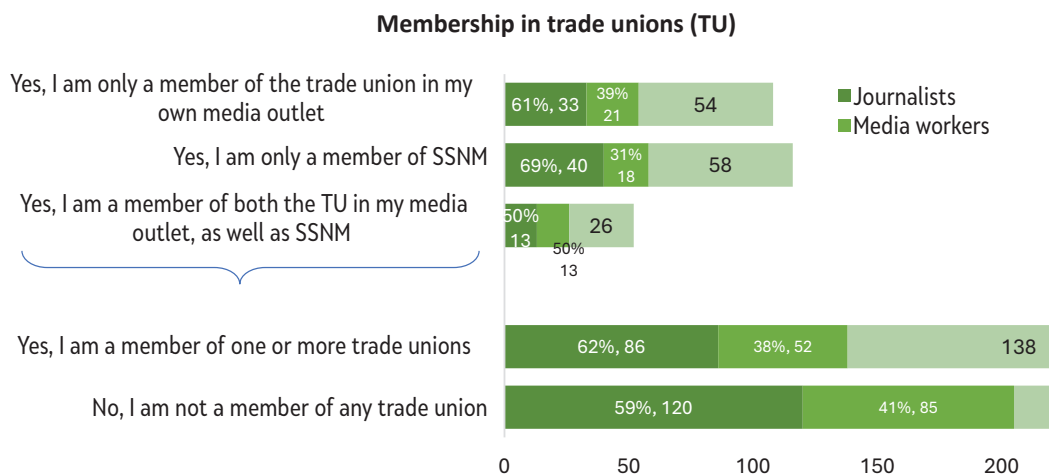
6. Unionization

The Charter on Journalists' Working Conditions, as its founding principle, reaffirms the journalists' right to join professional associations and trade unions in order to protect their labour rights and interests. This right includes the freedom of unionization (establishing trade unions) in the media outlets that the journalists work for (editorial councils, workers' committees, trade union groups, etc.), the right to discuss their labour rights and professional rights with the management, as well as the right to access documents and information to promote the labour relations in the newsrooms (editorial offices). These same rights are guaranteed to journalists and media workers with the Law on Labour Relations.

The survey, among other things, also aimed to determine the respondents' motivation for membership in trade unions and what their attitudes and perceptions about the work of trade unions were.

6.1. Membership in trade unions

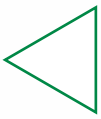
Of the total number of journalists included in the survey as respondents, 58 percent answered that they were not members of any trade unions, while 42 percent were members of one or more trade unions. There are similar indicators for the interviewed media workers: 62 percent were not members in any union, while 38 percent were members of one or more trade unions.



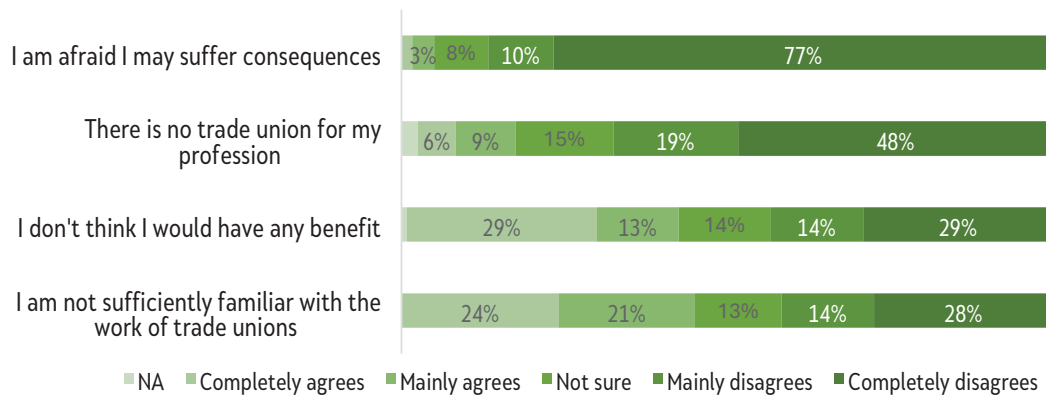
The respondents who answered that they do not belong to any trade union were asked the question about the possible reasons for their lack of interest in joining trade unions. The answers obtained indicate that:

- fear of possible repercussions from the employer is not a reason for not becoming a member: as many as 87 percent of the respondents answered that this attitude does not apply to them;
- for a large part of journalists (67%) and for 46 percent of media workers, the fact that there is no union dealing with the problems of their profession is not a reason;
- the belief that they would not benefit from union membership is the reason for 42 percent of journalists and 46 percent of media workers;
- 45 percent of journalists and 55 percent of media workers agreed that the reason was their *insufficient familiarity with the work of the union*.





