



CS1. Studies on national media research capability as a contextual domain of the sources of ROs

The aim of the **first case study** is to describe and analyse the **countries' monitoring capability**: the ability and possibilities of various agents to observe the developments of the media and the changes in society emanating from the media transformations, as well as related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication, and applying the obtained knowledge in making media political decisions.

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CROATIA

Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities

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Executive Summary

Croatian media and communication studies have a long history dating from the 1960s in socialist Yugoslavia. The growth and advances of the field started strongly after 2000. The analysis of the Croatian corpus of published research between 2000 and 2020 has identified more than 400 literature sources useful for further research of the ROs domains of Journalism, Legal and ethical domain, Media usage domain, and Media-related competencies domain. The largest corpus is in the Journalism domain, testifying to the origins of the Croatian media and communication discipline, followed by the Legal and ethical domain. Audience research started to be seriously developed after 2011, and the research on Media-related competencies domain was almost non-existent before 2011. While the number of publications in these two domains is smaller, a higher quality and international character of this research might offset its smaller number.

The aim of this case study is to give an overview of published literature and other data sources in Croatia in the four domains that are seen as presenting risks or opportunities for deliberative communication: *Legal and ethical domain*, *Journalism domain*, *Media usage domain*, and *Media-related competencies domain*. The report is based on published studies (national and international) and reports, and provides information on data collections and research methodologies. The report also includes an analysis of research resources: expertise, financing and position of research and data collecting units, with the aim of assessing the quality of research, the institutionalization of the academic discipline(s) necessary for their study, and the resulting national research capabilities to monitor the four domains with respect to the relevant time frame of 2000–2020.

1. Introduction

Croatia is among the rare CEE countries with previous research on intellectual history of communication and media studies (for histories of CEE, see Jiráček & Köpplová, 2008; Peruško & Vozab, 2016; Splichal, 2020). In addition to Croatia (Peruško & Vozab, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017), such studies exist for Poland (Filas & Planeta, 2014), while the pioneer was Slavko Splichal with his analysis for socialist Yugoslavia (1989a, 1989b). Splichal's analysis of 32 Yugoslav social science journals between 1964 and 1986 shows that in socialist Yugoslavia the paradigmatic parentage of the discipline was firmly "western" (i.e., the so called soviet media theory was not known or used) and drew on different schools of thought: "Critical theory (Adorno, Habermas, Enzensberger, Bourdieu), Functionalism (Katz, Lasswell, Lazarsfeld, Merton, Schramm, Riley) and "productive inclusivism" (McLuhan, McQuail, Kayser, Cazeneuve, Weiss)" (Splichal, 2020, p. 355). Only 18,7 % of the articles in the Yugoslav pre-1990 sample were empirical, and only 7,1 % included statistics.

Peruško and Vozab (2014, 2017) analyzed Croatian articles in a 50-year sample (1961–2011) and show that 61 % of articles use social scientific approaches, while this amounts to over 70 % in the 1990–2011 period. Critical studies reappear after 2000 with cultural studies and feminist approaches instead of the pre-1990's Frankfurt school or the theory of the public sphere as theoretical frameworks. 54 % of the Croatian sample was published between 2000 and 2011, testifying to a strong growth of the discipline after 2000.

Political communication was the main research topic in 1990s and 2000s. After 2000 the focus shifted to investigation of how media messages were produced and of their content, PR and marketing communication, media industry and media regulation. The number of empirical articles in the Croatian sample rose to 46 % in 2011. 69 % of empirical articles in the 50-year sample used quantitative methods like survey and content analysis (Peruško & Vozab, 2017).

The start of the institutionalization of the communication discipline is related to the introduction of university subjects relating to journalism at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb in 1969 (later than in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary, where such programs were introduced already in the 1950s, Terzis, 2009). A minor in journalism was offered at the same faculty until 1985, when a full four-year bachelor's program was established. The first academic journal in the broader field in Croatia was *Informatologia Jugoslavica* established in 1969, although media and communication related topics were also published in sociological and political science journals. The development of empirical studies of public opinion started to be introduced in the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb, in early 1960s. Sociology remains a significant source of empirical and theoretical ideas for Croatian researchers of media and communication to date. Visual analysis of media forms, like cartoons, advertising, or film, was developed in the Department of History of Art and the Department of the English Language and Literature. The study of mass media forms of literature advanced at the Department of Comparative Literature, already from the 1960s. Although the Department of Linguistics offered courses on semiotics of communication already in the 1980s, this thread has not so far been integrated into the mainstream communication discipline.

The institutionalization of the communication sciences, or communication and media studies as a separate academic discipline, has not been completed to date. They are part of the branch of "Information and Communication Sciences" within the field of social sciences, and the humanities approaches have not been integrated. As communication and media studies share neither theoretical nor methodological approaches with information sciences, this ill-fitting grouping is evidence of the weakness of communication and media studies in Croatia, both in academic and institutional terms (Peruško & Vozab, 2016).

1.1. Actors: Academic Departments and Research Institutions

A growing number of academic departments, academic journals and academic societies engaged with the field (especially after 2000) (Peruško & Vozab, 2016). Academic departments that run programs in journalism, communication, and media at B.A. and M.A. level exist at five universities (University of Zagreb has two, and one each at the Universities of Rijeka, Zadar, Dubrovnik, and University Sjever). Doctoral studies in media and communication are offered at the Universities of Zagreb, University of Zadar (in cooperation with Zagreb), University of Dubrovnik together with University of Osijek, and University Sjever (all after 2005). Short international graduate courses are taught at the Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik (IUC) (<https://iuc.hr>) since the 1970s, and journalism and media topics were included already in the 1980s.

Two main research centers / groups exist at the academic level. The first was the Department for Culture and Communication at the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) (<https://irmo.hr/>), which started with research in communication and media in the

mid-1980s in cooperation with UNESCO. Today their research is often from the perspective of critical theory, and involves issues of pluralism, cultural and digital economy and mediatization. Its researchers participate in international research projects and networks and have a strong international publishing record.

The Centre for Media and Communication Research (CIM) (<https://cim.fpzg.unizg.hr>) at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb was established in 2007 and is today the only university centre that combines international comparative research with academic teaching and training. Its research focuses on media system transformations in CEE in a comparative perspective, including issues of democratization, pluralism, freedom of the media, developments in journalism in relation to digitalization, and mediatization transformations. Audience research is an area that has strongly developed in Croatia since 2010 thanks to research projects of the CIM research group. Its researchers are prominent in international research projects, networks, and professional academic associations, and have a strong international publishing record with significant impact.

The number of authors / academic staff in the discipline also grew with the establishment of new university departments and journals in the field, although there are probably only around 10–15 academics who are members in mainstream international academic associations like ECREA, ICA or IAMCR.

1.2. Actors: Academic Journals

Six academic journals are devoted to media and communication research: *Informatologia* (published by Croatian Communicology Association, from 1969 as *Informatologia Jugoslavica*; referenced in SCOPUS); the first post-socialist journal was *Medijska istraživanja* (published by *Naklada Medijska Istraživanja*, from 1995 – earlier than in most CEE countries where journals were mainly started after 2000; referenced in SCOPUS); *MediAnali* (published by University of Dubrovnik, from 2007 to 2018); *Medijske studije* (published by the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb, from 2010; referenced in SCOPUS and WOS); *In Medias Res* (published by Centre for Media Philosophy, from 2012); *Media, Culture and Public Relations* (published by Croatian Communication Association, from 2012;³ referenced in EBSCO); and *CM-Communication Management Review* (published by the Edward Bernays College, from 2016). All academic journals published in Croatia are, thanks to a mandatory policy, available in open access at <https://hrcak.srce.hr>.

