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Far-right Nationalism and Populism in Europe: Assaults on Press Freedom

Series: Democracy Under Pressure

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Series: Democracy Under Pressure

Far-right Nationalism and Populism in Europe: Assaults on Press Freedom

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines press freedom in 12 European countries in the context of the threat posed to the watchdog role of independent journalism in democracies by far-right and populist political parties. The countries examined are: Austria; Bosnia & Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; France; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Montenegro; Poland; Romania; and Serbia. The time period covered is 2012-2016, inclusive, which marks a rise in support for far-right and populist parties in a number of European countries.

Although particular attention was paid, in the research, to reports of physical assaults on journalists, we utilise a broadened interpretation of the term 'assault on the media' to include legal action, threats, intimidation, verbal and online abuse, the leverage of employment precarity, abuse of monopolistic media positions by state and private actors.

Key findings:

- Impunity is commonplace when it comes to assaults of any type against journalists. Rarely are perpetrators brought to justice. In some instances, it is alleged that police do not take appropriate action. In other cases, the law does not provide for effective protection.
- Rises in the number of assaults are usually accompanied by increased concerns about the democratic health of a country.
- Online abuse is disproportionately directed at women.
- Media monopolies / oligarchies in the hands of actors, both public and private, some of them affiliated with populist / far-right ideologies, constitute an increasing threat to independent journalism.
- The ability of far-right / populist politicians and parties to circumvent the mainstream media by reaching large numbers of supporters directly, online, in particular through social media, is creating echo chambers for political ideologies and in particular for vilification of the mainstream press as, for purveyors of 'fake news'.
- Most of the countries examined have experienced a drop in international press freedom rankings across the time period researched; the decline in ranking is particularly evident in countries that have witnessed a systemic rise in populist / far-right support.

- Economic dependence on the state and other actors endangered and compromises independent journalism, especially in times of prolonged financial crisis.

Recommendations:

- Governments must make greater efforts to combat the climate of impunity when it comes to assaults of any kind against journalists, including those perpetrated by figures affiliated with far-right / populist ideologies.
- Independent regulatory oversight mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure that illiberal political ideologies and an often-concomitant assault on press freedom, cannot be furthered by media monopolies.
- Police and other security bodies must be sensitised to the rights of journalists covering any form of activity, including demonstrations, by political parties, including far-right / populist ones.
- Legal instruments must be developed to provide for more effective protection of journalists and the intersectionality factor (ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) in assaults against newspeople.
- Mechanisms of monitoring must be overhauled with a stronger and effective collaboration among stakeholders in national and international levels; data must be gathered, crossreferenced and publicised widely on a regular basis in addition to reports provided by existing organisations.
- Establish independently audited and publicly controlled central funds for independent journalism and media, to enable the separation of the state from the media as the sole or core funder, in times of crisis.

Introduction

This report provides a closer examination of the challenges faced by journalists covering the far right and the politics of populism across Europe. The investigation derives from two intersecting trends in European societies today. On the one hand, the idea of Europe as a system of political and economic integration is being challenged by a complex set of exogenous and internal factors, with the financial crisis sitting, arguably, at the core. On the other hand, the increasing numbers of attacks and assaults against journalists and newsmen in the broader European space provide a second framework of pressure under which freedom of expression and press freedom on the continent is compromised.

This particular study examines the state of journalism within the context of the rise of far-right political parties across Europe and with the emergence of autocratic, yet formally democratic countries. Examples of such political context are the nominally-defined far-right parties such as UKIP championing Britain's vote to leave the European Union, the challenging position of the National Front in the presidential elections in France and the rise of the Alternative fuer Deutschland in Germany, to the narrow loss of a far-right Freedom Party candidate in the 2016 Austrian presidential election and to the expansion of support for the Jobbik party in Hungary.

Methodology

The study explores the past five years in 12 European countries with the aim to answer the question: What challenges do journalists face, especially those covering far-right, populist, nationalist parties? The study pays particular attention to physical attacks on journalists as well as threats. Each country was explored through interviews and media archives research, including where possible in the national language of the country being researched, as well as statements, articles, reports and databases from international and national NGOs dealing with press freedom and the media, and national authorities and international institutions that deal with media freedom, including: the Council of Europe; the OSCE; the European Commission; Amnesty International; the Association of European Journalists; the Helsinki Committees; the Austrian Foreign Ministry; the Central Election Committee of Bulgaria; the Committee to Protect Journalists; the European Charter on Freedom of the Press; the European Centre for Press

and Media Freedom; the European Federation of Journalists; the European Journalism Centre; the European Union; Freedom House; the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights; Human Rights Watch; IFEX; Index on Censorship; the Institute for War and Peace Reporting; the International Press Institute; the IREX Media Sustainability Index; the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung; the Municipality of the City of Vienna; Medija Centar Beograd; Ossigeno; Parlamentarna skupstina BiH; Reporters sand Frontiers; and the South East Europe Media Organisation; UNESCO.

In some of the countries researched, there were no records of journalists being physically attacked by far-right groups in the last five years, while in others there were numerous incidents reported. For this reason, the report involves data on the specific countries researched and can be termed a press freedom report on the series of countries, with a very strong emphasis on far-right nationalism / populism.

An early challenge was defining the “far right” and “populism”. For example, although in France the National Front is routinely referred to as the country’s far-right party, there is also activity by the so-called Identitarian party, which has far less support but which also occupies a position on the far-right spectrum. In terms of theoretical criteria, the report is based in part on Vieten and Poynting’s assertion (2016) that the global rise of populist, right-wing, nationalist, xenophobic movements is in large part a reaction to the insecurities and displacement of neoliberalism in the context of the global financial crisis. In addition, Taggart (2000) and other authors (see, e.g. Jansen 2015; Mudde 2015; Zùquete 2015) agree that foremost, populist mood is driven by strong anti-elite anger; and further, there is a claim to be nativist, where nativism means having an inherited entitlement to the common good of a society. Vieten and Poynting (2016) observe that all populist rhetoric shares the fundamental distinction between ‘we’ the pure people, and ‘them’, the corrupt elite. Far-right populism, further identifies an enemy figure on whom real insecurities may be projected: the Other, the Muslim: the Jew.

The report is part of the ‘Democracy under Pressure’ focus of the Media Governance and Industries Research Lab, of the University of Vienna.

Country Reports

1. Austria

After the general election in 2013, it became clear that Austria's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) had gained significant strength. The two mainstream parties, the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), had dominated the country's political scene since World War II. The trend was consolidated in the 2015 presidential election, in which the FPÖ also significantly increased its voter share. The continued growth in political power of the FPÖ was even more starkly apparent during the Austrian presidential election in 2016. In the first round, FPÖ candidate Norbert Hofer came first with 35.05% of the votes. The two mainstream parties came only fourth and fifth.

The run-off pitted the FPÖ's Norbert Hofer against independent, Green Party-supported candidate Alexander van der Bellen. The two candidates were neck-and-neck. Many voters were concerned that if Hofer won Austria would turn in a dangerous direction because the far right would gain enough power to undermine Austria's democratic nature. Hans Rauscher, a columnist for the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard*, warned that if Hofer won, Austria would become like Hungary. There were also fears that if Hofer became president he would dismiss the government, forcing an early general election, which could be won by the FPÖ (benefitting from migration crisis headwind) and propelling its leader, Heinz Christian Strache, into the seat of Chancellor.¹

Van der Bellen ultimately won, by 53.8% to 46.2%, in a rerun of the initial run-off vote, which was annulled because of vote-counting irregularities. In Reporters without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, Austria was ranked No. 11 in 2016, four spots lower than the year before.² In Reporters without Borders's view:

“The constitution and the 1981 media law guarantee media freedom but defaming and slandering politicians and government officials continues to be penalized and this forces journalists to censor themselves. The concentration of media ownership in few hands

¹ cf. Rauscher (2016)

² cf. Reporters Without Border (2016h)

also affects journalistic independence. In several regions, the most important daily newspaper owns the only privately-owned local radio station.”³

FPÖ leader Strache regularly accuses the media of lying and a website linked to his party, unzensuriert.at, often posts news articles purportedly indicating that the intention of the media is to report lies, or simply not report on stories that undermine the interests of the ‘establishment’ Unzensuriert.at, in turn, appears to propagate ‘alternative’ truths, which are then widely shared across social media, further cementing the view in some quarters that mainstream journalists are not to be trusted, and fuelling the ‘fear factor’.

All of this results, in Austria, in journalists regularly being targeted with hate postings. For example, after a TV interview with Norbert Hofer conducted by TV presenter Ingrid Thurnher, the journalist was insulted and threatened on social media. The Austrian public service broadcaster, ORF, for which she works, took action, and some of the postings were removed from Twitter and Facebook.⁴

Christa Zöchling, from the news magazine Profil has also been on the receiving end. One comment directed at her was: “Too bad the gas chambers do not exist anymore.” Another explained how to use her head for target practice. These comments were made on the homepage of unzensuriert.at. Zöchling brought charges against the commentators and won, in the first instance. An appeal has, though, been launched.⁵

Ingrid Brodnig, a former editor at Profil, has also been abused and threatened on social media. She sees four levels on which the hate is built and intensified: Firstly, the political situation in Austria is a trigger for a lot of emotions. Secondly, websites and homepages frame far-right and other parties in a certain light. Thirdly, in the social media world, people can operate anonymously and thus consistently post offensive and aggressive content and participate in increasingly hateful online debates. Fourthly, although people who post threats online can be prosecuted, those above them who may have indirectly incited them suffer no legal consequences.⁶

Brodnig suggested that debate on Twitter is increasingly aggressive, including the involvement of anonymous accounts. Facebook, she added, is more the realm of the angry citizen. For

³ cf. Reporters Without Borders (2016h)

⁴ cf. Sulzbacher (02.06.2016)

⁵ cf. Der Standard (21.01.2017)

⁶ cf. International Press Institute (18.01.2017)

example, when FPÖ leader Strache addresses a topic, the knock-on anger-stirring effect is broad and includes citizens who are not necessarily ardent FPÖ supporters.⁷

Earlier, when journalist Werner Reisinger was working for the Austrian public broadcaster ORF, he responded to a group of right-wing extremists who had mailed the editorial office. A right-wing extremist newspaper subsequently published Reisinger's private address and phone number. From then on, he was threatened by email and post. He says, it is difficult to assess the degree of danger he may have been in, but to this day the matter evokes fear in him. Some of his colleagues at the newspaper Wiener Zeitung, where he now works, were banned from FPÖ pre-election parties because of their critical reporting. He notes that the FPÖ-linked online platform unzensuriert.at successfully defames mainstream media. Women, he adds, receive more abuse than men.⁸

Journalist Jelena Gucanin says she has never been attacked or abused in person, but on social media and via email. After writing an article about sexual abuse she received an email with a sex video. Following an article she wrote about the image of women in the FPÖ she received responses suggesting she go home if she doesn't like it in Austria. And sometimes she receives private messages on Facebook: One man wrote her to say that she was mentally unbalanced and that he would be glad to go for a walk with her, to show her that she was not going to be harassed, because sexism does not exist. Quite a few men, she argues, believe that sexism does not exist.⁹

The International Press Institute (IPI) conducted interviews with five female journalists from Vienna who have had similar experiences: Verena Bogner (Broadly, Vice News' women's interest news site); Teresa Havlicek (Wienerin, a women's lifestyle magazine); Solmaz Khorsand (the daily Wiener Zeitung); Oona Kroisleitner (the daily Der Standard); and freelancer Olja Alvir.¹⁰

Insults included "Go die, you whore" or "You should be raped by a refugee." During the interview two conclusions were formed:¹¹

"First, the abuse is extraordinarily invasive, particularly when it reaches journalists unfiltered via social media; and second, the quantity and nature of the abuse depends

⁷ cf. International Press Institute (18.01.2017)

⁸ cf. Interview with Werner Reisinger on January 15th 2017. The whole interview is in the appendix.

⁹ cf. Interview with Jelena Gucanin on January 18th 2017. The whole interview is in the appendix.

¹⁰ Vogt (05.10.2016)

¹¹ cf. Vogt (05.10.2016)

strongly on the issue being covered. All of the journalists we interviewed stated that they could tell in advance whether an article would be particularly controversial and give rise to a large number of comments and postings.¹²

Women are particularly likely to be abused online when they write about feminism or refugees. Every time the five journalists interviewed wrote a critical article about right-wing populism or the FPÖ, hateful online comments ensued, particularly on Facebook and Twitter, and articles about the journalists appeared on the platform unsenzuriert.at. Although the threats were reported, many of them remain visible on the Internet.¹³

Both, Reisinger and Gucanin suggested there is actually no way to prevent threats. As a journalist you have two options: either you write critical articles and are threatened or you censor yourself and do not write about critical topics.¹⁴

¹² Vogt (05.10.2016)

¹³ cf. Vogt (05.10.2016)

¹⁴ cf. Interview with Jelena Gucanin on January 18th 2017.

2. Bosnia & Herzegovina

The Center for Social Research Analitika, a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, notes that “the countries of the Western Balkans, including B&H, suffer from a “transplant effect”. Namely, the international community imposed nearly all of the most important laws regulating the media sphere in B&H; the laws were borrowed from another context that has not always fit.¹⁵

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) confirms this “transplant effect” in their report on Bosnia for 2016:

“This country has the world’s most liberal media freedom laws but their implementation is held back by a saturated judicial system. Defamation was decriminalized in 2003 but lawsuits are still possible. Journalists are often the targets of threats and political pressure. The situation is aggravated by the fact that the pro-government media continue to enjoy direct and indirect state subsidies.”¹⁶

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s (B&H) main problem remains division based on nationalism, intolerance and economic decline as consequences of the 1992-95 war and the peace agreement that ended the conflict but kept the division. The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement (B&H’s constitution at the same time) administratively split the country’s territory into two semi-autonomous constituent entities: The Federation of BiH (FB&H) is populated mostly by Muslim Bosniaks and Roman Catholic Croats while the Republika Srpska entity is dominated by Christian Orthodox Serbs.¹⁷

Each entity has its own public broadcaster and in general media are divided along ethnic lines as well. Unfortunately, salaries of journalists and other professionals in the media are low. They are hence forced to work for multiple media organisations in order to earn for themselves and their families. This also results in corruption among journalists and keeps honest and qualified

¹⁵ <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2014-bosnia.pdf>, p. 19

¹⁶ <https://rsf.org/en/bosnia-herzegovina/> / Accessed January 13, 2017

¹⁷ Republika Srpska is ruled by Serb nationalists, mostly from the SNSD party (Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata). On the other hand The Federation of B&H is ruled by Bosniak nationalist party SDA (Stranka demokratske akcije) and Croat nationalist party HDZ BiH (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica BiH). The constitution of B&H is discriminatory toward other nations as only members of the main three can serve as presidents or as members of the Parliament’s Upper House.

staff out of the media profession. In B&H, there are currently very few media outlets engaged in investigative journalism. Those few are primarily financed by international donors.¹⁸

Some political magazines involving investigative journalism have been produced and shown by public broadcasting companies BHRT or FTV. On the other hand, investigative journalism is close to nonexistent at private media outlets. Journalists working in local newsrooms rarely specialise in specific topics. Rather, they work on different stories, usually driven by requests from their editors, and have little opportunity to explore their areas of interest and become experts in certain fields. As a result, specialised and quality reporting in areas such as justice or economics is rare.

A look at RSF, Press Freedom Media House, and IREX reports on the state of B&H journalism clearly confirms a significant deterioration of the free media environment since 2016. The Bosnia and Herzegovina public service broadcasting system consists of three broadcasters: BHRT, which is a country-wide service, and two separate-entity public broadcasters, Radio and Television of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Radio-Televizija Federacije BiH - RTFBiH), in charge for the Federation entity, and Radio and Television of Republika Srpska (Radio- Televizija Republike Srpske- RTRS) for Republika Srpska. In its report from December 2011 SEEMO (The Vienna-based South East Europe Media Organisation) described the main problem of the B&H entity's public service broadcasters in the following way: "The public broadcasters, designed to promote cohesion and tolerance, tend to behave as rivals. They have been used and abused by different political parties, generally organised along ethnic lines. The country-wide public broadcaster BHRT has been especially targeted by political parties".¹⁹

Reuf Herić, Director of Radio Q in Visoko / BiH and Board chairman of the Association of Private Radio and Television Stations illustrates the bias based on political and/or ethno-national identification: "While reporting on the same situation, they seem as if one was on the

¹⁸According to IREX report 2016, international donors have offered several regional and national award programs for journalists (EU Regional Award for Investigative Reporting, ACCOUNT Journalists Award, SGIP USAID Award, etc.) to support independent reporting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. USAID is the primary supporter of investigative reporting by CIN (Centar za istraživačko novinarstvo) and Žurnal web magazine. CIN occasionally receives financial support from National Endowment for Democracy NED, EU, Balkan Trust for Democracy and other donors. Regional project such as SEE Media Observatory provide dome grants for journalists as well.

¹⁹<http://www.seemo.org/activities/pressfreedom/11/press1192.html>, Report "SEEMO Calls on President of Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to Respect and Support Country's Public Broadcasters" from December 20,2011

moon and the other was on Mars, and neither was at the scene.”²⁰ Private media reflect these divisions too.