Possible reasons why journalists do not become members of trade unions



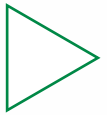
Possible reasons why media workers do not become members of trade unions



6.2. General perceptions of the work of trade unions

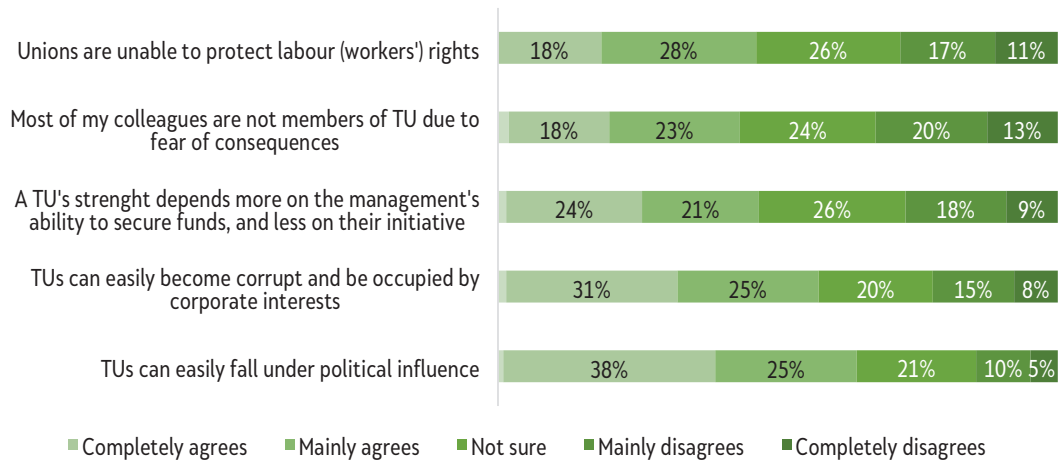
All the respondents in the survey, both those who were members, and those who were not members of trade unions, were asked several questions regarding their views on unionization and the success of trade unions, as well as TUs' susceptibility to influences and pressures from various sources of power. The answers obtained indicate the following general perceptions of journalists and media workers:

- In both categories of respondents, the view that unions can easily fall under political influence dominates: 63 percent of journalists and 65 percent of media workers agreed (completely or mainly) with this view;
- More than half of the respondents also believe that unions can easily be corrupted or fall under the influence of corporate interests: 56 percent of journalists and 56 percent of media workers agree with this (completely or mainly);
- A significant percentage of journalists (45%) and media workers (46%) agree with the view that the strength of unions depends on the ability of their leadership to secure funds, and less on their agency;

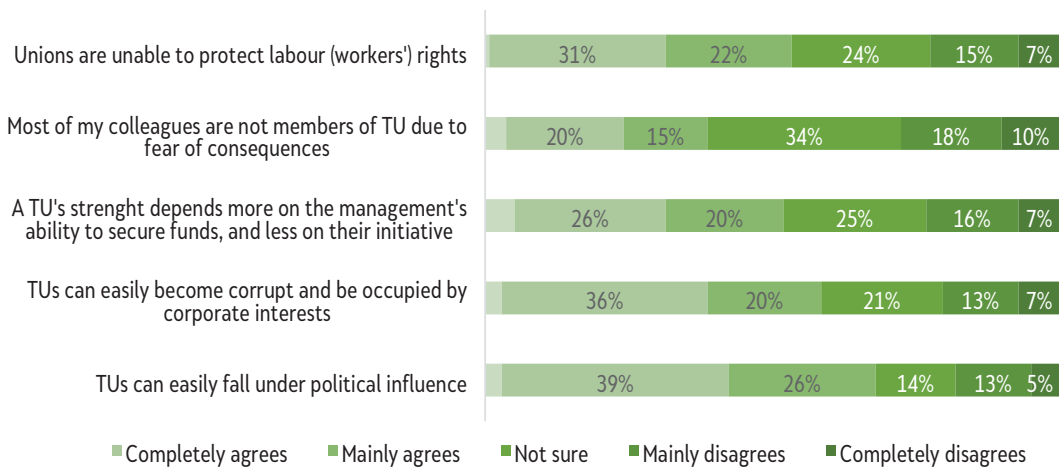


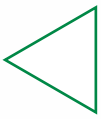
- Over half of media workers (53%) believe that trade unions are unable to protect labour (workers') rights. 46 percent of the interviewed journalists held this view.
- There are divided opinions and uncertainty among the respondents regarding the view that their colleagues do not join unions for fear of consequences to their job.

Journalists' attitudes towards Trade Unions (TUS)



Media workers' attitudes towards Trade Unions (TUs)





7. Conclusions and recommendations

Modes of employment (types of employment contracts)

The survey showed that, unlike the past, when a large number of journalists and media workers were hired through fixed-term contracts or on a freelance basis, the situation today has changed significantly. The majority of interviewed journalists and media workers (about 70%) have a regular (indefinite) full-time employment contract, which enables them to have a stable working status and exercise all the rights arising from employment.