1.3. Actors: NGOs with Media Research Capacity or Influence

The Citizens Organize to Monitor the Elections (GONG) (<https://gong.hr/en/>) is one of the most prominent progressive NGOs in Croatia, involved also in monitoring and studying the media. They have several ongoing research projects whose findings might be relevant for our analysis, relating to hate speech, fake news, and pressures on journalists.

The Centre for Investigative Journalism of the Croatian Journalists' Association (HND) (<https://www.hnd.hr>) engages in relevant international studies and assessments. The Association for Communication and Media Culture (DKMK) (<https://dkmk.hr/>) is mainly focused on media literacy activities, especially with children, and have initiated some media literacy and media education studies.

³ The Croatian Communication Association (<https://portfolioig.wordpress.com/o-nama/>) is in 2021 listed among scientific and professional associations funded by the Ministry of Science and Education (with 2 000 EUR), though information on its membership etc. is not available (see Peruško & Vozab, 2013). It appears that their only activity is the publication of the two journals.

The Centre for Democracy and Law Miko Tripalo (<https://tripalo.hr/en/home/>), a progressive think-tank, has organized debates on issues of media development and media and democracy.

The Croatian Law Centre (<https://www.hpc.hr>), established in the 1990s, also contributes to or funds, from time to time, research in the field of media, especially regarding media and its democratic performance.

1.4. Actors: Government and Related Bodies that Act on the Media System

The Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) primary purpose is regulation, licensing and oversight of electronic media (including online media), it commissions studies on specific topics related to the media market (<https://www.aem.hr/istrazivanje-i-analize/>). It is also active in promoting (and funding) activities relating to media literacy. In the past two decades, they have commissioned studies on television market and audiences, effects of media subsidies, digital media market, radio market and audiences, and gender equality in the media. The AEM also collects and regularly publishes on its website the data about owners of the electronic media with licenses to broadcast (television and radio) in Croatia, and the registry of electronic online media in Croatia.

The Croatian Chamber of Commerce (HGK) (<https://www.hgk.hr/>) collects data on the print media publishers and their editions, which are obliged to report circulation figures and revenues on a yearly basis. This institution does not publish the data in a systematic fashion, but in earlier years the data were available online in a user-friendly form. This practice has been discontinued (staff deficiency is cited as a reason), but researchers can receive data in a raw (not user-friendly) form on request.

The Croatian Competition Authority (AZTN) (<https://www.aztn.hr/>) is a source of some information on media concentration, which it is obliged to assess in case of mergers or acquisitions in the media sector (according to the Media Act (NN 59/04, 84/11, 81/13) and the Electronic Media Act (NN 111/21), the media sector is subject to specific thresholds based on audience shares). Relevant information on market shares is published in their judgments.

The Court Register (<https://sudreg.pravosudje.hr/registar/f?p=150:1>) includes information on owners of the media, and the information can be searched free of charge.

The Ministry of Culture and Media (<https://min-kulture.gov.hr>) (media was added to the title in the most recent government mandate in 2019, although media came under its jurisdiction already in the early 2000s) has also been directly involved in media system analyses and studies, especially in relation to failed attempts to adopt a media strategy. While such a strategy was never adopted as a political / policy document to date, an extensive document titled *“Draft Proposal for the Media Policy of the Republic of Croatia until 2020”* was published by the Ministry of Culture in 2015 (Ministry of Culture, 2015). This document included an analysis of the media landscape, including journalism, media market, position of journalists, etc. The next government announced a swift media policy / strategy of its own, but this has never materialized. The Ministry has throughout the two decades created ad-hoc expert groups in relation to media legislation under development, although the composition of the groups is not always made public, and their advice not necessarily taken. Public or expert discussions are also sometimes organized on issues under discussion, especially in relation to legislative proposals. The capacity of the ministry to engage with media research or create research informed policy is limited, as their media policy department does not include any staff. Media related laws and other regulations are available on their website (<https://min-kulture.gov.hr/propisi-543/mediji-16238/16238>).

The Croatian Bureau of Statistics (DZS) (<https://www.dzs.hr>) provides information about the availability of media technologies in households, number of people employed in publishing and audio-visual sector, average salaries in the sector, as well as the number of journalism students.

The Croatian Financial Agency (FINA) (<https://www.fina.hr>) publishes annual financial reports from private enterprises registered in Croatia. Information about sources of income is included in financial reports provided by media companies.

1.5. Actors: Media Industry and Market Research

Some market research agencies are more open to share their research on request. For example, IPSOS Puls agency for market research (<https://www.ipsos.com/hr-hr>) shared in the past collected data on audience shares of different media for research purposes. They have also been commissioned by the AEM for media market and audience studies, and these are publicly available at the AEM website.

The Croatian Association of Communications Agencies (HURA) (<https://hura.hr>) provides annual data on advertising expenditure across different media.

1.6. Foreign Actors and International Research Cooperation

Significant data and knowledge about the four ROs domains in Croatia also come from international institutions that work at media system comparisons at the international level.

Analyses of the political development and democratic consolidation can be tracked through various international sources, like the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index. In 2020, their score for Croatia was 6,5 and it was categorized as a flawed democracy (EIU, 2021). The V-Dem Institute Democracy Index evaluates Croatia in 2020 as electoral democracy in the top 20–30 % tier (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2020). This is one of the most substantial and academically weighted comparative studies, based on several expert coders for different sub-areas of the index in each country, with their confidence levels reported for accuracy. The Freedom House Global Freedom Score 2021 gives Croatia a score of 85 and ranks her as free, with 36 points for political rights and 49 for civil liberties. In its Democracy Ratings, Croatia is evaluated as semi-consolidated democracy with the score of 54 (Freedom House, 2021). Freedom House Index of Internet freedom does not include Croatia, and their Freedom of the Press Index was discontinued in 2017.

The Reporters Without Borders (since 2013) World Press Freedom Index places Croatia in 2022 as the 48th country from the 150 it evaluates, an increase from its 56th place the previous year (RSF, 2022). Main problems with media freedom in Croatia include many SLAPP lawsuits also involving government and public officials, threats from subjects of investigative journalists (mainly online), and the ruling-party informed editorial policy of the public service broadcaster.

IRES Media Sustainability Index (2001–2019), funded by the USAID, places Croatia in 2019 at the 5th place among the SEE countries with 2,31 points (3 is sustainable, which Croatia was ranked as in 2005) lower than Kosovo (in the 1st place), Albania, Montenegro, and Romania.⁴ This placement and the underlying analysis are not seen as reliable by the authors of this study.

Information on media use is also collected by Eurobarometer⁵.

European Values Study (<https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu>) includes Croatian data in the 3rd (1999), 4th (2008), 5th (2017), and the 6th wave (2022).

European Media Systems Survey lead by Marina Popescu⁶ includes Croatian data in the 1st (2010), 2nd (2013), and 3rd wave (2017).

⁴ See <https://www.mediasustainabilityindex.org>

⁵ See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home>.

⁶ See <https://www.mediasystemsineurope.org/overview.htm>.

The Council of Europe Safety of Journalists Platform (<https://fom.coe.int/accueil>) includes information about threats to Croatia journalists (at the time of writing in February of 2022, there were no active or unresolved threats reported for Croatia).

The Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists' Safety in Western Balkans (<https://safejournalists.net/>) is a project commissioned by the European Commission, in which professional journalist associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia cooperate to monitor safety of journalists in the region.

Significant research and attention to the ROs domains also resulted from cooperation of Croatian researchers in the Council of Europe and UNESCO bodies. Cooperation with the Council of Europe first introduced the cultural policy project to Croatia (already in the 1990s), and the topic of media pluralism and diversity, when Croatia was included in a comparative study (Ward, 2006). The research attention to the topics of media pluralism and protection of journalists against impunity, also had a source in CoE cooperation. The participation in UNESCO IPDC contributed to the study of Media Development Indicators in Croatia (Peruško, 2011, 2012; Peruško et al., 2011), and as a regional comparative project.

Croatian researchers also take part in international academic comparative projects which shed light on certain domains. These include the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS) (Croatia first participated in the 2nd wave 2012–2016 and is participating in the 3rd wave, with data collection expected in 2023). This study provides a wealth of information on journalism practice and values in Croatia, and in a comparative perspective, based on a national representative sample of journalists surveyed with an online questionnaire (Peruško et al., 2016). Professor Zrinjka Peruško (CIM, FPZG, University of Zagreb) is the project leader in Croatia, with participation of Antonija Čuvalo and Dina Vozab.

The Digital News Project of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism of the University of Oxford (Croatia is included since 2017) provides information about news media usage, based on a national panel sample of online media users (Newman et al., 2022). Professor Peruško is the academic partner from Croatia.

The “EU Kids Online” project (<http://www.eukidsonline.net>) includes Croatia since its 3rd wave (2011–2014). Representative surveys are used to collect data on children’s use of new media. Since 2014, the network has been directed by Professor Uwe Hasebrink (Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung & Hans-Bredow-Institut, Germany). Lana Ciboci (Edward Bernays University College) is coordinating the Croatian team, with participation of Igor Kanižaj, Ivana Ćosić Pregrad, Dunja Potočnik, and Dejan Vinković.

Croatia also participates in the Media Pluralism Monitor led by the EUI Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (<https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>) since 2015. Researchers collect data about basic protection of the media sector, market plurality, political independence, social inclusiveness. Researchers evaluate risks by desk research and with the help of expert interviews. Paško Bilić (IRMO), Monika Valečić and Toni Prug, independent researchers, are the authors of the 2020 study.

The Open Society Institute undertook a European comparative project in 2000, “*Television Across Europe*”, in which the developments in television were analyzed in media policy and media system from the 1990s. The study included most western and eastern European countries, as well as Croatia (Peruško, 2005). An update was published several years later, but that did not include Croatia.

The next comparative project of the Open Society Institute was “*Mapping Digital Media*”, including Croatia. The project resulted in the publication about risks and opportunities of the digital transformation.

Another such topical researcher with local participation in comparative studies at the European level, was the “*Study on the Implementation of the New Provisions in the Revised Audio-visual Media Services Directive*” (Professor Peruško was the expert for Croatia, 2021), and the “*Comparative Study of Investigative Journalism*” (Peruško, 2016).

The “*Media Literacy Mapping*” project (<https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>), commissioned by the European Commission, has specifically contributed data on projects promoting media literacy, apart from official school curricula. Professor Igor Kanižaj (FPZG, University of Zagreb) has been one of the key experts involved in this research.

Research cooperation in EU funded research networks, especially the COST network, have also produced some significant research on the four ROs domains. The COST “*East of West*” resulted in Croatia with studies on media pluralism and diversity policy and the state of media concentration in Croatia and the CEE region (Peruško & Popović, 2008a; Peruško, 2010). “*The Audiences across Europe*” COST project (2010–2017) was instrumental in starting a significant research focus on audiences in Croatia. Croatian researcher participated in two comparative research projects within the scope of this COST network. One aimed to look at the type of media and information use based on national survey samples in 9 countries (Jensen & Helles, 2015; Peruško et al., 2015). The second project was qualitative and focused especially on news media use and employed the Q method to show news media repertoires across 10 countries (Adoni et al., 2017; Peruško et al., 2017).

An EU Framework program study “*Mediadem*” (2010–2013) also contributed to the comparative view of Croatian media policy. The study was led in Croatia by Nada Švob Đokić at IRMO, with participation of Paško Bilić.

Data about media use in election campaigns are collected by the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb, in representative surveys on political preferences conducted after each parliamentary election. The data are not publicly available, but several publications include the main findings (on media use and election expectations, see Vozab & Peruško, 2018).

The Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (IDIZ) (<https://www.idi.hr>) collects data about political literacy of high school students in Croatia (in 2010, 2015, and 2021). The questionnaire contains a battery of questions about media use. It also conducted research on youth values and practices, including ICT and media use.

1.7. Funding of Media and Communication Research

The number of publicly funded scientific research projects in the field of communication, journalism or media studies is rather small – in 2012 their share was 3,7 % and 3,4 % in the funded social sciences and humanities projects, respectively (Peruško & Vozab, 2014). The funding is administered in competitive fashion by the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ) (<https://hrzz.hr/en/>). There is only one communication related project funded at this time by HRZZ, focused on journalism experimentation with new genres, led by Professor Tena Perišin (CIM, FPZG, University of Zagreb). University of Zagreb funds research by its members on a yearly basis, and several communication and media related projects have been selected each year (although still on much smaller scale than other areas of science). Some research projects are funded by non-academic actors or NGOs, as described above.

After 2000, communication and media related research started to increase. This is related to the increase in the number of research units and university departments and specialized academic journals. In the following section we will focus on the analysis of published sources on which the following work of the “*Mediadelcom*” project will be based.

We focused on three types of published sources for the four ROs areas: 1) Articles published in international and Croatian academic journals; 2) Research reports published on the web pages

of various organizations; and 3) Books. We explored the lists of academic journals in domestic academic sites (<https://hrcak.srce.hr>) and international publisher databases (SAGE, Taylor & Francis, etc.) with key-words related to the operationalizations of the four key domains in the “Mediadelcom” project: the *legal framework of freedom of expression, journalism, media usage, and media competencies*. Online library catalogue of the National and University Library (NSK) (<https://www.nsk.hr>) was used to identify relevant academic books. Only the sources of satisfactory academic quality⁷ were used for the analysis.

The process of interviewing experts in specific fields of the four ROs is ongoing, and while some comments and suggestions have been already integrated in this draft, the final version will include a complete list of consulted experts and their possible comments.

2. Publications, Data Sources and Main Monitoring Actors of the Legal and Ethical Domain

Problems and issues in the Legal and ethical domain in Croatia were different in different decades, in relation to various critical junctures that preceded them. The year 2000 was a critical juncture in political terms when the change in government introduced a center-left coalition which announced a new media policy of media freedom and pluralism (Peruško Čulek, 1999b). The previous critical juncture in 1990 marked the first multi-party democratic elections in Croatia after almost 50 years, economic transformation, as well as independence from SFR Yugoslavia. Both had repercussions on the media system as well as on media research.

2.1. Freedom of Expression

The most prominent topics in both decades relate to freedom of expression, defamation, and the right to correction of published information (Prančić, 2008), and access to information.