In December 2011, Milorad Dodik, the president of Republika Srpska who advocates a secession of the Serb entity from Bosnia and therefore tends to reject any state-level institution, stated that BHRT should be abolished and people living in his entity should not be paying for it. Already in 2008, Dodik declared BHRT to be “a foreign TV station as far as the Bosnian Serbs are concerned”.²¹ For Dodik, the BHRT is a “monster that lives in Sarajevo”.²² BHRT is currently facing a blackout because of its financial situation. Officials have not managed to find a way to finance it by imposing fees. This has nothing to do with the difficult economic situation but is a consequence of a political quarrel.²³

On top of that problem comes the request of the main Croat nationalist party HDZ for the establishment of a separate TV channel for Croats, as the existing channels, they claim, do not fulfill the needs of that part of Bosnia’s population.²⁴ This additionally burdens the financial situation of the national broadcaster as the Croats also refuse to pay the fee. This gravely affects the FTV (public broadcaster of the Federation entity) as most Croats consider it a Bosniak TV station because it is based in the Bosniak-dominated capital of Sarajevo.

These ethnic and political divisions are the main cause for limitations on journalistic freedom and attacks against journalists. Gordana Šarović, the director of the Technical Information Center at the RTRS Istočno Sarajevo (Republika Srpska) bureau, said, “We from the RTRS have a general problem getting information from institutions in the Federation.”²⁵ On the other hand, journalists from the Federation of BiH face the same problem when trying to obtain information from the institutions in Republika Srpska.

²⁰<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2013-bosnia.pdf>, p. 27

²¹<http://www.h-alter.org/vijesti/dodik-pozvao-bosanske-srbe-da-ne-placaju-pretplatu-bht-u>

²²<http://www.seemo.org/activities/pressfreedom/11/press1192.html>, Report “SEEMO Calls on President of Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to Respect and Support Country’s Public Broadcasters” from December 20, 2011

²³According to Media Clientelism Index, a regional assessment of clientelism and politicisation of media in five countries of the Western Balkans, B&H, together with Macedonia, suffers the most influence of political elites on media - quote from <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2016-bosnia.pdf>

²⁴The official languages are Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian but they are linguistically the same language – Serbo-Croatian, once used in Yugoslavia. The division is political and the names for the language changed as each former Yugoslav republic declared independence and renamed the language after its new country. In Bosnia, all three languages are official languages and often official documents are published in three copies although with almost the same language.

²⁵<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2015-bosnia.pdf>, page 19

Although restrictions in freedom of media represent a country-wide problem, they appear to be tighter in Republika Srpska. Even the journalists who come from Republika Srpska will experience significant restrictions in free access to information if they are considered the political opponents of the ruling SNSD party. “The political party SNSD (the president of this party is Milorad Dodik) published a “black list” of media: journalists and NGOs labeled as foreign mercenaries and disturbers of the constitutional order in RS.”²⁶

According to Freedom House, in 2015 “journalists of BN TV and Serbia’s Beta news agency are said to be still banned from covering events at the Presidential Palace of RS.”²⁷ The difficult economic situation, worsened by further withdrawals of international funding for media outlets, is an additional factor that diminishes the independence of the media from political and commercial influences. Boro Kontić, director of Media Centar in Sarajevo explains this kind of pressure on the media: “Why do media choose to have relations with the state? Because the state is the only source of additional funding.”²⁸

All this resulted in increased self-censorship among journalists and editors. Also, the journalists who write stories that incriminate powerful members of the political and business elite are attacked viciously. All this makes journalists and editors reluctant to report on the most prominent crime cases, such as war crime and corruption. Lawsuits are an additional mechanism for weakening the journalists and media. Although libel was decriminalised in 2003, journalists still face civil penalties for libel complaints. Borka Rudić, secretary-general of the Association of BH Journalists, who has analysed more than 700 cases of defamation lawsuits in a 10-year period, explains this strategy of intimidation of journalists:

“Most politicians file lawsuits to put pressure on the media, not with the intention of actually going through with a defamation proceeding. I have followed the lawsuits filed by Avaz (i.e., the former owner of Avaz); he filed 260 lawsuits in a period of five years and quickly withdrew 190 of them. Therefore, he achieved what he wanted in relation to pressure.”²⁹

The magazine *Slobodna Bosna* from Sarajevo, which often openly criticised the government and nationalists in general, was driven to the brink of closure in November 2014 due to the financial impact of numerous libel lawsuits (primarily from politicians). In another case, for

²⁶<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2015-bosnia.pdf>, page 18

²⁷<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/bosnia-and-herzegovina>

²⁸<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2012-bosnia.pdf>, page 24

²⁹<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2014-bosnia.pdf>, page 21

example, Milorad Dodik's libel charges against FTV were judged differently depending on the entity in which the court was based.

Another serious obstacle comes from the fact that free speech violations are rarely prosecuted and punished. Experts for the local media find that it is the consequence of limited capacity, inefficiency, and, in some cases, lack of willingness to prosecute such cases on the part of the police and the judiciary system. A 2014 IREX report notes: "Journalists generally feel unprotected; they are often unwilling to tackle the more sensitive issues that would put them in danger, hindering reporting on issues of public relevance as a result."³⁰ The Bosnian Serb leader, Milorad Dodik, is the most prominent Bosnian politician accused of heavily manipulating as well as pressuring and threatening media. Dodik, who has been known to be sensitive to criticism, has never hesitated to openly insult journalists or news reports he does not like, in full public view – on camera. Slobodan Vasković, a journalist and the author of the popular and respected blog "Sa druge strane" (From the other side), is very critical of Milorad Dodik and his close associates. Since 2011, Mr. Vasković has been persistently accusing them of embezzlement and corruption. At the end of 2016, Mr. Vasković had to flee Bosnia and Herzegovina after receiving death threats from members of the government of the Republika Srpska. In an interview for this report, Vasković said:

"On 20 November this year I was threatened with being blown up. I was forced to leave the country for nine days. The threats came from the leadership of the SNSD. Days before that threat, I was threatened by top SNSD party officials via social networks and one of them even publically offered money for "effective means" against me. Also on 10.09.2016 an unknown driver tried to push me off the road on Ugar, Vlašić, while I was traveling to Sarajevo. Before that they attacked me on the street, punched me once, hit me with a car twice. On 30.12.2015, the Minister for Police labeled me the "destroyer of RS institutions and the Ministry of Interior of the RS ... I have no other word but 'hell' to describe the environment in which our journalists live and work ... Attacking journalists is part of the Milorad Dodik's populist agenda. The attacks are premediated, precisely timed, and perpetrated publicly and forcefully, so that journalists are constantly kept in fear and forced to self-censor. There is a whole range of premediated attacks on journalists, which are performed by various parts of the ruling elite: from regime-hired bloggers to the SNSD's senior officials and Dodik's advisers. Of course, everything is done through the regime-owned media. The most open attacks are done by Mr. Dodik himself: he insults

³⁰<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2014-bosnia.pdf>, page 20

journalists, throws them out of press conferences, forbids them to enter government properties, and the like. All this has been happening so often, that by now it has become something completely 'normal'.³¹

On 15 November, 2015, as Dodik was giving public statements in front of cameras, when Gordana Katana, a journalist of the Sarajevo-based *Oslobodjenje* paper, asked him a question he did not like, he responded in the following way:

"You are coming from a media which is the way it is and from a nation which is the way it is ... thanks to you, we have cancelled in the RS institutions all subscriptions for your paper "Oslobodjenje" so nobody can read it there. Now you can write what you want."³²

Despite strong divisions and fragmentations of media space along entity lines, there is still an institution, the Association of BH Journalists, which is fighting for freedom of expression and against its opponents all over the country. Especially important in this fight is the association's helpline. Una Telegrafčić, a coordinator at the helpline, explains:

"In the event of an attack or threat against journalists and media employees, our helpline creates a report of the incident and forwards it to the police and the proper judicial institutions, as well as international and national organisations acting in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as the OSCE, ombudsmen for human rights, etc. Especially helpful are press releases that international organisations regularly publish because they draw wide attention to the incidents that we report about.

"Cooperation between the police and the Association of BH Journalists can be characterised as good since the police, for the most part, does its job and reports back with details on a particular incident. As for the court and the judicial system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there actions face significant problems due to the lack of a media law. We definitely need such a law, as we need a Media Ombudsman, too."

The helpline of the Association of BH Journalists recorded an increase in violations of media freedom and journalist rights in B&H over the last two years. On 15 February, 2016, Bosnia and Herzegovina formally submitted its application for EU membership. The Association of BH Journalists expects that the application for the EU membership will help in protecting the rights of journalists and other media employees, revealing ownership of media houses, and

³¹Interview from December 2016

³²Translated into English / Original on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tsd6xMuNISC>

increasing freedom of media and freedom of expression in general. Journalist Slobodan Vasković is not optimistic, though:

“There is a sharp division among journalists, which cannot be easily overcome: there are those who obey (any kind of) regimes and those who are criticising the regimes. Very often the journalists who protect the regime are the most persistent and the most brutal persecutors of independent journalists. Unfortunately, this situation will get worse in the foreseeable future. Regarding the threats and attacks against journalists, the situation is getting worse day by day and this tendency will not change any time soon.”

3. Bulgaria

With its ubiquitous social and political baggage, Bulgaria ranks lowest among all EU member states, on the Press Freedom Index. Freedom House describes Bulgaria as 'partly free' in terms of freedom of speech and press, whilst the Committee to Protect Journalists claims that lately Bulgaria has been overshadowed by the attention on media freedom breaches in neighbouring countries Greece and Turkey, but that it is definitely no safe haven for freedom of expression. The following chapter examines some aspects and recent developments in political violence against journalists and the media, especially threats against, and limitations of, journalism, arising from the growing popularity and political relevance of far-right populist parties.

The last decade of the 20th Century brought about immense transformations of political life in Europe. The 'Third Wave' of democratisation, and especially the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, initiated a chain of transformative processes in politics, economics and society, and caught a number of states in a transitory struggle between the totalitarian status quo of the system, and the challenges of newly introduced open-market and pluralist liberal democracy (Ognianova, 1997). Former communist states embarked on a quest for political and economic restructuring, to secure the place of the media system on the transformative agenda. While most Eastern European states already have the required infrastructure and qualifications for producing quality media output, there is another set of challenges that persist. Totalitarian traditions of government control over the media clash with the conventional balanced relationship between media and politics in Western democracies. Whilst democratisation of political and social institutions of the time has undoubtedly contributed to the restoration of freedom of expression, and introduced pluralist media, political and media actors remain somewhat at odds. Former usage of national media for the purposes of politicised communication and propaganda has led to attempts to almost completely decouple government and media. Establishing stable but independent communication between the new political system and national media has proved to be among the most challenging and controversial tasks under the transition to democracy (Votmar, Dobrova, 2009). The new direction in which former Eastern European regimes are heading has

introduced a tricky balance between co-dependence of political and media actors, independent watchdog political journalism, and the media, as a channel of political communication.

To date, Bulgaria has established itself as a stable parliamentary democracy, with little political turbulence, despite a number of persisting societal issues, specific, but not limited, to the Balkan states, such as organised crime and corruption. Since pluralism of parties and movements is a relatively new feature of Bulgarian political life, the establishment of numerous short-lived political parties, with mostly mainstream positioning on the national party spectrum, is becoming increasingly common. The emergence of a far-right populist and nationalist party is a recent, but eventful, phenomenon for both politics and the media.

Despite the communist regime's tight grasp on Bulgarian media, it left behind a well-developed media infrastructure, qualified content producers and an active audience (Ognianova, 1997, Voltmer, Dobрева, 2009), with both print and broadcasting media traditions dating back to the monarchy. For political institutions and the media, the post-communist transition is a competition: the media has been quicker to find its way in the democratisation process, in spite of the connections of journalists, staff and owners to the previous regime, whereas public bodies are taking more time to modernise and introduce a stable regulatory framework for journalism.

Neither nationalism, nor populism are newcomers among the ideologies and peculiarities of Bulgarian political movements. Bulgaria's ethnic diversity, a consequence of the country's geopolitics and history, gave rise to nationalist and ethnocentric political movements and actions in the final years of the communist regime. However, much like other political splinters of the totalitarian government, nationalist ones never managed to surface as an ideological success. During the period of transition, in the light of socialist / communist versus democratic party polarity and domestic democratisation, nationalist agendas become virtually inexistent, especially with the outbreak of the Bosnian wars in the early 1990s (Palchev, 2002, cited in: Ghodsee, 2008), and later, with the processes of meeting accession requirements of NATO and EU. Contemporary populism, however, has surfaced independently of movement ideology or left – right positioning. Thus, according to Jones (2007), Bulgarian populism, entered the political stage in an 'entrepreneurial' and 'centrist' form, with the political undertaking of Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha, former successor to the throne of the Bulgarian monarchy. His political platform was built upon popular disenchantment with current governing parties, simple slogans, and an agenda of transparency and measures against corruption, and none of the abrasive

rhetoric and nationalist sentiments of the populism of today. The newer brand of populism³³, whose threatening advances across Europe are being examined in this study, comes with cruder slogans and political direction. Radical right populism as a phenomenon and a political movement in Bulgaria has hardly any historical roots comparable to those of much of its ideological brethren across Western Europe.

The parliamentary elections of 2005 brought a political surprise to national party politics. Ataka emerged as a coalition of several small nationalist movements and parties shortly before the election, and swooped in, receiving eight percent of the vote, and 21 seats in Parliament, leaving political analysts at a loss for words. Since then, the party has developed, more or less, as an eloquent example of an extremist ideology with populist rhetoric. Political researchers and journalists struggle with pinpointing the electorate and the positioning of the party on the left – right ideological axis, since it promotes an economic agenda of the far-left, with far-rightist political insights. By 2014, Ataka had managed to secure a stable number of seats in the national parliament, as well as in the European, Parliament, despite the party's rhetoric, involvement in numerous scandals, and lawsuits against members. Populist politics is often associated with the enigmatic central figures of movements and parties, and Bulgarian Ataka is no exception.

The controversial role of this party, as a national phenomenon in the study of journalist safety in times of far-right populist resurgence, is rooted in the political and professional background of its leader, Volen Siderov. After becoming a professional photographer and journalist in the 1980s, he later headed Democracy, a party newspaper of the Union of Democratic Forces, and in his position as editor-in-chief was a fervent activist for freedom of speech and expression, and democratisation of the Bulgarian press. Later, Siderov briefly occupied an editorial position at the daily Monitor, won a prize from the Union of Bulgarian Journalists, and later anchored a political programme at a private television channel. Alongside his party activity, he published a trilogy, that established his nationalist and far-right populist image, as he addressed a broad palette of topics typical for the ideology: anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, anti-Roma, anti-elite and establishment, and opposing NATO and European Union membership (Ghodsee, 2008).

³³ While there has been a resurgence of populism in much of the party rhetoric in Bulgaria today, this research focuses on a particular party that is deemed the most comparable to similar parties across Europe, fits the state-of-art conceptual framework of radical-right populism, and has been active long enough, to fit the time-frame of the study.

As a political party, Ataka is known for its strong media presence. Headed by a journalist, the party founded the first television channel in Bulgaria officially owned and managed by a political party, as well as a daily newspaper (Kutseva, in Lazarov, 2011). Both outlets focus primarily on social and political content; however, in comparison to other representatives of the far-right populist party family, Ataka is not as active in social media. The party is not only a creator of content, but is also often present among national and European headlines, with its members allegedly implicated in incidents of violence, verbal abuse against politicians of opposition forces, physical attacks against civilians and members of the media, and violent rallying.

Thus, the aforementioned uneasy relationship between politics and media in post-communist Bulgaria, and the abrasive, active media presence of a local far-right populist party, have created a conflictual environment for journalists and media representatives documenting Bulgarian politics.

In summary, then, first there is a difficult and dubious relationship between political and media actors dating back to the democratisation period. Whereas healthy, independent communication between media and politics is necessary for the functioning of a democracy, Bulgarian journalism is in a tricky predicament. On one hand, national, as well as private, media depends on either state subsidies or funding from foreign or questionable domestic sources, which fuels the risk of personal and political bias, and can lead to limitations on the freedom of press and the safety of journalists. On the other, the political climate of transition has imposed, for two decades, a tendency in media to avoid overt connections to politics and politicising news. This, and the overall lack of trust between the media and state institutions (Hanitzsch, Berganza, 2012), sparked by the late democratisation of media laws, and high corruption rates, has contributed to the unsafe environment for responsible and independent journalism. Secondly, the case of Bulgaria, as a part of the European picture of journalist safety in times of populist resurgence, is a particularly interesting one, as the most prominent and active radical-right populist party is led by a journalist, and owns its own broadcast and print media outlets. Whereas the populist radical-left / -right-wing Ataka publishes and broadcasts its own angle of national political and civic news, and has its own brand of investigative journalism, representatives of other media often find it difficult, and hardly a safe undertaking, to communicate the actions and messages of the party.