However, in certain media sectors there is still a practice of hiring journalists and media workers based on fixed-term contracts (17% in both categories of respondents) or on a freelance basis - with a copyrights contract, or with a temporary service contract (7% of journalists and 9% of media workers). Employment with a fixed-term contract is more common in television stations and online media, while freelance work is most prevalent in online media.

Overall, about a quarter of journalists (24%) and media workers (26%) do not have employment which would enable them to have a stable and secure employment status and exercise their employment rights. Naturally, the most vulnerable group in this regard are journalists and media workers hired based on a temporary service contract, or a copyrights contract.

The survey confirmed that the number of self-employed journalists or media workers (freelancers) in the country is low: out of a total of 343 respondents, only 5 answered that they were self-employed.

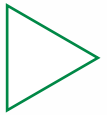
Recommendations:

- From the point of view of international standards and domestic regulation on labour relations, it is important to further determine: (a) whether the employment contracts contain all the guaranteed elements (job description, amount and method of salary calculation, working hours, rest periods and etc.), and (b) whether the journalist or media worker was allowed to negotiate freely with the employer about the working conditions before the contract was concluded.
- It is also important to determine the reasons why fixed-term contracts are concluded in certain sectors and whether employers respect the obligation to transform temporary employment into a permanent employment after the expiry of the fixed term.

Workload (working hours, right to rest, work-related stress)

Employers in the media sector, as well as in any other area of business, are bound by a special decision to establish a schedule of working hours within the legally determined number of working hours, taking into account the right to daily, weekly and annual rest (leave) of their employees, all the while striving to minimize overtime work. Employees must be informed in a timely manner about any changes to the schedule of working hours.

The dynamics of work in the media sector, especially in the daily news media, require serious organizational efforts and sufficient human resources to be able to fully comply with the rights of journalists and media workers. The data obtained from the population mapping, as well as the survey itself, showed that the number of employees in many newsrooms has decreased over the last year (especially in private media at the regional



and local level), and that this, undoubtedly, increases the burden and stress on journalists and media workers who have managed to keep their (regular) employment.

Therefore, the answers received from the survey showed that more than a quarter of the interviewed journalists (28%) work beyond the legally prescribed working hours, and about a fifth do tasks that are outside their established job description. In addition, one fifth of journalists are unable to exercise their right to two days off a week. The most concerning piece of data is that over half of journalists (55%) are exposed to stress very often or often.

Regardless of the specificities of media work and the financial situation of the specific media, it is unacceptable for journalists or media workers to continuously work longer than the permitted number of working hours per week, to be unable to disconnect from their professional duties, or to have to be constantly available to the employer.

Recommendations:

- In order to overcome this situation, it is important to determine whether all media have made a decision determining the schedule of working hours, whether that schedule has been prepared by taking into account the maximum number of working hours and the right to rest, how often the schedule changes, whether the employees are timely informed about the schedule, etc.
- In order to overcome the phenomenon of journalists and media workers being given excessive duties for the same salary - which go beyond the scope of their specialization and job description, it is important to establish the employer's obligation to adopt an act of internal organization and description of jobs, on the basis of which the description of the specific job will be entered in the employee's employment contract.
- In the adoption of the new Law on Media, it is recommended to introduce an obligation for media publishers to adopt basic organizational acts, including a special decision to determine the schedule of working hours in accordance with the regulations in the field of labour law.

Right to a livelihood (salaries and allowances)

Some of the typical features of precarious work in the media sector, which were very frequently written about in the past, were the low and irregular wages, the unpaid overtime work and the work done on holidays. This situation was, to a large extent, due to the state of the media market, but also due to the policies that were built or implemented in this area in the past. It has been emphasized many times that in the country, the media market is oversaturated and that there are too many private media outlets for such a small and underdeveloped economy. In such strong competition, the private media generated little income and invested little in human resources and development.

Both the process of mapping the population of journalists and media workers and the survey, partially confirmed these previous findings. The number of employees is continuously decreasing, especially in the local and the regional private media outlets which generate the lowest income from advertising. Journalism as a profession is undervalued - more than half of the journalists (55%) have income below the average monthly salary in RNM, while this percentage is even higher among media workers (77%). There are differences in the salaries in different sectors: they are higher in the public service and lower in private television stations. Major variations have been observed in the online sector with regards to this issue.





On top of these findings, there are also data showing that the legal provisions for salary supplements are largely not complied with: overtime work was not paid to 38 percent of the journalists and 36 percent of the media workers included in the survey. 46 percent of all the interviewed respondents were never or rarely paid any compensation for working on holidays.