Significant work related to the freedom of expression was produced in relation to civic and academic projects promoting media policy change, especially from the second part of the 1990s onwards. At that time the Croatian Law Centre was involved in supporting media policy research, resulting in a study “*New Media Agenda: For a European Media Policy in Croatia*” (Peruško Čulek, 1999b). The HND was also very prominent in this activity that included several academic researchers and journalists who identified the main problems facing different media fields in Croatia and proposed a necessary change to improve the field – in relation to freedom of expression, journalism, public service broadcasting, commercial radio and television, and print media.

Examining the situation in the 1990s, and the areas that need to change in order to enable a democratic role for the media, Alaburić (2000) sees the role of the legal system in the media system at three connected levels: “legislative, judicial protection, and in the aid to the self-regulation of the journalism profession” (p. 66). Alaburić further identifies the problems of media related legislation in 2000 as primarily stemming from the contradictory solutions for the same issue in the media law on public information and the Criminal Code. The possibility of the jail sentence for these speech related offences in the Criminal Code were also a problem at that time, as was the very strong protection of state and military secrets, without a balance in terms of the right of the public to be informed even in cases of information marked as secret (Alaburić, 2000).

⁷ We discarded publications without cited sources and those without or with insufficient description of research samples.

Authors see defamation in media legislature as a mixture of private and public law: in the first instance with the duty to protect personality rights of individuals, in the second the rights of the media to freedom of expression (Radolović, 2007). In the matter of the balance of the protection of personality rights and the freedom of expression of the media, Alaburić (2000) finds the judicial practice was in the decade of the 1990s more inclined to adjudicate in favor of personality rights and a remnant of previous authoritarian times (Alaburić, 1996, 2002), contrary to the standards of the European Court of Human Rights, although this was often corrected in secondary level courts, and improved in time to reach more or less acceptable European standards by 2000. With the changes in the media laws and the Criminal Code that followed the entry into government of the new center-left coalition in 2000, many of these problems were solved, but some inconsistencies remain.

Authors focused on the changes in media and related legislations and its effects on freedom of expression, although not all authors agreed on the outcomes. This included changes in the Criminal Code which started to favor more the freedom of expression and the public right to be informed, removed protection for high government officials, removed jail sentences for defamation and journalists, etc. (Badrov, 2007; Jakovljević, 2017; Maršavelski & Juras, 2019).

Among legal scholars, Alaburić (2002, 2003) also pioneered the investigation of hate speech from the legal standpoint. Authors examine hate speech and xenophobia as defined in the Criminal Code in the context of the Croatian EU accession and the European Convention on Human Rights and in terms international legal frameworks and the Croatian jurisprudence with that of the European Court on Human rights (Munivrana Vajda, 2013; Munivrana Vajda & Šurina Marton, 2016). The judicial practice in this area is not seen as fully effective. The authors also note the importance of the EU Framework decision on racism and xenophobia but evaluate all international frameworks as focusing only on some types of hate speech and discrimination, to the exclusion of others, i.e., based on sexuality or gender. More recently authors argue for a need to adopt specific legislation against hate speech on the social media, with the German example as the template (Roksandić Vidlička & Mamić, 2018).

Media scholars investigate the definition of hate speech (Vilović, 2011), media content and presence of hate speech (Labaš & Grmuša, 2011), and manifestations of hate speech in the Croatian context (Kulenović, 2016). Often, media scholars do not consider Croatian legal scholarship when discussing issues regarding freedom of expression and hate speech.

Disinformation and fake news are introduced as research topics in 2017 (Klauški, 2017; Nenadić, 2017; Vozab, 2017). Media literacy as a strategy to defend against fake news is one of the two main approaches to the topic in Croatia (Krpan Mofardin, 2018; *Media Studies* 2019 special theme issue, Vukić, 2020; Sivrić, 2020). Nenadić (2020) additionally discussed policy responses of platforms to misinformation and disinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic. The second approach to disinformation investigates new digital media affordances which allow fake news to appear (Peran & Raguž, 2019), or possible technological remedies (Grmuša & Prelog, 2020). The audience perspective is also present – how audiences recognize fake news and how this relates to trust in the media (Biloš, 2020; Krelja Kurelović et al., 2021; Peruško, 2021).

Legal scholars investigated the penal aspects of fake news in view of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pilić & Pilić, 2021).

2.2. Freedom of Information

Privacy and protection of personal data is mainly studied by media scholars in terms of media content which violates privacy, and how parents can protect children on social media (Brautović, 2007; Ciboci et al., 2013; Ciboci, 2014; Grmuša et al., 2019). Legal scholars analyze the

legal framework before and the transposition of the AVMSD, and in terms of self-regulatory measures adopted by Croatian media for the protection of minors (Lisičar & Jurić, 2014).

Legal scholars examine the access to public information and the special status of journalists but also in general terms of the constitutional guarantee of the right to information and the Act on the Right of Access to Information (NN 25/13, 85/15), but also the Data Secrecy Act (79/07, 86/12). Problems exist with the legal framework and its application there is a need to establish independent controls regards the Data Secrecy Act to prevent its misuse (Rajko, 2002, 2007, 2012). The number of complaints tripled between 2011 and 2014 based on the Act on the Right of Access to Information, while the number of solved cases dropped by a third (Vajda Halak et al., 2016). Journalistic complaints accounted for 8,53 % of all the cases.

Protection of journalistic sources is analyzed in only one article (Rajko, 2000), focusing on human sources and types of protection afforded in the legal framework. Whistleblowers figure as internal sources of information, as opposed to outside sources (witnesses, or those with information from insiders). Secrecy or protection of proprietary information are confronted with the public interest. The privilege that journalists have in protecting their sources of information (in the Media Act) stems from their obligation to inform the public in the public interest. He argues that journalists do not come under jeopardy of the Criminal Code for publishing secret information, because they are not obliged to disclose them. The article was written long before the Act for the Protection of Persons Reporting Irregularities (17/19) was passed. Only one article deals with the protection of whistleblowing, focusing on the protection in working-place law (Habazin, 2010).

Matanovac Vučković and Kanceljak (2018) show that copyright presents one of the limitations to the re-use of information of the public sector. The right to re-use public sector information is new in European and Croatian jurisprudence (EU directive from 2013, implemented in the Croatian Act on the Right of Access to Information 2013 and amended 2015). Research on copyright in relation to media use is almost non-existent in academic publications.

Rajko (2015) examines how the legal protection of trade secrets is used for restricting access to information. Media scholars in Croatia have not published on the topic of trade secrets as they affect journalistic freedoms.

2.3. Accountability System

Professional accountability of journalists and media organizations was studied regarding the practice and impact of the Ethics Council of the HND, or the public service (Croatian Radiotelevision) HRT (Nenadić, 2020). Skoko and Bajs (2007) show that 45 % of the resolved complaints to the Council were confirmed and published on the HND's website and in its journal (there are no other consequences). They mostly related to the published information not being truthful, balanced, or properly sourced, or to the publication of intimate and private details, especially in a sensational manner. Vilović (2009) analyzed the idea for the establishment of a Media Council in Croatia, as a media ethics self-regulatory body composed of journalists, editors, and members of the public, which had never materialized.

Authors analyze the effectiveness of the regulatory body for the audio-visual and electronic media, the Electronic Media Council, and propose changes to improve its autonomy, as well as self-regulation and co-regulation of media (Ivanuš, 2018; Lisičar, 2016; Lisičar & Jurić, 2014; Šola & Čičak, 2013; Bilić et al., 2017). These articles also reference journalistic codes of ethics.