Media freedom and journalist safety in Bulgaria has been monitored by European and global organisations, and subjected to lengthy scholarly analysis. The World Press Freedom Index

places Bulgaria in the lowest position among EU member states in terms of press freedom, and the country has been steadily descending through the press freedom rankings since 2006. Reporters without Borders says that collisions between media, politics, and media ownership, as well as oligarchy, corruption, and unfavourable legal and control mechanisms, help explain the result. Freedom House deems Bulgaria's press freedom status to have remained 'partly free' since 2004, when it declined from 'free' because judiciary changes, increased government involvement in the media, and organised crime violence against investigative journalists. Most of the high-profile violence against journalists in the country has occurred within a period of 15 years. Since the populist radical-right is a relatively new phenomenon in Bulgarian politics, it appears in the annual reports only since the 2007 presidential election, during which the party announced an agenda to eliminate national television content³⁴ produced for the Turkish minority. The party is mentioned in the following year's report because a mob of its supporters entered the offices of one of the country's biggest dailies, and physically and verbally threatened journalists because of party funding accusations published by the paper. In the following years, no high-profile populist violence against journalists was reported; however, nationalist and populist parties and movements were criticised for instigating and mainstreaming hate speech in the media until, even after a hate speech law was passed in 2011. The far-right populists of Ataka re-appeared in Freedom House's 2014 report because of their violent participation in some of the protests throughout 2013, as well as physical and verbal assaults against employees in the office of the Bulgarian National Television, and on a separate occasion, against a television crew³⁵ attempting to conduct an interview.

While right-wing populist politicians have not been reported as having been involved in high-profile conflicts with journalists in recent years, Freedom House has reported a number of clashes between members of the media and politicians of various party affiliations. In brief, annual reports on press freedom acknowledge the populist threat to the safety of journalism, however, it has not been as common and persistent in impeding the freedom of the press and the safety of journalists as organised crime and the issue of media ownership, the judiciary, apathy of the state, and unspoken encouragement of self-censorship.

³⁴The Bulgarian National Television broadcasts daily news both in Bulgarian and Turkish language since 2000. As the Turkish language broadcasts cause the discontent of not only the populist right, the news are now being broadcasted exclusively on BNT's satellite channels.

³⁵The television crew in question belongs to a private television channel, where Ataka's leader, Siderov, anchored a political programme in the 2000s, motives for the assault have not been clarified.

The Committee to Protect Journalists acknowledges declining safety for journalists and media workers in Bulgaria; however, the focus of the annual “Attacks on the Press” reports is exclusively the organised crime threat and the inability of national institutions to ensure press freedom. Bulgarian-born journalist and CPJ Program Coordinator Nina Ognianova underlines the increasing number of unsolved cases of high-profile assaults against journalists³⁶, while Belgian correspondent Jean-Paul Marthoz has examined extremist and populist violence against media workers across Europe³⁷. The US Department of State is among the institutions that monitor and annually report on human rights practices globally. In their “Freedom of Speech and Press” reports from 2011-2016, the existence of laws protecting freedom of speech and the media was acknowledged. High-profile violence against journalists and breaches of freedom of the press have largely been attributed to organised crime. Political parties, including those in government, have been identified among the common instigators of self-censorship and sources of defamation and libel. The reports also record several singular and personal threats to journalists. However, the populist far-right party Ataka, and its members, are mentioned overtly as perpetrators of violence against members of the press and media only once, in relation to the 2013 protests.

The International Research and Exchanges Board also examines the period of interest in its latest editions of the Europe and Eurasia Media Sustainability Index for 2016. A panel of 14 Bulgarian journalists, communication researchers and media experts assessed the long-term deterioration of press freedom and journalist safety and attributed much of it to entangled political and economic issues of media ownership and governmental and criminal pressure. Whilst the involvement of right-wing populist party Ataka, and its leader and members in further destabilising the picture of national journalist safety and freedom of expression is undoubted, it has been more influential in a number of indirect aspects. Its recent refusal to join an initiative on abstaining from hate speech in electoral campaigning further advances the normalisation of political incorrectness and overt hate speech in a political context. The panellists, however, also noted that the regulatory ‘silver lining’ of populist threats to journalism and freedom of expression – as well as the actual acts of physical and verbal abuse against journalists and media workers in 2013, followed by a violent outburst at the National Academy for Theatre and

³⁶Ognianova, Nina – Bulgarian Journalists are under Attack, 25.09.2013 <https://cpj.org/blog/2013/09/bulgarian-journalists-are-under-attack.php>

³⁷Marthoz, Jean-Paul – Journalists Grapple with Increasing Power of European Extremists, 27.04.2015 <https://www.cpj.org/2015/04/attacks-on-the-press-journalists-grapple-with-increasing-power-of-european-extremists.php>

Film in 2015 - had led to the loss of parliamentary immunity of the party leader and other members, thus allowing for criminal investigations to take place.

Considering it is a relatively new phenomenon in Bulgarian politics, far-right populism has, indeed, contributed to the declining safety of journalists in the state. High-profile threats to journalist and media worker safety in Bulgaria are, however, rare, and are reported in Europe as a part of the global picture of populist resurgence and media freedom decline. Furthermore, the Bulgarian nationalist-populist party Ataka, led by a journalist, produces most of its media content itself, through its own television channel and a daily newspaper. Thus, members of other major media tend to limit themselves to reporting only high-profile incidents. In brief, right-wing populism in Bulgaria is among the concerns for journalism safety in the state, albeit not the most important one, since it is overshadowed by issues of media ownership, organised crime, and overall political involvement.

4. Croatia

After WWII Croatia was part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. It declared independence on 25 June 1991 under the first democratically elected President Franjo Tuđman, which resulted in a war lasting four years. The state of war also served as a pretext for numerous violations of human rights and media freedoms, as well as increasing authoritarian rule. After the war Croatia faced a decade of rule of authoritarian nationalism under Tuđman.

“Under its 1990 constitution, Croatia operated under a semi-presidential system. When constitutional changes were made in 2000, the country switched to a parliamentary system. There are two major political parties – the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) – as well as a number of smaller national and regional parties. HDZ was founded in 1989 by Franjo Tuđman, the Croatian president from 1990 to 1999. It has been in power for most of the period since 1990 (1990–2000 and 2003–2011). HDZ is a conservative right-wing party; its political attitudes vary from center-right to radical-right and are strongly colored by the ideology of ethnic nationalism. [...] The other major political party, SDP, evolved from the former League of Communists of Croatia. It is the largest party of the Croatian centre-left, and its political ideas are in many aspects closer to those of (left) liberal parties than of social democratic parties. SDP led a coalition government from 2000–2003, after HDZ lost power for the first time after 1990.”³⁸

On 8 November 2015 parliamentary elections were held in Croatia, in which all 151 seats in the Parliament were up for grabs. This was the first general election after Croatia joined the European Union as its 28th member state on 1 July 2013. There were two major players involved in this election: the center-left “Croatia is Growing” coalition led by the then Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic from the SDP party and the center-right “Patriotic Coalition” led by the HDZ Party Chairman Tomislav Karamarko. Since none of the two won the majority of seats, the decision about the formation of the government fell to the new emerging alliance of independent candidates called “Most” (Bridge), which came third in this election with 19 seats.

³⁸ Koren, Snjezana; Twentieth-century wars in history teaching and public memory of present-day Croatia; *Studi sulla Formazione*, 2015, Vol.18(2), pp.11-32,289,293 Firenze University Press; Florence; p. 13

After 76 days of negotiations, a coalition between HDZ, i.e. the “Patriotic Coalition” and Most was formed. The new government finally took office on 22 January 2016 with an until then unknown Croatian-Canadian businessman Tihomir Oreskovic as its Prime Minister.

However, on 16 June 2016 the HDZ party put forward a motion of no confidence after a conflict of interest with the Prime Minister. This resulted in Croatian lawmakers voting to dissolve parliament on 20 June which came into action on 15 July, thus paving the way for a snap election. President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic called for elections on 11 September 2016 when again all 151 seats were up for election. Again the two main players in this election were the HDZ party with a new head Andrej Plenkovic, who replaced Karamarko after the latter resigned following his alleged implication in a conflict of interest scandal³⁹, and the SDP led by Zoran Milanovic and contesting the election as a part of the People’s Coalition.

The HDZ won the election with 61 seats in the parliament and formed a coalition with Most in order to form a government. Plenkovic was approved as Prime Minister by the Croatian Parliament on 19 October 2016. Although according to different sources the new Prime Minister and the head of the HDZ party is described as a moderate and conservative, nationalism and populism are still very present because they are historically infiltrated in Croatian politics and society. In Croatia, the term “populism” appears in various contexts, amongst which are “as a rhetorical instrument aimed at the disqualification of the political opponents; in media discourse as the inflammatory label attached to disparate phenomena; as a political identification of those politicians who try to envision an image of activist close to the people and opposed to the obnoxious political elites”.⁴⁰

According to political scientist Andjelko Milardović⁴¹ in Croatia there are three major periods of populism in the 20th century, namely from 1941 to 1945 when Croatia was under the right-wing populist dictatorship of Ante Pavelić (the Independent state of Croatia period), then from 1945 to 1980 when Croatia was part of the socialist Yugoslavia and under the left-wing populist dictatorship of Josip Broz Tito and finally from 1991 to 1999 after Croatia gained its

³⁹ Cooper, Harry; Macdowall, Andrew (2016, August 11); Mystery man hoping to rule Croatia; Retrieved from <http://www.politico.eu/article/mystery-man-hoping-to-rule-croatia/>

⁴⁰ Zakošek, Nenad (2015, October 25). “Globusov okrugli stol – populizam u Hrvatskoj. Populizam je znak bolesti naše demokracije” [The Globus magazine round table – Populism in Croatia. Populism is a sign of illness of our democracy]; *Jutarnji list*; Retrieved from <http://izbori.jutarnji.hr/globusov-okrugli-stol-ljevicu-u-hrvat-skoj-i-europi-populizam-je-znak-bolesti-nase-demokracije-socijaldemokracija-nema-odgovor-na-ekonomsku-krizu/>.

⁴¹ Milardović, Anđelko; *Populizam i demokracija* [Populism and Democracy]; Zagreb; Centar za politološka istraživanja; 2004

independence and experienced the semi-democratic/semi-authoritarian populism during the Franjo Tuđman period.

As research on populism and youth in Croatia has shown, “The “Tuđman period” is closest to what was considered populism in the 2010s, because it was part of a national state democratic multi-party political system.”⁴² Since Tudjman’s death, his party, HDZ, has not distanced itself from nationalistic policies, and reached its peak in the year 2015 with Karamarko as its leader, just before he was replaced by Plenkovic: “A break with the past may be refreshing — especially since, under Karamarko, many saw worrying flirtations with the Ustasha, the Croatian fascist movement that killed hundreds of thousands of non-Croats and dissidents during World War II. Ministers, including Karamarko and Orešković, were accused of failing to condemn the use of Ustasha symbols and chants, including at a controversial World War II memorial ceremony in Austria and at an international football match against Israel.”⁴³

Not much research has been done about political populism in Croatia, but there are two main studies named *Faces of Populism in Croatia*, in which populism was conceptualised on two levels - as a thin political ideology and as a political communication style - that have to be mentioned here: “Their goal was to identify the presence of populism in Croatia and to establish its faces. The first one is the benchmark study conducted around the interviews of 11 Croatian politicians in the leading newspapers in the period between two local elections (May 2009 and June 2013); the second one uses the same methodology to examine the interviews of the four candidates in the presidential election in Croatia in 2014/2015.”⁴⁴ The results of the first study identified four politicians as populist, and as expected the populist style was found among the populist figures. However, against all the expectations and trends in Europe, no right-wing populism was detected. The second study concentrated on the presidential election in 2015 and detected populism among the presidential candidates, however not with Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, who won the election.

All in all the two studies “established the presence of populism in Croatia, both in terms of political ideology and political communication style. Several types of populism were identified.

⁴² Derado, Augustin; Dergic, Vanja; Medjugorac, Vanja; *Croatian Youth and Populism: A Mixed Methods Analysis of the Populism “Breeding Ground” among the Youth in the City of Zagreb*; In: *Revija za sociologiju* [Sociological Review]; Vol. 46, Nr. 2, Pages 141-173; Croatian Sociological Association; Zagreb; August 2016, Page 145

⁴³ Cooper, Harry; Macdowall, Andrew (11 August 2016); *Mystery man hoping to rule Croatia*; Retrieved from <http://www.politico.eu/article/mystery-man-hoping-to-rule-croatia/>

⁴⁴ Grbeša, Mirjana; Šalaj, Berto; *Faces of Populism in Croatia*. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe: An Interdisciplinary Journal on Southeastern Europe*; 2016, 3(1); pages 106-127; <http://www.suedosteuropa.uni-graz.at>; University of Graz; Graz; 2016

The populist style was popular also with mainstream politicians, especially in terms of the use of empty signifiers.”⁴⁵ There are also almost no studies about the connection between media and populism in Croatia and there is no discourse in the media about it. However, it can be said that there are media that support populists and right-wing politicians. “The modern media, in order to attract an audience, have become more and more sensationalist, which simultaneously creates distrust of the political elite and brings populist actors closer to the electorate.”⁴⁶ As the above-mentioned studies by Grbesa and Salaj have shown, this can be especially observed in the pre-election campaigns.

So journalists not only face pressure by the politicians, receive (anonymous) threats or in the worst case scenarios get physically attacked, there are journalists that are pressured by their colleagues and other media outlets. Even the President of the Croatian Journalists’ Association (CJA) Sasa Lekovic, who himself is an investigative reporter, has been a target of this practice, which seems to have become a common instrument to intimidate journalists and obstruct their work. According to Lekovic:

“it is important to explain that the main generators of the attacks on journalists (from insults to direct threats and even to physical attacks) are some politicians (mostly nationalist-chauvinist ones from the minor right wing parties, but also from the ruling HDZ party), but also some media i.e. journalists, who are political agitators and manipulators. Politicians accuse “nonconformist” journalists of being leftists, communists etc. Actually they are accusing them for what they are, although these so called “journalists” serve these politicians well and at the end support them. Part of the media, such as the two weeklies *Hrvatski tjednik* and *Dnevno* as well as some web portals such as *MaxPortal*, *Kamenjar* etc, also invent lies against the journalists who are doing their job at a professional level. It is interesting that I myself as the President of the CJA am a target of these because I publicly reveal what these politicians and “journalists” are doing. There are media like web portals *Dnevno* and *Narod*, which do this at a more sophisticated level, because they do use arguments but the false ones. They insinuate that there would be a discourse, but the truth is it does not exist.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Grbeša, Mirjana: Šalaj, Berto (2014). *Faces of Populism in Croatia*. Paper presented at the IPSA Conference, Montreal, July 2014; Retrieved from <https://populism.byu.edu/SiteAssets/Salaj.Grbesa.pdf>

⁴⁶ Mustapic, Marko: Hrstic, Ivan; Croatia - The Rise of Populism on the Path From Communism to European Integration; pp.274-284; In: Aalberg, Toril; Esser, Frank; Reinemann, Carsten; Stromback, Jesper; De Vreese, Claes; Populist Political Communication in Europe (Routledge Research in the Communication Studies); Routledge; New York, London; 2016; Page 276

⁴⁷ Sasa Lekovic, personal communication, 6 January 2017

While Croatian journalists cannot really rely on protection through legislation - for example libel remains a criminal offense, although in 2006 imprisonment was removed by the parliament as a possible punishment - Lekovic has found ways to cooperate with international organisations or to create new local associations, which are acting as advisory bodies and aides for the journalists.

“As soon as I was elected President of the Croatian Journalists’ Association (CJA), I started with a project called Centre for Protection of Freedom of Speech in which more than 30 lawyers from all over Croatia give legal advice to CJA members or defend them in case they face charges. Or are attacked in any other way.”⁴⁸

Due to the recent change in the leadership in the Croatian governing party HDZ and taking into consideration the fact that there are only two main parties in the country, one can conclude that populists, especially the radical-right type ones rather belong to marginal groups and minor parties - as compared to some other countries of the European Union which have seen a rise of populism in recent years. Nevertheless, the already mentioned research on populism and youth in Croatia from 2015 concluded there is grounds for the rise of populism, especially within the younger population.

“However, the size of the economic crisis in Croatia and the level of dissatisfaction with the two biggest political parties in Croatia (and their traditional coalition partners) could open doors for various protest parties. Nevertheless, the demand-side analysis is limited, and wide support for the ideas of democracy exists in Croatia, which is confirmed both in the qualitative and quantitative results of this study. Therefore, the realisation of inclinations to populist alternatives depends on many factors, not alone the supply of potent populist actors.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Sasa Lekovic, personal communication, 6 January 2017

⁴⁹ Derado, Augustin; Dergic, Vanja; Medjugorac, Vanja; Croatian Youth and Populism: A Mixed Methods Analysis of the Populism “Breeding Ground” among the Youth in the City of Zagreb; In: *Revija za sociologiju* [Sociological Review]; Vol. 46, Nr. 2, Pages 141-173; Croatian Sociological Association; Zagreb; August 2016, Page 166-167

5. France

At the beginning of 2017 far-right leader Marine Le Pen, head of the Front National, had positive words for the media, in her New Year's address, as she sought to appear moderate and democratic to broad swathes of the population in an election year.

But by February the old face of the Front National was back, with a critical journalist being thrown out of a Le Pen event by burly security guards⁵⁰. At around the same time the deputy head of the party verbally accosted another critical journalist live on air⁵¹. There is a long history of hostility on the part of the Front National directed at the press in France. Although the highest number of physical attacks occurred when Marine Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie was still head of the Front National, the relationship between the party and the media remains a fraught one characterised by verbal and occasionally still physical aggression. During labour day protests on 1 May 2015 journalists were physically assaulted by Marine Le Pen supporters⁵². A 1996 Reporters without Borders report identifies 15 attacks on journalists since 1990⁵³.

According to French journalists interviewed for this paper, the degree of problems journalists in France have covering the Front National depends on the degree to which they are perceived by the party to be critical or unbiased. "Some media are open with their genuine declared hostility towards the Front National. Others are more neutral or at least try not to blatantly exhibit any pre-established positions," notes the media journalist for *Le Monde*, Alexis Delcambre (personal communication).