Recommendations:

- It is important to determine whether the employers in the media sector comply with the legal provisions to keep regular records of overtime and holiday work. Those records are a prerequisite in order to be able to precisely determine the employee's right to salary supplements, that is, for them to be duly compensated for overtime work and work done during holidays.
- According to the new Law on Media, in addition to the other acts and the decision to specify (establish) a schedule of working hours, media publishers should also be obliged to keep accurate records of overtime work and work during holidays.

Right to health insurance and health care

The right to health insurance and health care is part of the broader corpus of rights related to safety and security at work. However, due to the extensiveness of the measures related to security and protection, only some aspects of the right to health and health care were covered in this survey. Employers in the media sector, among other things, are obliged: when calculating the salary, to pay the employee compensation for mandatory health insurance, to pay compensation in case of illness or injury, to monitor the health status of employees and to provide them with regular medical check-ups.

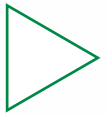
From the answers obtained through the survey, it can be concluded that as many as 90 percent of respondents have mandatory health insurance and that the right to paid sick leave and parental leave is almost universally exercised. However, only about 40 percent of respondents in the previous year had a regular medical check-up organized by the media outlet. That, among other things, indicates a lack of care on the part of the employers, especially considering that a large percentage of journalists and media workers complain about the stress they are exposed to during their work.

Recommendation:

- Given the range of obligations of employers, regarding the safety and care for the physical and mental health of journalists and media workers, it is important to pay special attention to the entire plethora of issues related to safety and health at work.

Job and environment satisfaction

Several questions in the survey referred to the degree of satisfaction of journalists and media workers with the working conditions and the environment that they work in, as well as the extent of personal autonomy in their work and the perceptions of the level of general freedoms in the country. Exposure to stress, and the still pervasive precarious conditions in the work of journalists and media workers is reflected in their feelings of discouragement and conformity, and this, in turn, ultimately leads to self-censorship, succumbing to pressures and low professional quality of the journalistic and media products.



The survey showed that a large part of the interviewed journalists and media workers (about 80%) express satisfaction with the way their career is progressing and with the quality of the products they create, but are, however, dissatisfied with the opportunities for further professional development and education.

Journalists, more often than media workers, complain about the impact of their work on their private lives, but this assessment differs depending on the sector that they work in – the public service or private media outlets, in a media outlet with a large editorial office or in a small media outlet. In terms of salary satisfaction, the opinions are divided, that is, they do not correspond to the really low incomes in the entire media sector. These responses seem to reflect the conformity or indifference among journalists and media workers due to the long-standing uncertainty and insecurity of jobs in the media.

Respondents in the survey gave high marks to their own work autonomy in the media outlet that they work for, but the majority expressed critical views on the overall media freedoms in the country.

Recommendations:

- From these findings, a general recommendation for trade union organizations is that in their representation they should not limit themselves to the labour rights of journalists and media workers, but to continuously work to defend the freedom of expression and the freedom of journalists in general, both within the framework of the workplace, as well as in society as a whole.
- The journalists' satisfaction with their job is directly related to the opportunities for advancement and additional education during their career. In conditions where the newsrooms themselves do not care enough about the need for professional development of their employees, the trade union organizations are the ones that need to step in and work on creating opportunities for continuous training and professional development of journalists and media workers.

Unionization

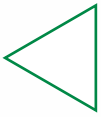
The survey corroborated the previous knowledge that the motivation to join trade unions among journalists and media workers and to establish their own trade unions is still low. In identifying the reasons for this, the fear of repercussions at the workplace was not found to be the sole and biggest reason, but also the existing perceptions about the independence and success of trade unions.

Two-thirds of the respondents believe that trade unions easily fall under political influence, and slightly over a half believe that they can be corrupted or fall under the influence of corporate interests. About half of the respondents believe that the low motivation to join unions is due to the belief that unions are, in fact, insufficiently capable and powerful to protect the rights of workers in the media sphere. Those perceptions are probably largely due to the way of functioning of individual trade unions, but also come as result of the overall general beliefs about the credibility and success of trade unions in the country.

Recommendations:

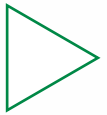
- In order to shift those beliefs and perceptions, trade unions in the media sphere should continuously work on strengthening their own credibility, both among their membership and among the entire population of journalists and media workers. At the same time, when communicating with all stakeholders it is of key importance to clearly define and





emphasize the key principles that the work of unions is based on: democracy, independence, professional ethics and integrity.

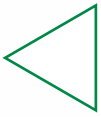
- The precise identification of the specific problems faced by employees in different media sectors should be the foundation for developing an appropriate approach during collective bargaining to solve the problems faced by journalists and media workers: working hours and workload, the amount of salaries and benefits, the payment of overtime hours, safety and health care, and a number of other conditions and rights in the work process.



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