Freedom of expression is included in the mandate of the ombudsperson for human rights and in their yearly reports include evaluations of the area (Ombudswoman, 2022). The ombudsman for children is also relevant in relation to the protection of children's rights in the media.

3. Publications, Data Sources and Main Monitoring Actors of Journalism

Journalism is the most analyzed of the four ROs domains, although not all the sub-domains are equally represented.

3.1. Market Conditions

Media pluralism and diversity are analyzed from several perspectives, both in terms of the international monitoring studies including Croatia (i.e., the Media Pluralism Monitor), and in research studies examining specific aspects of content or ownership diversity in Croatia and the CEE (Zgrabljic Rotar, 2003; Peruško & Popović, 2008a, Peruško, 2013). Research shows the opening of the media market, first in terms of press companies, then also in the audio-visual sector, with a high concentration of audiences and companies (Peruško & Popović, 2008a).

Promotion of media pluralism and limitation of media concentration in terms of policy and their implementation was a prominent research topic from the 1990s (Peruško, 2003, 2010, 2011, 2013; Peruško et al., 2011).

The issue of media market diversity in terms of ownership diversity is first discussed in terms of the role of foreign ownership of the traditional print media⁸ (Peruško, 2003), and later concerns were voiced about the reluctance of domestic regulatory bodies to enforce legal rules on media quality content in foreign owned media (Bilić & Švob-Đokić, 2012).

Later studies put a focus on the relationship of owner and media level / type diversity with content and genre diversity and pluralism of worldviews (Peruško, 2009; Roller, 2014; Bilić & Balabanić, 2016). Several studies were commissioned by arms-length actors in the media field to investigate the impact of media subsidies for content pluralism and diversity administered by the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media (Čuvalo et al., 2013; Peruško et al., 2013b; Vozab et al., 2013; Burić et al., 2018), which also resulted in further research on audiences of non-profit media (Vozab et al., 2017).

In addition to domestic sources, valuable information about media market and media diversity is found in the Media Pluralism Monitor (Croatia is covered in yearly reports since 2015). An evaluation of media autonomy and sustainability is published annually in IREX Media Sustainability Index. Some of these studies also pay attention to ownership diversity, including news media income, and regional and local journalism. Market conditions for media and journalism are also analyzed in relation to production conditions and digitalization, as well as in relation to public service media conditions.

Detailed overview of digital media policy is analyzed in study by Peruško and Popović (2008b), and digital media market is analyzed in Bilić et al. (2017). Effects of digital advertising in Croatian media market were studied by Bilić and Primorac (2018).

External, internal, and received diversity at the structural and content level was analyzed by Peruško (2013) for the decade of the 2000. Received diversity was studied empirically in only one article (Peruško, 2009).

⁸ Media pluralism and diversity as a research and media policy topic after 2000 was also influenced by the membership of Professor Peruško in the Council of Europe Expert group on media diversity (AP-MD, 2000–2004), which resulted in two well cited studies (Bruck et al., 2002, 2004) and in the Group of Specialists on Media Diversity of the Council of Europe (MC-S-MD, 2004–2008, which she chaired in 2006 and 2007). Several conferences and workshops were organized in relation to this cooperation.

3.2. Public Service Media

The position of the PSB in relation to government / political field and the autonomy one of the key topics of academic and professional debate in Croatia since the early 1990s. The first legislative change in the media sector in the early 1990s was the PSB law (Peruško Čulek, 1998). Analyses of public service media conditions primarily deal with autonomy and financing (Car, 2019), or discuss the democratic aspects of public service media. The decade of the 1990s, while introducing changes to the legal framework of the PSB, retained the power of politics through the governing bodies of the HRT, and it was only after 2000 that MPs could no longer be members and were replaced by civil society representatives. An early study (Zgrabljic Rotar, 2003) reflects the hopeful times of the new media policy after 2000 and the democratic transformation of the PBS, although the transition of the HRT to public service did not go smoothly on any front.

Deputy-prime minister Željka Antunović announced as the aim of the new government pluralism and diversity of the media and “freedom and openness of the media to different ideas, and a critical role of the media in the political and social system” (Antunović, 2000, p. 45). Zgrabljic Rotar (2003) shows how the public opposition stopped the privatization of the third (cultural) public radio channel, while public support for the privatization of the third HRT channel enabled the opening of the market for television. Critique of the legislative changes relating to the PSB is the topic of many published papers (Popović, 2004; Peruško, 2011, 2012; Bilić & Švob-Dokić, 2016).

3.3. Production Conditions

Several articles point to different characteristics of journalism routines and practices, such as use of sources, criteria of news selection (see Grmuša et al., 2016; Perišin, 2004, 2008, 2016). Several articles discuss the impact of digitalization and social media on journalistic routines and practices (Nenadić, 2018, Osmančević, 2016; Volarević & Bebić, 2013). There is an emerging trend to evaluate the possibilities of innovative news production, such as constructive journalism (Kovačević & Perišin, 2018). The authors explain this by the “inclusiveness of the institutions as well as the nature of the relationship between the political and economic fields, since low inclusiveness and weak democracy do not provide sufficient checks and balances to preserve / maintain the autonomy of the journalistic field from the economic field” (Peruško et al., 2017, p. 18).

3.4. Working Conditions

Working conditions of journalists are usually evaluated as precarious, with lower wages and lower social protection compared to other European countries (Car, 2016; Popović, 2018). An increasing pressure in recent years was exerted through libel and “shaming” suits against journalists and media (Bilić et al., 2021; Peruško, 2020). A survey by the HND showed that there were 905 SLAPP procedures against journalists and media in 2020 (Kutri, 2020).

Comparative analysis places Croatia in a cluster of peripheral European countries based on the media system characteristics, where journalists perceive economic, organizational, professional, and other influences on their work as higher than in more developed European media systems (Peruško et al., 2017).

Commercialization of the journalism profession is usually analyzed through content analysis of media. Vozab and Majstorović (2021) show that media sensationalism has been one of the most researched topics in Croatian literature about journalism from 1990, and Worlds of journalism survey found that journalists perceive the pressure towards sensationalist news as strongest in the recent period (Peruško et al., 2016).

3.4.1. Intra-Organizational Diversity

Workforce diversity is almost exclusively analyzed in terms of gender (see Car et al., 2017; Peruško Čulek & Uzelac, 2000; Vozab & Zember, 2016). Questions of the labor market in cultural industries, including the media, are investigated in several publications of one researcher (Primorac, 2006, 2010, 2012).

The journalism profession in Croatia has gone through a process of feminization (Car & Bukvić, 2016; Vozab & Zember, 2016), probably due to the change in status of the profession which has become increasingly precarious, less prestigious, and less paid (Vozab & Zember, 2016). There is a noticed pay gap in the “information and communication sector” (which includes journalists), and hierarchical and sectorial segregation in Croatian media organizations (Car et al., 2017; Vozab & Zember, 2016).

Foreign media offices or correspondents’ production conditions were not studied in the Croatian literature.