Those media outlets that display blatant hostility towards the Front National have seen their journalists denied accreditation at Front National events. This appears to be the most common means the Front National uses to 'punish' critical journalists. Indeed in September 2016 the Front National denied accreditation to journalists from the TMC television programme *Le Quotidien* and all journalists from *Mediapart*⁵⁴. The Front National sought to justify this by

⁵⁰ <http://www.politico.eu/article/journalists-rough-treatment-highlights-tension-between-le-pen-and-media/>

⁵¹ <http://www.ozap.com/actu/louis-aliot-s-enerve-contre-un-journaliste-de-bfmtv/518674>

⁵² <http://www.journalistes-cfdt.fr/actualites/agressions-de-journalistes-le-fn-encore>

⁵³ http://www.liberation.fr/france-archives/1996/10/03/le-front-national-s-en-prend-aux-journalistes_185060

⁵⁴ http://www.liberation.fr/medias/2013/05/02/des-journalistes-menaces-en-marge-de-la-manifestation-du-front-national_900492

claiming that these journalists don't treat Marine Le Pen, leader of the Front National and a presidential candidate, as they do other presidential candidates.

But according to Delcambre it also happened to a journalist from Le Monde. "It's a party that does not hesitate to employ certain sanctions, certain punishments, when they feel that they have been badly treated by a journalist or a media platform." It has in the past happened that things have taken a more personal and aggressive turn. A journalist from Le Monde by the name of Abel Mestre and his colleague, Caroline Fourest, were in 2013 intimidated by Front National members during a demonstration by the party's Leader Marine Le Pen. Flyers bearing Mr. Mestre's name and home address and those of his colleague were found pinned to cars in the vicinity of the meeting⁵⁵, which was called Day of Anger, in 2013 during which people from the Front National pushed some journalists around. "It's never gone further than that though in France, beyond being shoved around and some physical intimidation. We haven't seen more serious acts," observes Delcambre. This wasn't the first time Fourest had been intimidated. Also in 2013, Fourest, who specialises in reporting on extremist groups, was tracked for hours by hundreds of intimidating activists from a demonstration against homosexual marriage with links to the Front National, and had eventually had to be escorted to a train by dozens of special forces police officers⁵⁶. The conference was supported by a neo-fascist group that had physically assaulted her in the past. In an interview she said the experience was "insane".

More recently the Front National has begun trying to position itself as a more respectable party in an attempt to win over people who have a negative view of it including the notion that it is hostile towards the press. This involves establishing more "civil, ordinary" relations with the media and journalists, notes Delcambre. Nonetheless an "ambiguity" remains. "And I think it suits the Front National to have that ambiguity, to be able to blow hot and cold air depending on the relationship it wants to hold with one media outlet or another or specific journalists."

Having said that, he observes, there is under the Front National a discourse that is more hostile towards journalists in the sense that it has always constituted a trademark of the Front National to say that the establishment media lie to the French people, that they are a part of a conspiracy that wants to dilute the nation and allow immigration to soar. But they are less coarse today about it. Non-Front National politicians see that "this is a rhetoric that works and

⁵⁵ http://www.liberation.fr/medias/2013/05/02/des-journalistes-menaces-en-marge-de-la-manifestation-du-front-national_900492

⁵⁶ http://www.liberation.fr/france/2013/04/16/caroline-fourest-le-debat-ne-les-interessait-pas-ils-voulaient-intimider_896580

adopt it". For example, leading conservative candidate Francois Fillon during the French conservative party primaries "on several occasions said things that were anti-media ... he hardened his discourse vis-a-vis the media because he felt: 'it works'."

"The Front National is trying to create a more peaceful climate with the French press with which there has been much friction and a lot of criticism," suggests Fabrice Pozzoli-Montenay, a Paris-based journalist and secretary-general of the European Press Association. For many years, the Front National has argued that the French press does not treat its party fairly. It uses various means of sanctions against journalists it considers to be opposition members rather than real journalists. This includes not being allowed in to meetings, not being invited to press conferences, sometimes there are highly aggressive acts committed by activists and tolerated by the party, he notes.

Now that France is entering an electoral campaign period it appears clear that Marine Le Pen is seeking to modify her rhetoric. Indeed, at her New Year press conference she was quite clear on the topic. The question is whether or not it will continue.

Pozzoli-Montenay also notes that the party has employed a rhetoric suggesting that the mainstream media is part of a conspiracy and not to be trusted. In fact till around 2000 the French media for the most part engaged in a media blackout of the Front National. Now the reverse is true. He says it is "astonishing" how much airtime and print time the Front National is getting in the mainstream press. "And yet they still carry on criticising the media because it's a rhetoric that sits well with its electorate." Some editors and media platforms they get on quite well with, but there are some journalists who "seriously displease them", for example those working for critical media outlets Le Quotidien and Mediapart (who were denied access to a Le Pen meeting in September 2016), because Mediapart's investigative reporting annoys the Front National and Le Quotidien adopts a highly critical, satirical mocking tone and context they don't like. "The whole strategy of the Front National has been to bypass the media that is critical of them and to favour the media that is positively or at least not too negatively disposed," says Pozzoli-Montenay.

France is still riven by a debate about how much media oxygen to give the Front National or whether to give it any at all⁵⁷. Montenay suggests that the argument by some journalists that

⁵⁷ <http://www.slate.fr/story/101563/journalistes-traitement-mediatique-fn>

they will not give the party any coverage at all is “not very professional as of the moment when it is a party with elected representatives and a political programme”.

Nonetheless despite the move towards the centre and Le Pen’s pro-media New Year speech, the Front National is still very much capable of pressuring journalists. “This can go to the point of pushing them around, knocking away their cameras, covering the lens with a hand. But there is less violence now than a few years ago when it came to blows,” says Pozzoli-Montenay. He puts this down in part to a professionalisation of the security services of the Front National “who a few years ago were still very much thugs and who now have better learned how to handle press relations”. On one side the Front National has undergone a high degree of professionalisation over the last five years, he observes. “This is most perceptible in the teams surrounding elected officials, and during campaigns we feel a level of professionalism that did not exist before”.

There are two strategies in the Front National, observes former *Le Soir* newspaper editor, now European press freedom consultant for the Committee to Protect Journalists, Jean-Paul Marthoz (personal communication). One is drawn from the father who always had a very aggressive stance on the media. Since the Front National became much more powerful, including Marine Le Pen’s “making it less diabolical”, there has been a “normalisation and mollifying of relations with the mainstream media”. Some in the Front National are trying to professionalise the relationship with those journalists who don’t like the Front National but feel obliged to cover it because of its power. “At the same time you have people in the Front National who are very vocal about the way they see the media. The closer you are to the extremes, the far-right and the ‘Front de Gauche’, the mistrust in the media is growing ... The journalists are scum they are dishonest ... This is something that the leaders of the Front National around Marine Le Pen try not to focus on too much, but out in the provinces and in the part of the party that does not want to be seen as nice they are not going to change their position.” They also have, he adds, what they did not have before: a growing presence on the stands and in the web of new magazines and new websites that are very popular. They have been rising in circulation. Second, they know that like Trump they have the capacity to get around the media using social networks. “The far-right have been able to use social networks to get around the media, and to some extent the journalists themselves are a bit less important and you can get around them because you can bash them.”

The far-right does not hesitate to show that they don't like some journalists, Marthoz underscores, and it translates into a number of actions like not allowing them maybe to enter into the party's National Congress, which is increasingly difficult because they want to be seen as more open or more tolerant. The slogan of Marine Le Pen is 'La France apaisée' (a more peaceful France). He too points out that the Front National has been known for discriminating against journalists it sees as aggressive in their reporting, including Caroline Fouret, who has covered both the far right and radical Islam. "She is the kind of journalist the far-right don't like very much because she can't be accused of being a liberal completely oblivious to the risks of radical Islam." She has been attacked a number of times by the far-right, including by Le Pen who sued her when she wrote a book about her and also by people linked to the far-right "but where you don't know if they acted because they were ordered to do so or if they just like what they hear - a little bit like the alt-right in the United States."

There have been some physical threats but not recently, that Marthoz can recall.

"There is always the threat for journalists who are seen as being hostile to the National Front that someone will at some point feel they have the right to punch them in the face. It happened in a number of events where you could even see films of the leaders of the National Front pushing back journalists, or security guards being more aggressive towards journalists they perceive as being more hostile."

The atmosphere in France now is that it is increasingly popular to attack the elitist media which the Front National sees as synonymous with liberal-minded media. "You are a part of this elitist cosmopolitan multicultural secular pro-migration" group, in their eyes, Marthoz notes.

There is a pacification effort coming from the leaders of the Front National directed at the media, notes Pauline Ades Mevel, France press freedom expert for Reporters without Borders (personal communication). "Because we are in a presidential year and so there is a will to change tactics and address the media in a different way because there are some media who have always been in the bad books of the Front National but this is a significant change of strategy."

In the case of Mediapart it's like a game of ping pong between them and the Front National. The Front National justifies not giving Mediapart accreditation by saying Mediapart does not invite it to give its point of view. Ades Mevel says though that she thinks a degree of animosity will remain:

“We saw it on the May 1 demonstrations of 2016, when certain journalists were treated very aggressively especially one who addressed Mr Le Pen. And there is still a regularly aggressive tone in some quarters although the official discourse has in fact changed”.

6. Germany

Germany has in recent years seen the rise of right-wing populism, in the form of so-called PEGIDA and LEGIDA supporters.

Press freedom group Reporters without Borders sees a growing problem for journalists:

“The law bans hate speech, Holocaust denial and Nazi propaganda but far-right groups target the media regardless. Since 2014, there has been growing harassment, threats and violence against journalists covering radical right-wing groups, especially the Islamophobic and xenophobic group Pegida. The other source of concern for journalists is the 2009 anti-terrorism law, which allows the police to conduct clandestine surveillance operations (including searches of homes, inspection of computer hard disks, and phone taps) and threatens the confidentiality of their sources.”⁵⁸

Since 2015 Germany has fallen four places in the ranking of press freedom from twelfth, to sixteenth.⁵⁹ The massive increase of encroachments to journalists has been noticed since the beginning of 2015, since the right-wing populist movements gained strength. In a study the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom shows that journalists and reporters are perceived by the right-wing members as enemy. They are not seen as neutral observers, but rather as the “mendacious press” or “lying press”. So journalists are seen as a part of the enemy role and their reporting is perceived as provocation.⁶⁰

In early January 2016 a female journalist was attacked by LEGIDA demonstrators in the German city of Leipzig. She was punched in the face and abused verbally. In this context, many journalists only cover such demonstrations protected by private security. In October 2015, a male reporter asked PEGIDA demonstrators what they were afraid of and was subsequently assaulted. A Russian cameraman said he too was physically attacked, by PEGIDA members.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Reporters Without Borders (2016a)

⁵⁹ cf. Reporters Without Borders (2016a)

⁶⁰ cf. Welt (2016)

⁶¹ cf. Humpenöder (2016)

In November 2015, journalist Helmut Schümann, from the Berlin newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, was insulted, including being called a 'leftist filthy swine', and physically assaulted from the back in the centre of Berlin after a critical article about incitement to hate against refugees. He had also suggested that PEGIDA and the far-right party AfD were trying to undermine democracy and human rights. He remains defiant, though: "No one is going to stop me."

In an interview with Martin Hoffmann, a researcher at the European Centre of Press and Media Freedom, he says he is still scared. He was unable to provide police with a detailed description of the man who hit him and no witnesses came forward. Schümann filed charges but it is unlikely his aggressor will be identified. His fear is in part fuelled by the fact that the person who assaulted him is "still out there". For a while he could not walk down a street without turning around to make sure he was not being followed.

In addition to physical attacks, the frequency of hate postings is also increasing in Germany. Again, this appears to be in part linked to the fact that hate posters can operate anonymously. Dunja Hayali, an anchorwoman for the German public broadcaster ZDF had to take a break from social media after being targeted with public hate postings following an acceptance speech she gave. In an interview with the German news magazine *Stern*, she suggests it is very hard to remain balanced as a journalist when targeted like that. Hayali has filed criminal complaints against the hate posters, but she is also recognised in the street. In one frightening incident, she emerged from a supermarket and somebody on a bicycle verbally abused her. Because of her work at ZDF, she is accused by far-right supporters of being a part of the 'lying press'. They are further incensed by her immigrant background. Her boss, she says, has supported her.⁶²

By consistently vilifying the mainstream media, and heaping rhetorical abuse on it, far-right parties and their supporters are creating an environment in which violence against such journalists is increasingly being perceived as acceptable. The threat is particularly high in states such as Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia, in the region of former East Germany. Hoffmann notes that in 2015, 29 journalists were physically assaulted on the job in Germany, with most of the attacks occurring in the city of Dresden, capital of the state of Saxony in what used to be East Germany. However, he notes that the threat level has increased across the country.

⁶² cf. stern.de (2016)

A spike in attacks was apparent starting in 2015, he says. It coincided with the rise of the far-right, anti-Islamic PEGIDA party and the far-right Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD) party. Both parties rhetorically attack mainstream German policy and media. PEGIDA, in a 2014 meeting, revived the term 'lying press' previously used by the Nazis, to contemptuously refer to mainstream media, which is seen as being in league with the government and the 'establishment' in general, and therefore as a purveyor of 'propaganda'. Hoffmann says the backlash was really sparked when the press started to focus on the new far-right parties.

Michael Hiller notes that initially they refused to interact with journalists, then they started with insults, and now they have moved on to physical attacks, not just in Saxony but also across the country.⁶³ Hoffmann observes that the refugee crisis has fuelled the anger and attacks.

The head of press of the police department in Leipzig, Andreas Loepki, acknowledges that not every journalist can obtain private security.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the threats continue to grow: journalists are regularly kicked, spat at, and attacked with pepper spray. In addition, they are threatened, on social media, with demonstrations in front of their homes. For freelancers, one of the worst things that can happen is the destruction of their equipment; because this can have grave financial – and even professionally existential - repercussions.⁶⁵

Hoffmann alleges that in some instances the police have ignored the attacks and told journalists that it was their own fault. In 2016, the organisation he works for, kicked off a pilot project with the Leipzig police focused on the rights and responsibilities of journalists and police during political demonstrations.⁶⁶

Hoffmann notes that some broadcasting organizations provide bodyguards for their television crews, but he does not think this is a good solution. Freelancers should get together, he suggests, so they can keep each other safe.⁶⁷

⁶³ cf. Hoffmann (2016)

⁶⁴ cf. Hoffmann (2016)

⁶⁵ cf. Interview with Martin Hoffmann on January 5th 2017.

⁶⁶ cf. Interview with Martin Hoffmann on January 5th 2017.

⁶⁷ cf. Interview with Martin Hoffmann on January 5th 2017.

7. Greece

Greece has undergone a number of changes in its recent political history, affecting directly its media / communication scene. This – in turn – has affected the ways journalists are perceived by society at large. Violence-related episodes are directly linked to this public image of journalists. In this section, the related typology was researched from scratch, in an attempt to classify more accurately who the ‘attacker’ was, how and why the attack occurred, and how the victim perceived the reasons for the assault.

After a seven-year dictatorship (1967-1974) Greece had a rather smooth transition (if one does not account for the related Cyprus invasion by Turkey) followed by relatively stable governments, mainly by the ‘traditional’ conservative right (“New Democracy” Party, founded by the right-wing late lawyer Konstantinos Karamanlis) and the Social Democrats (PASOK Socialist Movement, founded by the late academic Andreas Papandreou, father of the later PM Giorgos Papandreou). They formed long lasting (i.e. seven years each) one-party governments, with both similarities and differences. Among the former, there are at least two sets of policies of interest to this paper: strict control of state-owned and -operated media and indirect control of privately owned media groups.

The latter was achieved through three distinct means: by misregulation, first, de-regulation later, as we shall see, by allegedly⁶⁸ intervening favorably, or otherwise, in the banking sector, either keeping operations afloat but ‘deep in the red’, or by allowing unsecured loans to media enterprises of questionable viability. The third method involved lack of state-imposed standards⁶⁹ and lack of a plausible process leading to a legally dispersed License to Operate. This allowed for a multitude of not-legalised-media, operating at almost no cost, (other than forms of taxation i.e. on advertising, which was rarely collected by the state), therefore placing those uncontrolled operations in ‘hostage’ status. This simply meant that the state could at any point terminate them, if it so decided.

The state audiovisual media monopoly ended in 1989. It was the start of the misregulation era, when no reliable policies were put in place to provide for a legally normal operation

⁶⁸Parliament extensive hearings on the inter-dependence of the press to the banking sector to the political parties, throughout 2016.

⁶⁹The Board for Radio & TV (ESR) was put in place with no jurisdiction over licenses, poorly manned, with few resources.

environment for broadcast media. This was followed by a gradual de-regulation season, as digital media burst in, making the Frequency Scarcity Issue no longer a basis for the much needed regulation.

The broadcast mediascape remained in a peculiar state of 'balance'. Alleged 'compromise' was in place, as the State tolerated "illegal" media operations. One thing remained certain: The industry could be regulated, as early as 1989, instead only recently (2017) a disputed effort seems to be in progress⁷⁰.

The Crisis (2019 – current day) also played an important part. All income was significantly reduced, practically horizontally. Journalists' income was even more drastically reduced due to the reduction of advertising expenditure. To complicate the problem, lots of citizen or small-group media emerged, operating at very low cost, hosting stolen intellectual property and paying very little to the otherwise neo-poor, unemployed news professionals. This affected News Quality in the most 'violent' way, making room for severe criticism of journalism's responsibility, accountability mechanisms, market versus news quality rules, and ultimately the ethical standing of any given journalist, not just as a professional, but even as a person⁷¹.

Keeping in mind the above, research on 'Violence Against Journalists' was conducted to detect the combined effects of a society and an industry in crisis, on the documented violent incidents towards the Greek gatekeepers. Here are the specifics :

➤ Methodology:

Phase A. Desktop Research.

A number of offences in Greece, going back three years, were recorded, and analyzed.

Journalists were regarded as "Newspersons" making room for all news related professionals to be included in these recordings. According to the findings, all incidents would fall in one or more of the entries in the Typology below. These categories are not exclusive, meaning that any incident can fall under more than one.

⁷⁰ The moderate left current Government, in office since January 2015, made an extremely controversial attempt to make a public tender in 2017, which was recalled by High Court order. A new attempt is currently (April 2017) emerging.

⁷¹ Allowing for a very common and aggressive – banner/insult on the streets of major cities "Tramps – Ruffians – Journalists"

I. Categories:

1. Physical abuse, pushing, hurting in any way, by either an individual, organised team, or official/other formation, including but not limited to extreme right wing or other 'anti-systemic' entities, violent anarchists, hooligans, a.o.
2. Semantic-Non Physical Verbal and Non-Verbal, including but not limited to insults, profane language, gestures, signs, posters, other visual media, interviews, publications, posts and other web content of all sorts, a.o.
3. Psychological Creation of a threatening environment. Use of ambient suspended threats, use of suggestion or subliminal methods, inferred threatening outcomes, intentionally inconclusive reports on 'state of affairs', a.o.
4. Institutional Exercised by Authority Centers, i.e. government,, official reps, spokesmen/women, official Mass Medium (Including Web Page) of an authority exercising organization, political party, major private entity, NGO, other.
5. Work-Place (Hierarchical)⁷² related to Internal Bullying, mobbing or other authoritative methods applied down (and occasionally up) the Line of Hierarchy, in a News related organization. It can be multi-modo (i.e fall additionally in any of the above categories) and can also vary in the degree of directness and the population of receivers (i.e. individual or groups or the entire organization, as below look part II and III.)

II. Who Receives VAJ ?

1. News Personnel outside the Organisation
2. News Personnel within the Organisation
3. News Organisation Owners – Executives

1. VAJ against Field Journalists

Journalists/contributors of all types, Editors, Reporters, Photographers, Cameramen/women, other Mass Media personel, "on duty", "in the field".

2. VAJ against Non-Field News Personel

As above, but exercised along in-house news production, or private outsourced production, or generated at a place not directly controlled by the Organization (i.e. an editor's home office), including VAJ exercised either from Hierarchy members or the audience, or other outsiders.

⁷²This category (type) was detected in the process of the research. Therefore it is not part of the original questionnaire.

3. VAJ against Heads

VAJ victims are Publishers, Owners, Top Decision Makers or other Head Figures of News Organizations. Includes terrorist VAJ of the five types of section I (Types of VAJ). Results of this type of VAJ may propagate down the hierarchy.

III. Violence Vehicles

1. Low Tech
2. High Tech

1. The "One – Off" Offender

Low tech includes physical, interpersonal semantic, interpersonal psychological a.o. Typically the incident is not easily retrievable and has a short & mid term effect. Print or Linear media incidents (like radio and TV) fall under 'Low Tech'.

2. The Omni – present Offense

Concerns use of High tech vehicles: Networks of all sorts, Web, Social Media, Composite "campaigns" , character assassination campaigns being a typical example.

Note: High Tech differs both in the sense of the extensive and sometimes self-multiplying publicity of the offense (i.e. to web-intensive audiences, like younger groups), and in the time of exposure, meaning that it is never totally 'erased' or remedied in some efficient way.

Phase B. Social Media (mainly Twitter) probe, using Brandwatch.

All related findings confirmed Typology above. No new entries (categories) in the typology were deemed necessary.

Phase C. Interviews.

Four interviews with high ranking news executives, who have experienced VAN and have rich knowledge of VAJ related issues were carried out. A number of other interviews are in progress in an effort to create an On-Line UGC Observatory, only to confirm the initial findings. Initial interviews are listed below:

- Nikos Xydakis, f. Culture Minister, f. Foreign Affairs Minister, currently Speaker of the House, Parliament, Senior Columnist on a number of prominent Media

- Paschos Mandravelis Senior Columnist 'Kathimerini' and www.kathimerini.gr (also English section)
- Fotis Georgeles . Chief Editor 'Athens Voice'. Publisher
- Kostas Kyriakopoulos CNN.gr Chief Editor, ECI member .

The following questions were asked:

- To which category of the following four does your case (related incidents) belong?
- Is it an isolated incident?
- Do you think that such incidents have affected the freedom of the Greek Press?
- Did these events affect you personally or bring some change in your work?
- Is public opinion aware of any form of violence towards journalists? Degree of awareness of the problem in the Hellenic Society.
- Can a journalist (like you) turn to any other Formation (apart from authorities) in such cases?
- Do you think that we need systemic confrontation of the phenomenon? C) Would a scientific observatory focusing on such phenomena in Greece, help ?
- In your opinion do things get worse? Is a Newsperson more likely to become a victim than he was one decade ago ? What lies ahead in this respect ?

Findings

A. Documented the existence of the Problem, in Greece.

B. Meaningfully laid a theoretical Categorization (Typology) pattern for future research

C. Surfaced suggestions for further action

The detailed findings are incorporated and uphold the “key findings” and “recommendations” as outlined in the Introduction of this Report.

8. Hungary

In Hungary, the far-right Jobbik party, since they were founded in 2000, have been trying to get “in good relationships with the media says Andras Desi, a former editor of the Hungarian newspaper Nepszabadsag, and the Reporters without Borders representative for the country (personal communication). “They tried to serve the media, to set up professional press teams. To my surprise, they were always very friendly and very polite and they tried to help the journalists so they provided six or eight press releases on a daily basis.”

The press department of Jobbik has tried to operate on a very professional basis. If journalists called in with interview requests for Jobbik MPs they tried to organise them. However, if journalists step over certain lines Jobbik is quick to sue them “if they feel that the report ... is inappropriate”. Desi says they sue private TV channels for referring to them as an extreme right party because private commercial TV channels are more dangerous for them and are more popular than the print press. They never sued Nepszabadsag on that basis but instead sued them twice because they did not like an opinion article.

Top politicians of Jobbik have not issued threats to journalists but the party basis is very hostile to the so called “Judeo-liberal press”. According to a colleague of Desi’s who regularly covered Jobbik rallies, they put an emphasis on providing security for journalists at rallies and demonstrations.

Desi says there have been some verbal threats from Jobbik supporters or other people from Jobbik “but the security service from Jobbik took care of the safety of the journalists.” He recalls though that during the 2006 riots Jobbik members made public the telephone numbers of several liberal journalists and tried to organise a vendetta against them. “It was harassment and threats on the Internet or some people called these journalists and threatened them but nothing happened.”

There are some Internet sites though now that are the main sources of extremist propaganda in Hungary and sometimes they publish the phone numbers of those journalists whom they label as enemies of the Hungarian nation in a parallel with the Front National in France apparently

publicising the addresses of critical journalists at Front National demonstrations, according to Desi.

The top politicians of Jobbik have tried to show their better or nicer face and launched a what Desi refers to as a “sweetie campaign”. He says this has to do with the fact that they think they can challenge Jobbik in the next elections and the chairman of Jobbik is “trying to push his party into the centre”. But the problem is that other Jobbik politicians and especially the basis of Jobbik do not want to push the party into the centre. So there are some tensions within the party.

“Maybe the chairman of the party is a little bit reformed because he realises that if he wants to win the elections he should go into the political centre but sometimes it seems to me that he would like to present himself as an alternative to the PM, says Desi “Regarding the other politicians of Jobbik there are some moderate voices but the majority is still the old guard, they are still xenophobic, anti-Semitism is still there, anti-Roma, and anti-immigration. Desi says he is not aware of any particular case of Jobbik supporters beating up journalists or something like that: “There are verbal threats on Internet forums but basically that’s all”

Hungarian investigative journalist Attila Mong (personal communication) recalls a couple of years ago, when Jobbik was still out of parliament, they tried a couple of court cases with prominent media outlets. Some media outlets put Jobbik in seclusion out of fear that integrating them into the media would populise their views just like the French media did with the Front National until 2000 or so. Mong back then worked for the national public radio and there the opinion was clearly that until Jobbik was in parliament it was to be ignored. Then, when they entered parliament, only recorded interviews were allowed and not live broadcasts and then in 2010 election campaign live broadcasts were allowed but there were special internal guidelines on how to deal with Jobbik.

“I was one of the few journalists who threw a Jobbik representative out of a live broadcast in 2010 because I had agreed with my editors that if Jobbik employ terminology that hurts the feelings of our Roma listeners or against basic human rights then I would warn them and if it went on I would simply have to say goodbye.”

Gradually the treatment of Jobbik changed. Other media outlets approached it in a completely different way, especially commercial radio and TV stations for whom Jobbik was a way to attract listeners “because this kind of language was interesting, new, breaking taboos and it

caused a stir, it caused scandals. So some commercial stations liked very much to invite Jobbik representatives. So that was the relationship with the mainstream media”.

Mong notes as well though that Jobbik, just like the front National in France, also created its own media and like other far-right parties relied heavily on social media, especially Facebook and of course did use the terminology of the “lying mainstream media”, accusing the mainstream media of ignoring them, and arguing that if you wanted unbiased media you should go to social media. They even created a YouTube-based TV channel and the camerawoman who at the height of the 2015 refugee crisis was filmed tripping up refugees worked for such a far-right channel, according to Mong.

Ironically, Mong says, after Fidesz took over in 2009 and in 2010 set about dismantling independent media, Jobbik supported a minute of silence at the public media as a figurative sign of respect for the death of independent media. “Again we see a parallel with the Front National and Marine Le Pen’s New Year speech in favour of free media.” They were against the new media law because they saw it as solidifying Fidesz’s power in the media. Mong sees the support for free media of Jobbik in the same light as Le Pen’s support for media as she moves to the centre to try to challenge for the presidency. “Partly they changed their rhetoric and their policies so Jobbik is very much moving into the centre and trying to be the main challenger party to Orban.” Ironically, he adds, those media outlets that are controlled by Orban and are pro-Orban and Fidesz are now fighting a media war against Jobbik and its media outlets

Mong is echoed by investigative journalist Attila Batorfy who says that in his experience the press department of Jobbik is always open to journalists – they are for e.g. willing to give background interviews - “and I think they communicate quite well with journalists but on the other side they are the most angry party outside of Fidesz”. He adds that if you are critical they start threatening you with lawsuits, but echoing other Hungarian journalists and the RSF representative (himself a long-time liberal journalist) he says he cannot recall any cases of journalists being physically attacked by Jobbik supporters or politicians. He says he is not aware of them making direct physical threats against journalists.

Before Jobbik started moving towards the centre, extremist media linked to it anonymously posted the number of critical journalists to their site, again in an echo of the tactic employed by the Front National in France, in an apparent act of psychological intimidation with possible harmful consequences.

Nonetheless press freedom activists warn of the danger of creating an environment of rhetoric aggression or intimidation vis a vis journalists because it is very often a precursor to violence.

Batorfy says:

“Jobbik were very hostile with journalists but as time has passed by the central communication of the party started to be very soft and friendly with journalists from the other side and they started to vanish their links to the extremist media site that saw the posts of critical journalists’ mobile numbers.”

Meanwhile, some intellectuals and journalists from Fidesz are openly hostile towards journalists, notes Batorfy – Fidesz has of course been described as a populist if not far-right party.

“And they started to use a rhetoric towards opposition or liberal journalists as if they were a right-wing nationalistic militant party and they threaten to use physical harassment against you.”

In Hungary, this goes as far as Fidesz claiming that all critical journalists are aided by pro-democracy philanthropist George Soros or the CIA. “They started to dehumanise journalists calling them rats and snakes, and warning “be very careful about what you are saying about the government, be careful walking down the street because we will see who is the strongest guy on the streets. It’s very threatening reading these opinions, from someone very close to the Fidesz; this could result in fear among journalists.” Batorfy said this in turn could result in self-censorship: “I would not be surprised if someone who does not have big courage would start to self-censor themselves.”

He thinks Jobbik took a very logical step towards the centre because “there is no space on the right” where they were at the boundaries. He adds:

“What is really threatening is how this practice from the far right subcultural media, where a journalist’s phone number is anonymously posted or they are threatened with physical harassment, infiltrates the conservative mainstream media. I think this is threatening.”

Beatrix Vissy from the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union centre echoes the view of journalists. “I think there are certain democratic values held in high esteem by the radical right-wing party Jobbik. Not all democratic values, but freedom of speech and of the press are among these democratic values. There were very clear manifestations of these values.” For instance, in

2010 when there was the big media law reform in Hungary that was criticised at the European level, the Jobbik party, allied with the socialist party, were also in opposition to the media reforms and they stood for the freedom of the press. Now, when the left-wing daily Nepszabadsag was shut and it was explained that it was because of media market reasons, the Jobbik spokesperson said it was not dictated by market logic but by Orban's machinations against the critical press. "And interesting was that the spokesperson said if Jobbik wins the election they want to rehabilitate freedom of the press. We have the impression that nowadays Jobbik is one of the main fighters for the press."

She adds: "I think they genuinely believe it. They of course also communicate thoughts and ideas that are from a legal point of view not hate speech but very close, racist nationalist ideas and of course for them it is also important for the people who support the party." Vissy says there have been no physical attacks on the press by Jobbik in the past five years. "The climate has changed. We had the feeling that Jobbik wanted to appear in the left-wing media and main media as well. But this was maybe because of the Fidesz movement move to the radical right."

9. Italy

There currently are no right-wing-populist anti-Islamic movements like the German Pegida in Italy, however, there exist a number of populist groups, two of which are in the Italian parliament. The most well-known is the right-wing nationalist Lega Nord, which has been in parliament for over 20 years. The second group is the Five-Star movement, led by the Italian actor, comedian and blogger Beppe Grillo. “Since the last general election the Five-Star movement is the second biggest party in parliament. They are also populists – but not fascists. You cannot consider them either left-wing or right-wing. They are mixed” (Spampinato 2016). Populist groups outside of the parliament are the “No Tax Movement” a form of protest against the building of a high-speed railway tunnel in the north of Italy, and the “black block”, “a squatters, anarchist and anti-globalist group that join up only during protests but are not an organised movement” (Spampinato 2016). Lastly, there exists a nostalgic fascist, right-wing movement called Casa Pound, “but neither very strong, nor in the parliament” (Spampinato 2016).

Reporters without Borders (RSF, 2017) placed the country at number 77 on their “2016 world press freedom index” out of 180 countries, having dropped from place 73 the year before. The country’s global score fell by .99 points from 27.94 in 2015. The NGO states that as of 2015, between 30 and 50 journalists were under police protection because they had been threatened. They also point out that the level of violence against reporters is “alarming”, including verbal and physical intimidation and death threats. “Journalists investigating corruption and organised crime are the ones who are targeted most” (RSF 2017). Regarding the Vatican City, a micro state located within Rome, RSF identifies the judicial system as the biggest adversary to press freedom, “harassing the media in connection with the Vatileaks and Vatileaks 2 scandals. Two journalists are facing up to eight years in prison as a result of writing books about corruption and intrigue within the Holy See.” (RSF 2017). While Freedom House (2017) states that Italy as a whole and the Italian Internet are free, the press is only seen as partially free. This has been determined from 2005 on. Media concentration and resulting conflicts of interest (as seen with former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi being both leader of Italia’s biggest center-right party and the owner of the country’s largest media company (Freedom House 2017), outdated press

legislation and a high number of threats against journalists are seen as the main reasons for this state of partial press freedom (Notiziario Ossigeno 2012).

Alberto Spampinato has been a journalist for 40 years and founded Ossigeno in 2007, following the death threats against the journalists Lirio Abbate, Roberto Saviano and Rosaria Capacchione (Ossigeno 2017). Since then, the NGO has been actively monitoring threats and acts of intimidation against journalists and bloggers related to their field of work and currently has over 3,000 names of victims on their website.

Italian journalists have to face a number of different kinds of threats in their line of work, although Spampinato (2016) mentions that the availability of social media and other information sources puts pressure off reporters, as they do not represent the sole source of information anymore. However, several hundreds of threats against Italian journalists happen every year. Ossigeno per l'Informazione classifies 34 different kinds of threats in three categories. Next to legal abuse and obstacles to the right of information, physical attacks are one main category (Spampinato 2016).