3.4.2. Journalists’ Competencies, Education and Training

There are several overviews on journalism education in Croatia. Zgrabljic Rotar and Vrljević Šarić (2009) describe journalism education landscape in Croatia, Car and Bukvić (2014) place the development of journalism education in Croatia in the context of Southeast Europe, and Perišin and Mlačić (2014) analyse the potential for digital journalism education. There are now many media and journalism education programs at several public and private universities and faculties in Croatia, and the number of enrolled students is considered too high in comparison to market demands (Car & Bukvić, 2016). There is a variety of forms of journalism education: “high education scientific and specialist study program at public universities and private schools, as a study program for postsecondary education and in the form of vocational training for both young and professional journalists, organized by their employers or by professional associations” (Zgrabljic Rotar & Vrljević Šarić, 2009, p. 373). Although initial motivation for studies in media and journalism is high among students, it decreases with time, and more students prefer to choose a career of a public relation specialist, rather than journalist (Car & Bukvić, 2016; Majstorović & Vilović, 2012). The dissatisfaction with media and journalism studies is also driven by the student’s perception of a lack of practical training and skills acquired at such study programs (Car & Bukvić, 2016; Majstorović & Vilović, 2012). There is also a lack of post-university short courses and workshops for journalists that would aid them developing new digital journalism skills for the transition to the digital media age.⁹

3.4.3. Professional Culture and Role Perceptions

Several sources discuss historical development of journalism profession and evaluate general trends and characteristics of the profession (Car & Bukvić, 2016; Perišin, 2017; Peruško et al., 2016, 2017, 2021; Popović, 2018). There are also several articles on journalism professional culture and issues of ethics and autonomy. Journalism ethics is mostly analyzed through content analysis of media and evaluation of ethically dubious practices in media (Majstorović, 2013; Pavelin & Karamarko, 2015), although surveys with journalists also reveal adherence to different roles, norms, or ethics (Ivanuš, 2021; Peruško et al., 2016; Pjesivac & Imre, 2018). Recent study among journalism students found that the most valued journalism roles in Croatia are those of a detached observer and the watchdog role, which is perceived as more important than giving commentary and opinion (Pjesivac & Imre, 2018). The Worlds of Journalism study found that “reporting things as they are” is the highest appreciated value in Croatia (Andresen et al., 2017; Peruško et al., 2016).

⁹ The authors would like to thank Professor Nada Zgrabljic Rotar for this insight.

Normative issues are also analyzed in several text in the context of broader media policy, including the process of media policy transformation in terms of European integration (Peruško Čulek, 1999a, 1999b, 2003; Popović et al., 2010).

4. Publications, Data Sources and Main Monitoring Actors of Media Usage Patterns

Media audiences are relatively new as a research focus in media and communication studies in Croatia, and most articles about media audience research appeared after 2000 (Peruško & Vozab, 2017). Most of the media audience research in Croatia has been done by media industry and market research companies – in socialist period by large publishing houses and television research units, while after 1990 several market research agencies took over the measurement of audience size and ratings (e.g., IPSOS Puls and AGB Nielsen) (Peruško, 2011). Previous research found that only around 5 % of articles in media and communication research had audiences as a main topic (Peruško & Vozab, 2014). However, the same research found most of these articles contain empirical research and are in higher quality (Peruško & Vozab, 2014). In the last period, audience research moved from descriptive measurement of audience size to more nuanced analysis of media effects and repertoires. Moreover, it moved from exclusively quantitative analyses to diversity in methodological approaches, using qualitative and mixed methods analyses. COST Action “*Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies*” in which many media and communication scholars from Croatia participated also helped to facilitate research of this topic.

The media usage research was rather scarce in the first decade after 2000, while interest in the topic and the number of sources rose especially after 2010. These are the topics predominantly analyzed in research of media use: traditional and digital media preferences, which is mostly presented through descriptive data; media use of specific socio-demographic groups, mostly young audiences; media generations; news media audiences; media effects related to media use; news consumption and its political ramifications, trust in media; and comparative analyses of media use.

4.1. Access to Media and Diversity of Viewpoints in the Media System

Several sources provide data which are useful for the assessment of audience access to media and channel preferences. Most recent and extensive data are included in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report published annually (Croatia is included since 2017). Traditional television still occupies the highest position as a news source in Croatia, followed by online editions of newspapers. Most popular television channels are those operated by commercial television companies, while public television is in the third place (Vozab & Peruško, 2021).

Croatian media regulatory agency (AEM) publishes reports on digital media use – this includes television (on television audiences, AEM, 2016) (digital switchover was in 2010), and monthly reports on people-meter shares and ratings of television channels and programs. Although traditional forms of media consumption are still most common, digital media use was rising already in the middle of our observed timeframe (AEM, 2013, 2016), together with the rise of Internet access in Croatia (in 2019, 81 % of households) (Eurostat, 2020). Media use is shaped also in relation to cultural capital and class (Krolo et al., 2020), and in relation to audience needs (Karuza Podgorelec, 2020).

Radio is prominent in Croatian media use (Peruško et al., 2017) but research is sparse (Mučalo, 2010; Mučalo & Knežević, 2014). Academic research on social media use is insufficient, apart from data on news choices. Several authors used the concept of media repertoires to assess me-

dia use in a high-choice media environment, in relation to media generations (Čuvalo & Peruško, 2017) and news repertoires (Peruško et al., 2017; Vozab, 2019a, 2019b). A mixed methods study (Peruško et al., 2017) found six news repertoires among Croatian audience: commercial traditionalist with national scope, local traditionalist with broadcast media in focus, internationally oriented news seeker, omnivore radio lovers and print avoiders, versatile online and print readers, and multiplatform local oriented light news snackers. Even among digital media users' popular television channels still hold an important position, but some digital outlets and Facebook also cut across different digital media repertoires (Vozab, 2019b). Education has an important role in distinguishing internationally oriented from locally oriented media users (Peruško et al., 2017; Vozab, 2019a).

Another stream of research deals with specific socio-demographic groups of audiences, mostly youth. Some of the reports and articles are based on the *"EU Kids Online"* research project (Potočnik, 2007; Ciboci et al., 2020) and there is an emerging strand of qualitative audience research in this area (Čuvalo, 2015, 2016). Newest report from the *"EU Kids Online"* shows that most children have Internet access, predominantly through mobile phones, and that preferred activities are entertainment, education, and communication with others (Ciboci et al., 2020). Excessive or unhealthy Internet use is not found in relation to most children, and they prefer face to face communication to computer mediated communication (Ciboci et al., 2020). Qualitative research on media use among young audiences analyses how media use is domesticated and embedded in certain type of habitus (Čuvalo, 2016).

Comparative analysis of media use find that Croatian media system belongs to the "southern" cluster of countries with generally lower media use (Peruško et al., 2013a). In relation to digital media environments, Croatia belongs to the "eastern" cluster of countries in which a higher preference towards Internet media sources (Peruško et al., 2015). Vesnić-Alujević and Simeunović Bajić (2013) analyze transnational television consumption focusing on audiences from post-Yugoslav states.

4.2. Relevance of News Media

There are also several sources of literature to draw upon in evaluation of relevance of news. Reuters Institute Digital News Report is also a valuable source in this aspect. There have been several articles published in recent period which emphasize news interest, news media use and news repertoires (Peruško et al., 2017; Plenković, 2020; Roller, 2014; Vozab, 2019a, 2019b; Vozab & Peruško, 2018, 2021).

Research in Croatia points out that the supply of media content in public interest (news and information program) does not match the audience demand, who seek more news and information program than it's offered on different television channels (Peruško, 2009; Roller, 2014).