“We have several physical attacks, like throwing TV cameras to the ground, throwing people on the floor, punching them, attacking people, who have taken refuge in a car, smashing the windows of the car to continue the attack or sending envelopes with a bullet inside, which is a death threat”,

explains Maria Laura Franciosi (2016), an Italian journalist working in Brussels and actively supporting Ossigeno in Italy and across Europe. In other incidents, journalists' cameras or mobile phones have been stolen or smashed, their cars have been set on fire or they have received pictures of crosses or had them scratched into the bodies of their cars - a death threat similar to receiving a bullet (RSF 2014). Those attacks are usually targeted against single or a small number of journalists. Journalists reporting negatively about the far-right Lega Nord often get threatened for their articles. “The threatened journalists reported on changes in the leadership of Lega Nord. Others wrote about a scandal concerning the financing of the Lega Nord” (Spampinato 2016). One of these journalists was Giovanni Mari from Genova, working for the daily newspaper *Il Secolo XIX*. He reported about the Lega Nord allegedly secretly exporting money to Tanzania. As a result, Lega Nord put him under illegal surveillance and monitored him with wire-tapping in order to find out about his contacts. In this case it is highlighted that those illegal acts were committed by a political party represented in the Italian parliament (Franciosi 2016; Spampinato 2016).

Aside from a few other journalists, Massimo Numa from the Turin-based newspaper *La Stampa* is currently under police protection after threats from “No Tav” and the “Black Block”. He reported on violence these groups perpetrated – an issue journalists usually do not tackle. Numa also received videos of him and his wife going about their daily lives, indicating that they had been monitored. Before, he had received a bomb package in October 2013, which was intercepted before it could explode (Notiziario Ossigeno 2014; RSF 2014). The Casa Pound movement is known as well for physical attacks. However, those are not limited to journalists, but to everybody criticising them.

Another method to intimidate journalists and make their work harder is discrimination, where political parties and movements exclude unwelcome journalists from their events and cut them off from information. “As a journalist, if you do not agree with what some of the authorities say, you become ‘persona non-grata’ and get denied access to press conferences etc. Your access to information is blocked and you cannot work properly” (Franciosi 2016). The Five-Star Movement and especially their leader, Beppe Grillo, are known for behaving negatively towards journalists and compose “black lists” of unwanted reporters (additionally to organising targeted attacks against them). However, this tactic is used in nearly all fields of information, ranging from fashion to social issues and incidents often go unreported (Spampinato 2016).

Journalists face a lot of attacks online and in social media as well (RSF 2014). Some cases even go beyond usual insults and become open death threats. Threats against family and warnings like “look after your children, we know where your children go to school” (Franciosi 2016) or telling them that their address is known and posting pictures of journalists’ homes are occurring as well. These threats are often made with public profiles; however, fake profiles are used in coordinated campaigns against individual journalist and bloggers. Usually, threatened journalists go to the police, however, in many cases, it is not possible to find out details about the issuers of threats. (Spampinato 2016).

The origins of the attacks published by Ossigeno are not primarily classified. However, it is estimated that populist groups are responsible for about ten per cent of threats against journalists. “About sixty per cent of the more than 3,000 episodes registered by us are physical attacks, the rest are legal threats, especially libel” (Spampinato 2016). However, it should be noted that when talking about populist groups in Italy, it is primarily the Lega Nord, and recently the Five-Star movement, that are meant (Franciosi 2017). Populist movements (especially the right-wing Lega Nord), though making use of all sorts of threats, specialise in certain kinds of

threats, especially suing over libel. Right-wing political movements are not present in as aggressive and violent ways as they used to be several decades ago. However, though not violent, populist movements do not keep a low profile in Italy “since they are represented in parliament and for this reason they believe themselves to be untouchable” (Franciosi 2017).

Libel accusations are a special case and considered by Ossigeno to be among the most-often used tools to intimidate journalists (Spampinato 2016). It is a “strong barrier” that can be raised against criticism and is frequently used by populist movements such as Lega Nord and Casa Pound, but by civil servants and local governments as well (Spampinato 2016). A total of 6,813 trials for libel were processed in Italian courts every year between 2014 and 2015, while another 1,300 are estimated to be pending (Ossigeno 2016).

According to Franciosi, the underlying danger of libel charges is the often-high amounts of money for damages asked from journalists and publishers.

“In many cases, even the former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi (populist and head of the conservative party Forza Italia, called Popolo della Libertà during his presidency, author’s note), have asked enormous amounts of compensation from journalists in libel cases and the amounts were often several million Euros. Since the Italian legal system often is very slow, it means that journalists’ cases often proceed from the lowest to the highest level in court over the course of six, 10, sometimes 20 years.” (Franciosi 2016).

Those possibly-impending charges for damages are threats, journalists and publishers often have to live with for years (Ossigeno 2016).

“Sometimes they are sentenced when they are already retired and their former publisher does not assist them any more. [...] If you do not have the money to pay, the justice system will take your house and everything you have. The procedure is disadvantageous for journalists” (Franciosi 2016).

Whoever feels threatened by what journalists write about them, even if it is based on facts, simply has to open up a libel case against the journalists to draw them into years of legal, possibly very expensive proceedings. “I spoke to some journalists, who told me that they only have the property of the house where they live and do not want to lose this, so they shut up” (Franciosi 2016).

The very real danger of going to prison for an article deemed libellous by a court encourages self-censorship among journalists as well. “The judges in Italy very easily sentence journalists

to prison terms. In 2016 –these are official figures from the Italian ministry of justice – the judges gave to 155 journalists a total of 103 years of prison because of what they had written. The journalists did not go to prison straight away, but it is a dangerous situation hanging over their head” (Franciosi 2016). In the end, almost 90 percent of all libel cases in Italy are closed because it was decided that the claims were lacking foundations (Ossigeno 2016). However, as the Italian legal system acts very slowly, journalists have to live with the Damocles sword of paying exaggerated sums of money for damages or even going to prison for many years (Franciosi 2016; Notiziario Ossigeno 2016b).

That suing journalists over libel in order to silence them is a commonly used tool in Italy is backed by official government data.

“Every year, in Italy, about 7,000 journalists are taken to court over libel. Of these, after three to six years, about eight out of ten are found not guilty. This data came from the Government. They are absolutely impressive. They say that a journalist can be put on trial for years over everything he writes” (Spampinato 2016).

Moreover, such lawsuits are not just time- but cost-intensive for journalists.

“It is calculated that journalists spend 54 million Euros in total each year for legal expenses and this is a very prudent estimation. So resorting to the ‘easy’ way to prompt journalists to refrain from reporting, there is less need for violent threats” (Spampinato 2016).

Spampinato (2016) believes libel to be the most effective legal method to limit the freedom of the press – and not only in Italy, but in every country. As a result, he demands that official data about libel suits be reported more frequently and publicly in other countries, as is the case with Ossigeno in Italy in order to get a broader picture of actions taken against press freedom all over Europe and the world. However, through the research and publications of Ossigeno, the issue of libel accusations is recognised more by government and parliament “and they try to change the legislation surrounding libel” (Spampinato 2016).

Though Ossigeno per l’Informazione analyses and collects threats against journalists and explores issues of legality in the field of journalism, they do not protect journalists in court or in person (Ossigeno 2017). Some journalists ask the NGO not to publicise their case and identity in order to avoid further danger (Franciosi 2016). In case of threats or plots against journalists, the Italian police forces are the first and more or less only address where journalists can turn to for protection, as other European organisations cannot physically protect them (Franciosi

2016). The Italian authorities seem to act reliably in this field of work. “They do a very good job. We can state this, because we have reports from people under police escort. The authorities are very clever, because many of the journalists under police protection have not been threatened directly, but the police conducted wiretappings and discovered that there were plots against the journalists. They made it known to the journalists and put them under protection.”

Currently, about 30 journalists in Italy are estimated to be living under police protection, compared to an estimated 10 in 2012 (Notiziario Ossigeno 2012; Franciosi 2016). There exist four levels of protection, ranging from being escorted by a police car at night and having it visit journalists’ workplace to being transported by armed policeman and being followed by them everywhere. About 15 journalists are currently under the latter high protection level. “Many newspaper editors are under police escort, because they have received death threats” (Spampinato 2016).

However, the weak point of the protection through the authorities is that “the people responsible don’t get punished” (Franciosi 2016). Legal consequences are rare. “When one of the issuers of such threats is proven guilty and sentenced, we make a big headline, because something like this is highly unusual. More than 90 percent do not get punished” (Spampinato 2016).

Self-censorship is largely used to prevent intimidation and causes journalists to refrain from reporting threats, creating a high estimated number of unreported cases. “Reporting is risky. Reporters, including those from big newspapers, do not go beyond the limit of reporting positive true facts because they know that this would be dangerous. “The Italian law says that the press is free, but facts say that this is not the case. There is something we call ‘hidden censorship’. This term comes from the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Nils Muiznieks, who used this term referring to Italy but also to other countries like Germany and Austria” (Spampinato 2016).

Additionally, the threat of legal action “is something that urges the journalists afterwards to self-restrain themselves, because they know that they cannot work if they write about opinions that are against those of local authorities etc. We have a lot of cases of this self-censorship” (Franciosi 2016).

“There is a great silence on these things. The newspapers report only one or two cases out of hundreds of cases disclosed by Ossigeno. It’s a big problem. Also, the

official government data that we published two months ago were not reported by the main newspapers. What we have in Italy is a mixture of violence and conditioning” (Spampinato 2016).

Another reason media outlets rarely report information about journalistic repression or “shocking” official figures like the number of journalists sentenced to prison, is the fear of the consequences.

“They are afraid that if this official data become known they must explain how they behave to avoid threats and requests for compensation, how heavy is the burden for each of them. So it is better not to write about this sort of thing (Franciosi 2016).”

10. Montenegro

Montenegro is a small country with a population of 644,578 (July 2016 est.)⁷³ situated in the South West of the Balkan Peninsula, which has a very long history and which was one of the last states to declare independence after the fall of the Socialist Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. “The secession of Slovenia and Macedonia came relatively peacefully but there were devastating wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Serbia and Montenegro together formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia between 1992 and 2003.”⁷⁴

Although it has changed several forms of statehoods and governments, the personalities in power in Montenegro have managed to stay present for more than two decades. The most prominent figure in this context is Milo Djukanovic, the head of the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), who “served as either prime minister or president for a quarter of a century, bar two interruptions in 2006 and 2010.”⁷⁵ He became Prime Minister of Montenegro for the first time on 15 February 1991 when he was 29, thus becoming the youngest prime minister in Europe. In the presidential elections in 1997, he ran as a candidate and won the second round vote against his opponent Momir Bulatovic. He was sworn into office in January 1998 and was President of Montenegro until 2002, when he swapped the position with then Prime Minister Filip Vujanovic. In 2006, after Montenegro declared its independence, Djukanovic resigned as Prime Minister (that was his second term) and retired only to return to the same position in 2008.

In October 2010, he again stepped down as Prime Minister. However, in 2012 Montenegro held early parliamentary elections. Four major players at this election were: Coalition for a European Montenegro (lead by DPS), Democratic Front (DF), Socialist People’s Party of Montenegro (SNP) and an alliance Positive Montenegro.⁷⁶ Since Djukanovic did not retire completely from the political life - at that time he was still the head of the DPS and the leader of

⁷³ http://www.indexmundi.com/montenegro/demographics_profile.html

⁷⁴ Profile Serbia and Montenegro (5 June 2006); BBC; Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1039269.stm

⁷⁵ Montenegro’s Veteran Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic Quits (26 October 2016); BBC; Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37777379>

⁷⁶ IFES Election Guide: October 2014, Montenegro; Election Guide: Democracy Assistance and Elections News; Retrieved from <http://www.electionguide.org/election.php?ID=2058>

the Coalition for a European Montenegro - after his Coalition won the election he became the Prime Minister for the fourth time.

The next parliamentary election was held on 16 October 2016, when again Djukanovic's DPS Party came first. However, on the same day an alleged coup to overthrow the government was stopped, resulting in several arrests. "Montenegro's Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic has resigned, hours after suggesting that Russia was involved in an alleged coup attempt on the country's election day and accusing the opposition of collaborating with the Kremlin. Djukanovic said on October 25 that there was "a strong connection of a foreign factor" in the October 16 vote, which was marked by the arrest of 20 people suspected of planning armed attacks against the prime minister and his supporters after parliamentary election results were announced."⁷⁷

While many Western politicians saw Djukanovic as a pro-European leader who tackled corruption after appointing a special prosecutor to look into other politicians, he has always been a controversial figure because of his alleged involvement in a cigarette smuggling network in the 1990's⁷⁸, among other alleged misdeeds. After this last election, his opponents accused Djukanovic of corruption and cronyism, which he strongly denied. "Opposition parties in Montenegro have accused the government of fabricating the coup attempt and Russian interference as part of a strategy to suppress turnout by opponents."⁷⁹ Following this most recent Djukanovic's resignation, on 28 November 2016 Dusko Markovic, his close longtime ally and a former head of state security, became the next Prime Minister of Montenegro. Since DPS did not get the majority in this election, it lost the majority in the parliament. "However, it was able to form an alliance with Social Democrats and other parties that represent national minorities in order to gain the support of 41 deputies in the 81-seat legislature for the November 28 vote. Opposition lawmakers boycotted the session."⁸⁰ Opposition politicians and civil society groups expected not much to change since Djukanovic kept his position as the leader of the DPS party, "...giving him oversight of party developments and considerable

⁷⁷ Montenegrin PM Resigns, Suggests Russia Behind Alleged Coup Plot (26 October 2016); FRE/RL; Retrieved from <http://www.rferl.org/a/montenegrin-leader-djukanovic-suggests-russia-behind-alleged-coup-plot-serbia/28075458.html>

⁷⁸ <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/djukanovic-smuggling-claims-persist>

⁷⁹ Macdowall, Andrew (26 October 2016); Montenegro's Prime Minister Resigns, Perhaps Bolstering Country's E.U. Hopes; Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/27/world/europe/montenegro-milo-djukanovic-resigns.html>

⁸⁰ RFE (28 November 2016); Montenegro's Parliament Approves New Pro-NATO Government; Retrieved from: <http://www.rferl.org/a/montenegro-parliament-approves-new-government-nato/28144614.html>

influence over party matters and has stated that he will be helping Marković to govern Montenegro when his experience is called upon.”⁸¹

At this point Montenegro still suffers corruption and crime, does not respect freedom of speech and it still has not finished reforming its legal system⁸², although it has launched the EU accession process by opening the talks in June 2012.⁸³ One of the main problems is the legacy of Milo Djukanovic, who has been the most prominent and influential political figure since 27 years. In the 1990’s, after the fall of Yugoslavia and while it was influenced by Serbia, Montenegro has faced populism coming from former Communists. “The fact that the elites in the first half of the 1990s did not emphasise the difference between the two counterparts of Montenegrin identity helped preserve the populist movement driven by Serbian nationalism. At the time of the economic embargo and isolationist policies of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, ideas of political populism and extreme (Serbian) nationalism resonated well with the people.”⁸⁴ Djukanovic, who at that time was collaborating with Serbia, with time turned against it and led the country to its independence in 2006. This raises a question, if this semi-authoritarian ruler, who used different opportunities to stay in power, has been applying political populism for this purpose, i.e. whether this was really necessary since he never really had a real opposition?

Although there is no current scientific research about populism in Montenegro or the governing style of Djukanovic, it is enough to talk to the journalists and NGO representatives from the country in order to get an insight and a local perspective on this topic. Zeljko Ivanovic, prominent Montenegrin journalist and managing editor, co-founder and co-owner of the independent daily Vijesti, sees Montenegro as a specific case in the region, because according to him firstly journalists work under most difficult conditions and secondly they are not jeopardised by right-wing populists and nationalists, but rather by coordinated activities by government representatives as well as illegal structures connected to organised crime.

“The conditions are dangerous and journalists work under higher pressure because of the organised crime of the state which according to the reports of the European Commission,

⁸¹ Morrison, Kenneth (4 November 2016); Milo Djukanović: Stepping down or stepping aside?; New Eastern Europe: A bimonthly dedicated to Central and Eastern Europe; Retrieved from:

<http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/2176-milo-djukanovic-stepping-down-or-stepping-aside>

⁸² European Commission - Fact Sheet: Key findings of the 2016 Report on Montenegro; 9 November 2016; Brussels; Retrieved from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-3638_en.htm

⁸³ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/eu-broadens-accession-talks-with-montenegro/>

⁸⁴ Dzankic, Jelena; Cutting the mists of the Black Mountain: cleavages in Montenegro’s divide over statehood and identity; European University Institute; Florence; 2011, Page 7

which are trying to be balanced, doesn't see a clear line between the 'aboveground' and the underground i.e. institutions and the informal centers of power. This pressure coming from these circles is limiting the journalistic work much more than some nationalist or populist structures would. There are some Serbian nationalist structures here, but first of all they are in opposition and they do not have any power to endanger journalists so they are rather a relic from the past, at least at this phase, while they are still at the margin of the political life and have no influence on political decisions."⁸⁵

Milka Tadic Mijovic, a prominent journalist and president of the Center for Investigative Journalism in Montenegro (CIN-CG), when asked about populism, remembers the still not investigated case of a murdered journalist in Montenegro, which happened in May 2004:

"Remember the Balkans in the 1990's - Tudjman and Milosevic were in a war against each other, but they had used the identical wording each in their own country for the journalists and media, who were not under their control, by accusing them of treason of national interests and cooperation with the enemy. Such populist campaigns are very dangerous, they not only threaten the freedom of the media but very often also inspire aggression and violence against the so-called 'traitors' and 'enemies'. Several journalists have been liquidated in the Balkans after being accused of treason and most of these cases have not been resolved until today. Even more so it is not known who ordered these crimes nor who pulled the trigger, as in the case of the Montenegrin editor and journalist Dusko Jovanovic, who was murdered 12 years ago and his case still has not been resolved. So the perpetrators of these crimes usually stay unpunished because they are protected by the populist leaders and their courts and police."⁸⁶

According to the newest report by the Freedom House, the situation in Montenegro deteriorated in 2016 and its status declined from free to partly free. With regard to freedom of expression and belief, the report states that the government does not explicitly censor media outlets, and libel was decriminalized in 2011, but indirect censorship exists. Journalists who are critical of Đukanović or the governing party have faced costly civil defamation suits. Attacks against journalists continued in 2015.

Although the attacks on journalists are going down in numbers, there is also one other tool which the government uses in order to put pressure on the media: "The DPS-led government frequently denies opposition media outlets advertising contracts from publicly owned or

⁸⁵ Zeljko Ivanovic, personal communication, 9 January 2017

⁸⁶ Milka Tadic Mijovic, personal communication, 15 December 2016

controlled entities.”⁸⁷ Thus the government has managed to indirectly control the media, because the economical pressure always results in self censorship by the journalists.

However, due to international pressure, especially from the European Union and the United Nations, in 2014 the government formed a Commission for monitoring the investigation of attacks against journalists, which should first of all protect them and second of all solve old cases of attacks on journalists. It comprises representatives of the Ministry of Interior, the prosecutor’s office, the police, the National Security Agency, NGOs and media representatives. Although the Commission was set up out of the government and media representatives, who were supposed to be working together, already at the beginning there were signs that the government would not support it entirely.

The head of this commission was Nikola Markovic, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of daily Dan, who himself said in an interview in December 2016 that the government was obstructing the work of the commission and that it was not committed to solving cases, unless they had no political dimension.⁸⁸ In its annual report for 2015, the Commission stated that it did fulfill some tasks, but it has failed to fulfill its main mission, namely to give an overall opinion about the omissions in the investigations it had looked into, and the proposals for the improvement of these investigations.⁸⁹ Ivanovic from the daily Vijesti also does not see any changes resulting from the Committee’s work within two years of its existence. It is not active any more since there was no political will in Montenegro to make the work of the Commission successful.

“The representatives of the police, who were named by the government as members of the commission, were obstructing its work all the time and it has ceased to exist due to that (...) It was just a theater performance in order to satisfy Brussels, which insisted on it.”⁹⁰

So attacks on journalists are still a serious problem and many international organisations are actively protesting these and trying to influence the government to find the perpetrators. The daily Vijesti alone has had 23 attacks on its journalists and property in the past 10 years since

⁸⁷ Freedom in the World Report 2016 - Montenegro; Freedom House; Retrieved from: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/montenegro>

⁸⁸ <https://bedrudingusic.wordpress.com/2016/12/14/nikola-markovic-urednik-dnevnog-lista-dan-i-predsjednik-komisije-za-istrazivanje-napada-na-novinare-u-crnoj-gori-ono-sto-je-problem-jeste-sto-je-medijska-scena-crne-gore-svakim-danom-sve-zagadenija/>

⁸⁹ <http://www.hracion.org/wp-content/uploads/RAD-KOMISIJE-ZA-PRAC%CC%81ENJE-ISTRAGA-NAPADA-NA-NOVINARE-Final-1.pdf>

⁹⁰ Zeljko Ivanovic, personal communication, 9 January 2017

Montenegro declared independence. Only two cases of these 23 have been resolved.⁹¹ Even if the perpetrators are found, the names of the people ordering these attacks are never revealed.

While journalists and media in Montenegro can turn to national and international NGOs and organisations, but also to Brussels, in order to get help and while these do protest in their name and pressure the government, it seems that the government itself still is the biggest problem because of its unwillingness to act. In most cases it reacts at the beginning, immediately after being reprimanded by the international community and the media, but very soon after that it retreats and the hot topics it should act upon are swept under the carpet.

Although in Montenegro populism does not really pose a major threat for journalists at the moment, there is a potential for its growth - not only due to the events happening in many European countries and around the world. Due to its historical connection with Serbia and still present Serbian influence on its society, politics and everyday life, there is a potential that the Serbian nationalists would use populism in order to get more power in the country. As Ivanovic pointed out, populism is marginal due to the opposition status of the Serbian parties, but he does observe a new trend here:

“However there is a new episode, which has opened itself in the past year. Through these populist and nationalist structures which are pro-Serbian and which are deep-rooted in the Serbian nationalism from the Milosevic era in the 1990s, recently they have started to secretly, but also publicly flirt and cooperate with Russia and Putin. At the moment there is an investigation into the financing of their campaign for the parliamentary elections in October, whether there was a putsch attempt or not in which supposedly Russian specialists have been involved.”⁹²

⁹¹ Zeljko Ivanovic, personal communication, 9 January 2017

⁹² Zeljko Ivanovic, personal communication, 9 January 2017

11. Poland

Poland joined the EU in 2004 along with nine other eastern and southern European states (European Union 2017). As of January 2017, the right-wing nationalist party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice, PiS) of Jarosław Kaczyński, twin brother of the late former Polish prime minister Lech Kaczyński, is the only governing party since their victory at the Polish parliamentary elections in October 2015 (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016, Wieliński 2017). The populist party, which was founded in 2001 by Lech Kaczyński, had been the governmental party of Poland once before, from 2005 to 2007. From 2007 to 2015, the country was governed by the liberal-conservative Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO) (Wieliński 2017).

Reporters without Borders (RSF, 2017) placed the country at number 47 on their 2016 World Press Freedom Index out of 180 countries, having dropped heavily from place 18 the year before. The country's global score fell by 11.78 points from 12.71 in 2015. RSF sees "media freedom and pluralism in jeopardy" (RSF 2017) in the case of Poland. They are mostly concerned because of laws passed by the PiS party that empower the government to "appoint and dismiss the heads of the state radio and TV broadcast media. It took effect in January 2016. Under a second law being prepared, the contracts of all the employees of these media would be terminated" (RSF 2017).

Interestingly, Freedom House (2017) rates the Polish press as free, although voicing concern over the restrictive laws of the PiS party. It classifies the Polish media landscape as "vibrant, but highly polarized":

Historically, public television and radio broadcasters have tended to favor the government in power, carrying less criticism than the private media. The majority of private outlets display ideological or political bias as well, forcing citizens to consult multiple sources in order to inform themselves effectively. *Gazeta Wyborcza*—Poland's most prominent news daily—the Polish edition of *Newsweek*, the weekly newsmagazine *Polityka*, and the 24-hour news station TVN24 are considered supportive of the PO and critical of the new government. Other titles, including *Rzeczpospolita*, *Gość Niedzielny*, *Nasz Dziennik*, and *Gazeta Polska*, have shown more sympathy for PiS. Polish media also include a range of largely apolitical, business-focused titles and tabloids" (Freedom House 2017)

The time period between the years from 2011 until the elections in the autumn of 2015 seems to have been rather fortunate for journalists regarding threats from right-wing populist groups and press freedom overall. The country was placed rather highly on Reporters without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, scoring place 22 in 2012 and 2013 and improving to number 19 in 2014 and number 18 in 2015, with only 12 other European countries (including Finland, which scored first place) ranking higher (RSF 2017). Freedom House (2017) has rated the situation of the Polish press as "free" since 2002 onwards and with the exception of a few defamation and blasphemy lawsuits had not voiced big concerns over Poland's freedom of the press up to 2015.

According to Bartosz Wieliński (2017), head of foreign politics of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the biggest liberal newspaper in Poland, published by the private media group Agora S.A. (Agora 2017), under PO-rule there were no direct attacks towards journalists. "Of course, society was then split as it is now, however, the representatives of a conservative, anti-European course were in the opposition and had no access to public media. Public media outlets supported the government then as well, however, not as propagandistic as they do presently" (Wieliński 2017). There was one instance of a partly government-owned newspaper being sold to a private investor, who restructured the paper and dismissed a lot of journalists. As the paper was known to be an outlet for national conservatives, they felt that the measures were politically motivated. "However, many liberal or apolitical journalists were fired as well. The reasons were purely economical, as the paper was not yielding any profit (Wieliński 2017).

The situation for media and press freedom changed drastically in October 2015, when the PiS-party rose to power again, states Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska (2016), coordinator of the "Helsinki Foundation For Human Rights" in Poland. Although they did not get the constitutional majority like Victor Orbán in Hungary, they still had enough power to pass and change laws on their own.

"So they change the law in a very speedy manner, usually without any consultations. The parliament usually works on the laws at night, so people are unable to follow what is going on. Also the media cannot report about it properly either, because who is listening to the radio or watching TV at 1 or 2 o'clock at night?" (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016).

Before trying to gain more control over the public media, the PiS party managed to change the structure of the constitutional tribunal and as a result was able to appoint their own judges. Bychawska-Siniarska (2016) points out the grave consequence of that measure, "that basically

we don't have any constitutional review right now, because the majority of the judges in the constitutional tribunal are nominated by the ruling party. They also changed the law on police and introduced an anti-terror, law, which allows a greater invigilation of citizens, but also of journalists." The constitutional tribunal has been paralyzed by the government.

"For example, today a session was cancelled as one of the judges was forced to go on a leave, another one was taken to court by the prosecution and as a result, the PiS-loyal chairwoman simply cancelled the session. The situation is similar to that under Dollfuß in Austrian fascism" (Wieliński 2017).

At the end of 2015, the ruling party produced the public media law, allowing the minister of state treasury to elect and nominate all management and supervisory boards of public media (Wieliński 2017).

"This triggered since January 2016 an avalanche of dismissals. Managers of public TV and radio were dismissed and new ones were appointed. This of course triggered further dismissals of journalists or simply leftist journalists, because they were not able or willing to cooperate with new management. So, now I think on the list of dismissals there were about 170 journalist managers that were dismissed since the beginning of the year" (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016).

Some of the dismissed managers went to court. In a limited number of cases, the court ruled in their favour, as in the case of a dismissed radio manager. "He knew that he would be dismissed and he wanted to protest against the December law, so he played the Polish national anthem every hour, just to show that the media are under attack. Because of this he got dismissed and the dismissal goes without any justification and in a very humiliating environment" (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016). Karolina Lewicka, a reporter and talk-show host of public TV outlet TVP, was fired for unprofessionalism, after threats from the newly appointed cultural minister, Piotr Gliński, whom she asked on air to defend his action of shutting down a theater production for containing a simulated sex scene. However, after an appeal to TVP's ethics committee, she was reinstated (Freedom House 2017).

As a further change, the Polish government introduced the national media council, giving it the power to elect and select management boards of public media. However, it consists of five members, of which three are active members of parliament of the ruling party. As the decisions are not made under the condition of unanimity, the PiS party basically still has control over which people manage the public media outlets, as those three MPs together hold the majority. The council was introduced as the PiS party was unable to send their members to the already existing and constitution-based council for broadcasting and television, since their serving terms were fixed (Wieliński 2017). Bychawska-Siniarska (2016) criticises this measure as

having a strong negative effect on the quality of public media, transforming them to propaganda tools for the ruling party.

“So, for instance, watching daily news is suddenly comment to the main opposition Gazeta Wyborcza’s daily articles. The main news, which are watched by three million people, they would just discredit the articles, comment on them and do this kind of thing to show that the opposition are all wrong. Of course, the screen time for the opposition is minimal and most news present the current government in a very positive light (...) The public media were bastardised into propaganda machines [...] They spread hatred against the opposition, those who think differently, the European Union, Germany and Russia. Television in Poland currently is something horrible. Like in Russia or even worse” (Wieliński 2017).

The current Polish government is behaving “very unfriendly towards journalists” (Wieliński 2017). Press and communication politics are lacking, journalists do not get informed well and are not involved – even those supporting the government are left out (Wieliński 2017). More importantly, politicians demand to push journalists out of the public. “We had an incident last December, when the president of the parliament tried to ban us from the parliament” (Wieliński 2017). Usually, journalists were able to witness, film and photograph the sessions from a gallery. “The president marshal wanted to prohibit this and lock us in a press centre, where we could only follow the sessions on a screen” (Wieliński 2017). This would have made their work harder, as, for example, journalists would not be able any more to film members of parliament sleeping during the sessions or things not wanted to be shown by the officials. This attempt, however, sparked opposition protests (Reuters 2016) and journalists were protesting on December 19th, 2015 and blocked the parliament. “Shortly after those protests, the government called an attempted coup, Kaczyński announced that the press would be held responsible for this, as they described the events in a wrongful way. He also announced to change the law to force media to tell the truth – well, what he believes to be the truth, anyway” (Wieliński 2017).

The government is acting especially hostile towards the liberal Gazeta Wyborcza, which “has contributed in forming the country for 25 years. It is a symbol of the liberal, cosmopolitan and not-so-religious Poland. This is a picture, that they cannot bear to see”, explains Wieliński (2017), who described an on-going antagonism between Kaczyński and Gazeta Wyborcza’s editor in chief, Adam Michnik. For example, Michnik and Gazeta Wyborcza sued Kaczyński successfully in 2012 for likening the Gazeta Wyborcza to a communist-era newspaper. Kaczyński, however, refused to apologise and announced an appeal (Freedom House 2017). The public media, at the present, harass Gazeta Wyborcza on a regular basis, calling it’s journalists traitors. “Furthermore, governmental officials are not allowed to directly speak to us.

So we have to turn to their spokespersons for questions and we barely get any answers. Fortunately, journalists are not entirely dependent on them and are still able to find ... scoops” (Wieliński 2017). Additionally, the sale of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and other liberal papers is forbidden at all gas stations owned by state oil companies (Wieliński 2017). “Sometimes liberal titles are available, but they are hidden under a pile of others” (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016).

A trend towards physical violence against journalists in Poland is not visible as there are next to no attacks (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016; Wieliński 2017). “Nobody was threatened, sentenced, beaten or arrested. However, when PiS first ruled, some of my colleagues were wiretapped illegally. A court-ruling forced the secret services to apologise” (Wieliński 2017). Bychawska-Siniarska (2016) knows only one instance of physical violence, that happened two months after the PiS-party’s electoral victory in 2015. A journalist, who was reporting about a public event, was suddenly attacked by the crowd. “The crowd shouted that he should get out and that he was tied to the former government and was not allowed to interfere in their gathering. They took away his camera and it got quite dangerous for him, but the police did not really react” (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016). Freedom House (2017) noted that Lukasz Masiak, “founder and editor of the independent news website *Nasza Mława*, died as a result of injuries stemming from an assault in a nightclub bathroom. Masiak had been a victim of attacks due to his journalism in the past, but Polish authorities found no direct link in this case” (Freedom House, 2017).

However, a certain legal instrument is used against journalists, though not just by populists, but by “whoever is in power”. Journalists are often confronted by criminal defamation proceedings (i.e. libel), especially in the local media. “You know, just to shut their mouths and to have this really chilling effect on journalists. Sometimes I have clients, who have 14 proceedings pending at once, which were being launched by local government people, be it the mayor of a town or someone from the office.”

Although mostly used in rural areas and by ministers, who sue journalists privately and often just use such announcements as a threat (Wieliński 2017) the right-wing PiS-party as a whole has sued a whole media outlet. In March 2016, they sued the country’s leading left-liberal newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, for libel “over its commentary on the controversial pardon of a state official who was convicted of abuse of power” (ECPMF 2016). The court found him guilty in 2012, but he appealed and the legal proceedings continued. In November 2015, after PiS won the national election, he was pardoned by the president, Andrzej Duda, without waiting for

the court's final decision. This was seen as highly controversial, although from a legal standpoint, the president may have the right to do so. Journalist Wojciech Czuchnowski, a colleague of Bartosz Wieliński, wrote in his coverage of the case in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, that the president's act was illegal and that he abused his rights. In the commentary (where journalists are allowed to voice their opinion using to a certain degree harsher words), Czuchnowski wrote that "the Polish state does not act like a democratic state. So does a mafia state." For this commentary the ruling party is seeking an apology from Czuchnowski, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and its parent company Agora S.A. that should appear in the newspaper on the front page, on the website and in the form of a traditional letter" (ECPMF 2016). However, charges were dropped as the court found Czuchnowski to be innocent at the end of August 2016 (Wieliński 2017).

Another issue that has reached new heights is discrediting, threats and insults against journalists on social media, i.e. Twitter and Facebook. "It happens on a scale like never before. And even regarding me as a social activist and proponent lawyer in most of their cases, I see on Twitter, even in private messages, that I am called a "red communist pig" and so on, which has never happened before" (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016). Journalists need thick skin online. "It is unpleasant, witnessing a shitstorm against oneself online. There are many things steered by government trolls. The man responsible for such actions is the deputy minister in the chancellery of the prime ministry, we know that" (Wieliński 2017).

Despite the absence of concrete figures, the number of insults and threats has risen significantly. "This government is absolutely the opposite. Not only are they harsh in words, but they say 'freedom of expression over everything' and that 'hate speech' is just this liberal leftist notion, and that we should not really pay attention to it" (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016). The absence of a program against hate speech gives hate commenters and Internet trolls more confidence in using defamations, insults, etc. themselves. However, this rising problem of hate speech, trolling and disinformation is not addressed in the public debate, which is seen as an urgent issue by the Helsinki Foundation, especially regarding its possible use as a manipulation instrument in the future, as false information is already circulating on the web (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016).

When describing an incident of physical violence against a journalist, the Polish police forces do not seem rather keen to act. Bychawska-Siniarska (2016) doubts that the police would be a helpful force for journalists, although she is helping journalists to file motions to the forces, if they so desire. Especially in the case of online threats and hate speech, the police seldom

open investigations when journalists turn to them, arguing that anonymous commenters with anonymous accounts cannot be tracked on the Internet. “So they are not really looking into those cases. It used to be a priority for the police, but it is not any more.” (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016).