Audiences in Croatia still dominantly inform themselves about political affairs from traditional media (Vozab & Peruško, 2018). Results from the Digital News Report (period from 2017 to 2021, as cited in Vozab & Peruško, 2021) show a gradual increase in Internet use, but not followed by an increase in digital news use, news interest or trust in news. However, there is a slight rise in trust in news audiences personally use, and concern over disinformation found on Internet. Analysis of news media repertoires found that "minimalist" users with low use of news sources are the most common group of users in Croatia, followed by traditional news users (Vozab, 2019a, 2019b). Younger generations are more often "minimalists" or "social and commercial media users" when it comes to news repertoires, while middle and older generations news repertoires consist of digital news media and traditional media (Vozab, 2019b). Around a quarter of the audiences follow community or civil society media – these audiences differ from the average media user by higher news interest, political engagement, and use a wider array of news sources (Vozab et al., 2017).

News media use in Croatia resembles the characteristics of the polarized pluralist media system (Peruško, 2012, 2013). Newspaper readers in Croatia differ from the average population – they are urban, have a higher socio-economic status and in general inform themselves more often (Čuvalo, 2010; Lamza Posavec & Rihtar, 2003). However, even among the newspaper readers there is a divide between older audiences with lower socio-economic status, with more rural background who usually vote for the right-wing parties; and younger, urban audiences with higher socioeconomic status, who usually vote for left-wing parties (Lamza Posavec & Rihtar, 2003). In the multimedia environment, the socio-economic divide shifted to distinguish between internationally oriented omnivore news users, who have a higher socio-economic status and political interest; and news avoiders, with poor news media diet, who are older, with lower socio-economic status and lower political interest (Vozab, 2019). Traditional news users are older, politically conservative, more educated and with higher interest in political news compared to “news minimalists”; while digital news users have higher socio-economic status, have higher interest in political news and are characterized by left-wing political leaning (Vozab, 2019b). Another analysis found a link between liberal values and online news use (Vozab & Peruško, 2018). Among young news media audiences, a trend is noted in which populist alignment determines use of digital news media outlets (Plenković, 2020). Young audiences who adhere to right-wing populism chose specific media brands and are also more religious and express less trust in media, while young audiences with left-wing populism characteristics express distrust to different social institutions, including media (Plenković, 2020).

4.3. Trust in the Media

Trust is regularly covered in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report. Audiences somewhat trust local and national media, while trust in journalists is not high (Čuvalo, 2010). Television use is positively correlated to trust in many of the political and social institutions, while Internet use is negatively correlated to trust in politics, government, and elites (Čuvalo, 2010, 2013). Qualitative analysis of trust in news media found that audiences in Croatia expressed distrust in news media as expert systems (Pjesivac et al., 2016, 2017). Significant predictors of trust in news are political orientation, access to news and interest in news. News use and interest in news are correlated to trust in news. Audiences closer to the political left have more trust in news, while those close to the political right are more concerned about disinformation (Vozab & Peruško, 2021).

5. Publications, Data sources and Main Monitoring Actors of Media-Related Competencies

5.1. Normative Sources

Structural analysis of media literacy education in Croatia is analyzed by Kanižaj and Car (2015) and Kanižaj (2016), who map media literacy practices in Croatia. Media literacy has not been a priority in education policy, and the term is for the first time only briefly mentioned in the education strategy in 2014 (Kanižaj & Car, 2015). Media literacy or media education is not defined in national legislation, and there is no official body responsible for planning, regulation and evaluation of activities connected to media education (Kanižaj & Car, 2015). Media literacy is being promoted and taught sporadically through engagement of various stakeholders with weak cooperation, stemming mostly from civil society (Kanižaj, 2016). In the last couple of years, most recent period the AEM in partnership with higher education institutions and NGOs, has been engaged more extensively in the promotion of media literacy. This included financial support for media literacy research and education projects, public campaigns, and development of different education materials. Media literacy projects in Croatia include skills like critical

thinking, media use, intercultural dialogue, creativity, participation, and interaction (Kanižaj, 2016).

Media literacy programs have so far been provided in formal education programs as part of media culture in curricula of Croatian Language and Culture, and some aspects of digital literacy are covered in computer classes. However, the formal media literacy education program has been evaluated as outdated (Ciboci, 2018; Ciboci & Labaš, 2019), and educators have not been equipped with competencies for media literacy teaching through their formal education (Ciboci & Osmančević, 2015). Media culture as a part of the Croatian Language and curricula does not encourage critical thinking, nor does it deal with digital media (Ciboci & Labaš, 2019). As a part of the experimental curriculum reform, the computer classes became more available and updated, so students now learn about “network security, data protection, electronic violence and concern for their digital reputation, personal data protection, inappropriate forms of behavior and seeking help for unwanted content or contacts” (Ciboci & Labaš, 2019, pp. 90–91). Usage of information and communication technology was introduced in 2019 in the curricula of elementary and high schools in Croatia as an inter-subject theme.

5.2. Assessment of Media-Related Competencies among Citizens

Croatia is ranked rather low on the media literacy index (24th place with 43 points) (Lessenski, 2021). Research on media-related competencies was rare in the first decade after 2000, and most of the research is published after 2010. Majority of sources which deal with competencies of media users focus on media literacy of children and youth. Media literacy of children and youth is analyzed through the evaluation of media literacy programs in the educational system, evaluation of informal media literacy education programs, testing media literacy among schoolchildren or students, or thorough the analysis of the role of family and parenting styles for media literacy of children. It seems that most of the research focuses on media literacy in general, and less on digital or data literacy.

Some literature is available for the evaluation of media competencies of young media users. Early 2000s research found that although media consumption is one of the most common activities for the youth, there is less communication and discussion about this topic with parents (Ilišin, 2005). Recent analysis found that students have a rich media use but are weaker in critical thinking and production of media content (Ciboci, 2018). Research on critical thinking found that young students have difficulties in understanding stereotypical representation of women in the media (Bubalo & Jelić, 2015).

Media competencies of other socio-demographic groups are not researched at all. There is also a lack of research referring to users’ cognitive abilities (e.g., categories in the bibliography table referring to rational argumentation in public communication, critical consideration of information, authenticity of communication, etc.), users communication competencies, and some aspects of digital literacy. From the literature review, we can assess that the covered areas are those of user’s skills (students and young users) and social context of media related competencies.

6. Analysis of Research and Monitoring Capabilities and Quality

6.1. Comparative Analytical Overview of Data Processing Capabilities

Raw data on media systems / structures is available from different regulatory bodies (both media specific, like AEM, or broader, like the Croatian Competition Agency or the Chamber of Commerce), the Court Register, the Association of Communications Agencies, or the Croatian Bureau of Statistics. Some data are free and openly available, and some data are member only (people-meter TV audiences) although some of that data is regularly published either by the media themselves or by the AEM.

With a long tradition of communication and media social science research dating from the 1960s, and presently six academic journals for media and communication studies, the number of published research studies is high (over 500 were selected and analyzed for this case study). The availability of data varies by ROs domain.

Policymakers in the media field are not quick to use research evidence as basis for their policies. Even if they send representatives to different round tables or conferences, or invite academics to legal proposal working groups, their suggestions are rarely implemented.

6.1.1. Law and Ethics

The Legal and ethical domain includes an adequate number on sources regarding the freedom of expression area predominantly focusing on defamation, also including hate speech and to a lesser (or more recent) extent, disinformation. Protection of personal data is not that well covered by research, and copyright protection is almost non-existent topic in relation to media. Research on the protection of journalistic sources is also insufficient, with only one research article, and no research is available on whistleblowing and the media and trade secrets. Issues of media ownership and transparency are well covered and presented in the Journalism domain.

Research coverage of the area of accountability is also not sufficient, with only a few articles dealing with ethical issues, and several more investigate the accountability of regulatory bodies. General normative perspectives of the media and journalism are more numerous, especially in various articles or books dealing with media policy issues.

6.1.2. Journalism

Most fields of interest in the Journalism domain are adequately covered and allow further analysis in Case study 2. The Journalism domain includes several articles and raw data regarding shape of the media market and the level of its pluralism and diversity. Production conditions for journalism are mainly investigated in relation to digitalization changes, while other aspects (economic) are not as numerous. Although PSB as a topic has permeated the media-policy related debate since the 1990s, we would expect more academic studies on this issue. Working and organizational conditions for journalists were also a topics of research studies, and the area of professional culture and journalistic competencies is well covered. There is also a host of articles that in some way touch upon journalism, often in relation to the quality of its content or in relation to representation of various social groups, that can be used as supporting evidence for other domains (e.g., legal).

6.1.3. Media Usage

Media usage research is rather scarce before 2010, but later studies are adequate to answer many of the questions posed by our study. Sources exist for evaluating access to media, relevance of news media, trust in the media.

6.1.4. Media-Related Competencies

The media literacy area / media competencies domain is well covered in relation to children and young people, but the data is not available for older audiences. The research only started after 2010 so the first period of our study is not covered.

6.2. Monitoring Capabilities and the Quality of Data and Knowledge

6.2.1. Recency and Continuity of Data (for each of the domains)

The raw data required by law are gathered annually and some are also published annually – this includes the change of structure of ownership and change to ownership, press circulation, advertising, media, and genre usage, etc. More than two thirds of all academic and other published sources are dated after 2010, although some of these studies also pertain to the first decade, i.e., 2000–2010.

Media-related competencies and Media usage domains are deficient in data or information regarding the first decade. The Journalism domain has enough articles through, but not all the topics / key words are equally represented. For the Legal domain, we have enough data for both the first and the second decade, and it is possible to view it in a longitudinal fashion.

6.2.2. Complexity of Data-Gathering (for each of the domains)

Different data are collected by different institutions, there is no one-stop shop. Data (required by law) are gathered by institutions with the same methodology in all parts of Croatia, but they differ according to the type of media because they are gathered by different institutions and according to different legal requirements i.e., articles in various laws / or commercial interests.

6.2.3. Trust and Reliability (for each of the domains)

Most data are gathered according to transparent methodology. Accuracy is the same as with all statistics (i.e., the accuracy depends on the bodies that send the data, and sometimes those might not be really accurate). There are also data from various research projects that are useful, as described above. Not all the published literature includes reliable data, some articles do not cite data sources or provide information on how the data was collected. We made every effort to exclude such articles and publications from our analysis and the database.

One issue that especially stands out in the Legal and ethical domain is the importance to distinguish between the texts by legal and media scholars. Legal scholars have a thorough understanding of the law and its different implications, but often have no knowledge about the broader media context or any media and communication theory, and thus their broader statements are sometimes inaccurate or misleading. Media scholars are on the other hand much more invested in the freedom of the media and journalists over issues of personal rights (the exception are studies involving the rights of children in the media), and their analyses sometimes do not consider the interaction of different legislation. It was difficult to exclude all the articles that have a problem in one of these areas; we often used articles from legal scholars in relation to their legal analyses, but not in respect to their broader statements about the media system (there are exceptions, especially legal scholars who specialize in media). It would be useful to bring these two groups of scholars together to improve the interdisciplinarity of the research area.

In relation to articles by legal scholars, an additional issue is their often-inappropriate citation practice, where they do not use the standard international scientific norms of using quotation marks around direct quotations of texts by other authors but include only a footnote reference from which it is not clear if the text / which part of the text is a direct quotation. This practice is widely used in different legal reviews and legal publications that we consulted (attempts to challenge it in court in terms of plagiarism were not successful as this kind of citation was pronounced to be the standard in the field).

Legal publications and articles are often not published in open-source journals, so their availability is limited, although they are available in public libraries.

One significant problem with the quality of published work is that some authors make sweeping statements that are not factually correct, and without any citations to support them. This negatively influences the cumulative quality that science has in ideal situations, because newcomers to the discipline take these statements for a fact and continue to quote the source. This is certainly the result of a low quality of academic reviews before publication in some journals, and the examples are also found in disciplinary journals like law reviews with ignorant statements relating to social or historical circumstances of the media.

6.2.4. Availability of Experts and / or Specific Research Structures (for each of the domains)

Although communication and media studies are a small academic field in Croatia (although with a relatively large number of journalism / communication programs and academic journals), there are experts in all the four dimensions of ROs. The quality of their published work varies, as well as does its impact. As Croatia is very small country (the last census in 2022 showed a little less than 4 million), its experts are easily identifiable, and they are not too numerous. Although the number of published articles in media and communication is very large, the number of authors who can be seen as experts is not that large.

The key authors with competitive research projects have been named in the first part of the study.

7. Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to assess the available of (primarily) academic knowledge and data in the four ROs domains in the past 20-year period. The presumption that academic and other research and monitoring of the state of the media system, or the political information environment (Esser et al., 2012) can make an impact, is that the decision-makers (the government and political actors) are willing and capable to learn from and consult with those who possess the knowledge. Thus, in addition to the analysis of the institutionalization of the academic discipline in terms of the establishment of academic programs, journals and empirical research (Löblich et al., 2011) and its intellectual history in terms of the topics under study, research quality and the predominant approaches (Splichal, 1989a, 1989b; Potter et al., 1993; Fink & Gantz, 1996; Bryant & Mirion, 2004) to the four key domains that are seen as influencing deliberative communication in the “*Mediadelcom*” project, it was necessary to include also an analysis of policy-making bodies and actors influencing the media system. Such an extended institutional analysis identified the network of actors with relevance for the four risk and opportunity areas. In extending the institutional analysis of the field of the academic discipline with the field of the media and media system, other important actors, and their capacity to use research-based evidence were identified. This approach similarly to Splendore and Grandusi (2021, Italian Case study 1 in this project) and employs Bourdieu’s (1993, 1996) field theory to link the academic and pragmatic fields of media and communication. A full analysis of the impact of the political

field on the academic field of media studies and the field of media practice, and vice versa, needs further analysis.

The field of communication and media studies started to develop in the 1960s Croatia in relation to western academic thought and this can be seen as an advantage over CEE countries where this only started after 1990 (with a few exceptions). The quality of research, in terms of theoretically designed empirical research, still leaves a lot to be desired. Earlier studies show that with each decade after 2000 (the decade of the 1990s being a retrograde decade when the quality of published media and communication research was lower than in the 1980s) the number of such articles is increasing, to reach 46 % in 2011 (Peruško & Vozab, 2017). For some of the ROs dimensions (Media-related competencies and Media usage), it will be difficult to show trends or turning points in the subject areas, as relevant publications only appear after 2011.

Along with the growth in the volume of research and academic production after 2010 – some two thirds of relevant research was published in the second decade of our interest – there is an increase in research in all four domains. The largest number of sources are found in the domain of Journalism, followed by the Legal and ethical domain. The least numerous sources are in the Media related competencies domain, especially pertaining to journalist competencies. The period from 2011 to 2016 was the most productive in research of most of the domains, while the greatest number of research in the Media usage / Audiences' domain is published in the latest period from 2017 to 2021. Research on Media usage published before 2010 is very scarce, and while the second decade has many studies, there are still substantial knowledge gaps, especially in relation to media trust and social media use.

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