There are already measures set in motion by the ruling party in order to weaken liberal newspapers such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, mostly using economic pressure. For example, the Polish government tried to cut out the liberals and opposition media by withdrawing all public advertising and announcements and transferring it to media outlets that are friendly to them. “This is a huge amount of money, because it is not just all of the official announcements produced by the government or courts, but it’s also all the advertising of the state-owned companies” (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016). “They try to starve us out”, states Wieliński (2017), whose newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* is hit heavily by these measures. “So this is a way of creating their own media which are in favour of their politics and policies” (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016).

The government withdrew all subscriptions of liberal newspapers from courts and officials, adding further economic pressure, as these withdrawn subscriptions mean a substantial financial loss for them. Additionally, judges and government officials are – at least at the work place – limited to the information and opinion they are able to get from media.

Concern is voiced as well over the growing hatred and division between governmental and opposition media, be it public or private. “The Polish journalistic society as a group is divided between those who support the government and those who oppose it. Both do this ruthlessly. There are rarely journalists who stay neutral over time” (Wieliński 2017). This leads to people living inside information bubbles, where only certain viewpoints are represented. In the case of state-owned media, this is especially true for people living in remote areas of Poland, as there are typically only public TV stations available and access to private news outlets is scarce. “I think this is a huge threat because we do not have really neutral media. They only operate on the Internet and will not reach the people (Bychawska-Siniarska 2016).”

12. Romania

Almost three decades after the end of Eastern European communism, Romania, along with most of its neighbouring states, is still struggling through a path of political and media transitioning and democratisation with an unclear outcome. While Romanian national politics is still plagued by corruption, and freedom of the media receives a lot of political and institutional pressure, it seems that both Eastern and Western Europe are heading down the same path of decline of press freedom and safety. The following chapter of the study examines the role radical-right populist parties in Romania have played in the decline of journalist safety over the period of the last five years (2011-2016).

The transformation to parliamentary political systems and party pluralism are the principle consequences in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of Eastern European communism. Amidst the proliferation of parties and the political opposition and financial competition among them, media plays the role of both a stage and an instrument. In the recent years after the end of the former regime, control and influence of political parties, structures and actors, especially on broadcast news media, is greater than on any other institution. Media's functions then are no different than during the old regime, in terms of propagandising, mobilisation, and news gatekeeping, however, the partisan pluralism and competition, eventually allows for a variety of political and social news to reach the citizens (Gross, 2003). In the mid-1990s media gradually distanced itself from political influence and control, and strived towards democratisation and westernisation, driven rather by commercial interests and profit, avoiding the over-politicising and propagandising legacy of totalitarianism (Grubb, 1999; Gross, 2003). As journalist safety and press freedom decline is reported Europe-wide, the role of radical right populism, as a movement and a party, resulting from the post-communist race for party pluralism is to be examined.

Romanian politics since the end of the totalitarian regime follows a peculiar path of transition and development. While the end of Ceausescu's dictatorship is the only Eastern European regime actively overthrown by popular uprising, post-communist transition is rather stagnant, with limited citizen engagement and re-dressed old political elite. Until the achievement of an acceptable proto-democratic framework, early post-communist governing elites still have a tight

grip on politics, economics, and the media, the latter being instrumentalised in delegitimising potential opposition.

Similarly to other East European states undergoing system changes, Romanian politics under newly established party pluralism suffers polarisation and radicalisation. Civil society enjoys brief moments of post-totalitarian thriving, as freedom of expression is introduced, and goes as far as the foundation of an independent government monitoring association, but it gradually loses credibility (Tismaneanu, 1998). Moreover, political vacuum, lack of adequate leadership, and inadequate administrative apparatus make the process of democratisation and the notion of democracy seem unrealistic and unattainable. Romania is often cited as 'exemplary' for the problems of democratic transition (Carey, 2004).

Despite economic ups and downs, political scandal, repeated presidential impeachment, and organised crime, Romania begins its second decade as a member of both the European Union and NATO. The media landscape in Romania immediately after the demise of the totalitarian regime was characterised by an increase in the quantity of publications and circulations, but only gradually improving in quality. While in the immediate aftermath press freedom and plurality, and freedom of expression were reintroduced, establishing and maintaining independent quality media has proved to be a complex task. The Eastern-European post-communist phenomenon of an initial period of media independence and striving towards political independence, followed by financing and ownership complications, is a reality Romanian media cannot escape. Romania met the 1990s and 2000s period of EU accession preparation with a long list of persisting issues of the media: institutional, political and civil attacks against journalists heading the list (Jakubowicz, Sükösd, 2008). Moreover, the legal framework often creates an unfavourable environment for journalism and media workers. Both public and private financing and ownership of media are largely dependent on political actors and highly susceptible to economic changes. In pre-accession studies on journalism safety, two thirds of the surveyed journalists deem their profession dangerous and underpaid (Jakubowicz, 2008; Gross, Jakubowicz, 2012). Despite the early 2000s economic boom and the good financial predisposition for media at the time, the 2008 financial crisis hits Romanian media and nowadays journalism is reported as similarly dangerous and underpaid. Global reports acknowledge the transitioning status of the state and its media, yet confirm the unfavourable working conditions and political and bureaucratic obstacles for Romanian journalism on the path of matching Western standards.

Romanian nationalism and populist political communication are a long-standing element of Romanian politics. During the years of the Ceausescu regime, nationalism targeted ethnic Hungarians (Tismaneanu, 1998), much like the Zhivkov regime in neighbouring Bulgaria targeted ethnic Turks. Whilst the former regime did not allow for an environment of splinter movements, its end ensured that in the confusing immediate aftermath party and movement pluralism flourished. It did not take long before radical nationalist right groupings become relevant as opposition to the new faces of the former regime and the future Westernisation and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Unlike the Western extreme right parties and movements, their post-communist brethren had a weak and often misguided intellectual or ideological tie to interwar fascism and nationalism. As communist regimes have turned the fascist cults into a taboo, contemporary right-wing populism in post-totalitarian Eastern Europe encompasses primarily an idealistic sentiment of pre-regime fascism with a political and economic outlook reminding of that of the former regime (Sum, 2010). Similarly to Bulgaria, the political party version of right-wing populism in Romania is both left and right, whilst actual glorified interwar fascism and nationalism belong to the realm of youth movements and societies. (Fruscetta, Glont, 2009). It could be argued that Romanian right-wing populism today is not only a product of the pluralist race for new party establishment, but also, one that instrumentalises the newly acquired freedom of expression of the early 1990s to create misplaced allegiance and a link between old and new political systems. The Greater Romania Party, which has, for the purpose of this study, been examined as the best-fitting example within the conceptual framework of the contemporary radical right, was founded in 1991 by the journalist, poet and writer, Corneliu Vadim Tudor. An active journalist during the communist regime, and a co-founder and publisher of the nationalist *România Mare* (Greater Romania) magazine, his leadership is comparable to other Eastern European representatives of the populist right, combining ultra-nationalist ideas, with nostalgic sentiments for the communist times, and a populist rhetoric.

Despite the initial success of its mixed message and the charisma and prowess of its leaders, the Greater Romania Party has enjoyed little active support, and respectively, parliamentary representation, since its last mandate's end in 2008. Immediately after Romania's EU accession, the party joined the European Parliament, but quickly caused the collapse of its respective far-right grouping. Currently, the party has no seats in the European Parliament, and its national support is at an all-time low. Nevertheless, it is still relevant to the wave of right-

wing populism across Europe from an ideological point of view. The party continuously issues the Greater Romania magazine, which is also active as an online edition and on social media.

The stagnation of the party, however, is not to be mistaken for a lack of right-wing populist activity in Romania: newer groupings have been emerging, politically and otherwise, and the populist radical right is likely to rekindle its relevance on a national and a European-wide level. Political and economic transition has left Romanian media in a complicated position of tensions, financial highs and lows and political dependencies. Journalists and media workers are often seen as pawns of political opposition, and thus victims of political criticism and citizen distrust.

Whilst populist influence has not been much discussed in international academic and grey literature, Romania is still one of the states with a 'journalistic' populist right, which allows populism to be a media product on its own. According to the World Press Freedom Index, Romania has been moving up and down the front tier among other states in the report. Reporters Without Borders, however, name politicisation of the media, especially during election periods, financial pressure and corruption, as the primary reasons for the state's poor performance in press freedom. Annual Freedom House reports rarely announce serious violations to journalist safety in Romania, however, pressure between government and media is present, and similarly to the case of Bulgaria, private media ownership is a dubious and conflictual issue, which introduces an environment of threats and pressure against individual journalists. A number of physical assaults on journalists and members of the media were reported in early 2012, most of them perpetrated by local police and anti-government protesters.

Another set of issues named through all of the period's reports is the unfavourable legislature and the governmental and bureaucratic obstruction of information (which also surfaced during the transition period (Tismaneanu, 1998; Stan, 2012)). While the reports, issued between 2011 and 2016, do not explicitly mention attacks and threats being made by right-wing populist groups, parties, or politicians, multiple occasions of verbal and physical abuse of journalists by politicians or civil protesters have been recorded. The biggest concern the organisation expresses are the uncertainty in the working conditions for journalists and media workers, especially with regard to politicised media ownership and monopoly, leading to low pay and restricted access to political information.

While the Committee to Protect Journalists do not report any recent populist attacks on journalists and media workers in Romania, right-wing populism throughout the Balkans is considered an underestimated threat. Furthermore, CPJ contributors call Romania, among others, out for hindering the smooth application of European legislative measures on press freedom.

The Media Sustainability Index panellists from Romania claim that whilst there is no outright violent retaliation or assassinations targeted at journalists, citizen distrust often results in harassment throughout the process of reporting. While some attribute violence against journalists to what they regard as an abrasive and often unprofessional manner of reporting, others confirm attacks against specific journalists are mostly associated with ownership of the media outlet. As a result of the public distrust, popular support for victimised journalists is virtually non-existent and lack of public outcry in media workers' defence is alarming. In response to 2012 European criticism of Romanian implementation and misuse of freedom of press legislation, journalists have been subjected to political criticism for purportedly 'destroying the country's image abroad'. Index reports do not bring up populist right violence cases against journalists, however, throughout the researched period, but confirm that journalists do not seek legal or administrative support when harassed.

The Freedom of Expression network IFEX reports investigation and surveillance of journalists as a major safety and freedom threat. However, no populist harassment reports have been published in the period of interest.

So far, this study confirms two statements: Journalist safety and press freedom are at an all-time low and Romania is no exception, Right-wing populism is ever-growing and constantly present in the European political picture. Romanian media plays an unfavourable part in national politics, partisan affiliation or political interests of media owners determines the direction and content of news, and thus, presents journalists as pawns to political and business rivalry. Whilst right-wing populism is hardly ever reported as the direct perpetrator of acts against journalists and media workers, it is often politicians or opposition journalists that engage in harassment against colleagues. Much like other transitioning states, the Romanian legal framework is less flexible when it concerns media freedom and journalist safety. While the major radical right populist party in Romania has not been regarded as an explicit threat to journalists, other members of government throughout the researched period, have. Therefore, it

is more fitting to classify violence against journalists as political, rather than purely populist. Nevertheless, the case of transitioning Romania and its regular occurrences of journalist and media worker harassment, contribute to the European trend thereof. One could safely say that political and system limitations to journalist safety and media freedom of the post-totalitarian East have matched the populist threat of the West, and while journalists do appreciate the efforts of the EU for establishing a freedom-friendly democracy, national efforts have a long way to go before the task is accomplished.

13. Serbia

To understand the political and media situation in Serbia, it is important to present Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, who held important official positions at the Serbian Radical Party (1993-2008), led by war-crimes suspect, Vojislav Šešelj, a close ally of the late Serbian President, Slobodan Milošević. The Serbian regime of Slobodan Milošević, whose era was marked by wars Serbia fought with almost all of the other ex-Yugoslav republics over its dominance in the Balkans, had a totalitarian regime approach toward media. If not affirmatively reporting about the regime, media were fined and harassed into submission. As Minister of Information and a member of Šešelj's Serb Radical Party (24 March 1998 – 24 October 2000), Vučić introduced fines for journalists who criticized the government and banned foreign TV networks due to the rising resentment again Milošević.

It was during Vučić's term that prominent Serbian journalist Slavko Ćuruvija was murdered.⁹³ Meanwhile, as Vučić was transforming his political image of an ultranationalist to a moderate, pro EU populist, his approach toward controlling the media landscape remained the same, if not worse, but with significantly changed methods. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) described the media Situation in Serbia for the year 2016 this way:

“Media freedom has declined ever since Aleksandar Vučić, Slobodan Milošević's former information minister, became Prime Minister in May 2014. Financial and editorial pressure is put on the media. Those that are most critical of the government are attacked publicly. The investigative media group BIRN is often targeted. “Hostile” media are subjected to frequent arbitrary financial and administrative inspections.”⁹⁴

Reflecting the apparent transformation, in 2013, Vučić – who had become Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia - gave permission to Veran Matić, the editor-in-chief of media group B92, to form a special Commission to investigate the killings of Ćuruvija and two other journalists.⁹⁵

⁹³ Ćuruvija irritated the regime with his critics and was executed on a side street in Belgrade on 11 April 1999. A post mortem found that he had been shot in the back 17 times.

⁹⁴ <https://rsf.org/en/serbia>

⁹⁵ The commission is also looking into the deaths of 16 media staffers from RTS — Serbia's state broadcaster — who were killed during a NATO airstrike targeting its headquarters in 1999. NATO is refusing to cooperate in this case.

The result of its work is a trial against four suspects that started in 2015.⁹⁶ Explaining the political situation regarding nationalism and populism, Veran Matić and World Press Freedom Hero (Honoured in 2000 by the International Press Institute) explained the actual political situation in Serbia in the following way:

“We have a kind of authoritarian system based on democratic institutions and procedures, built under the definitions of EU accession, but the practice is often different from the written rules of the game. There is quite a gap between the declarative and realistic part.”

Asked to describe the connection between Vučić’s reign and assaults against journalists by both populists and nationalists alike, NUNS, Nezavisno Uduženje Novinara Srbije (The Independent Association of Serbian Journalists), said that the NUNS’ position on this matter is known: “The connection is direct!”

“The Prime Minister has particularly in 2015 but also this year publically attacked a number of journalists and media. His rhetoric encouraged his immediate allies, members of local governments but also unknown supporters who felt free to expose journalists who criticised the regime to various threats and pressures, including physical violence.”⁹⁷

The position is shared by the organization Freedomhouse in its report on freedom of the press in Serbia for 2015: “In 2015, the administration of Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and aligned media outlets escalated a drive to portray investigative and critical media organizations as foreign-backed propagandists seeking to damage his government and destabilize the country.”⁹⁸

A public confession about government pressure on media was published in November 2015 by Aleksandar Rodić, the owner of the Belgrade paper “Kurir,” in the form of an open letter called “I’m sorry, Serbia! “

“I want to tell the truth in front of the entire public: Media in Serbia are not free and they are exposed to enormous pressure. I am stating publicly that I have myself taken part in the beautification of the reality along with 80 percent of other media owners (...)

⁹⁶ “Trials for former Chief of State Security Rade Marković and the two ex-secret service officers Ratko Romić and Milan Radonjić began 1 June 2015. The fourth accused is Miroslav Kurak, also a former state security member. He is being tried in absentia, as he is still at large, an Interpol warrant issued for his arrest.

⁹⁷ NUNS in the interview given to the author of this research in December 2016

⁹⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2016/serbia>

I confess that all these years I felt the pressure and that I was blackmailed into removing any serious criticism of the government and the Prime Minister.

You are all familiar with situations when a ‘request’ comes for this or that not to be published or a story to be written about something. This used to happen before too but it is sad that it turned into a form of self-censorship like never before in our recent history.

Journalists no longer offer critical topics by themselves and one never knows who in the room is under personal pressure or blackmail.

It is better to remain silent because we do not know whether we will face the consequences. (...) The pressure was always in form of economic weakening of my company and threats with persecution for acts that in fact carry no criminal responsibility.”⁹⁹

A record of NUNS (Independent Journalist Association of Serbia) shows an increase of pressure and verbal threats during Vučić’s reign (from mid 2014 until now). Many journalists and editors talk about an atmosphere of fear, censorship, and self-censorship as well as many other forms of pressure used to silence investigative journalism. They confirm what the “Kurir” owner has claimed in his open letter.

Many journalists receive lower salaries than bus drivers. As a consequence of political influence, job security, and pay level, niche reporting is rare and diminishing.¹⁰⁰ Dejan Radosavljević, research director, Ipsos, Belgrade, agreed that journalism is on the decline. “Professional reporting standards are perhaps at the lowest level in last 20 years.”¹⁰¹

Research conducted by UNS (Udruženje novinara Srbije / Journalists’ Association of Serbia) showed that 35 percent of its members have been exposed to censorship, 44 percent to self-censorship, and even 28 percent of respondents admit to practicing strict self-censorship.¹⁰²

The judiciary still remains one of the greatest problems of journalism because of being bias and exposed to strong political pressure and influence.

NUNS registered 34 attacks on professional journalists in 2015; among them were 20 verbal threats, 10 physical assaults, and three attacks on property. Ten attacks resulted in criminal

⁹⁹Translated from Serbian into English from <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/drustvo/aleksandar-rodic-srbijo-izvini-clanak-2008557>

¹⁰⁰Svetlana Kojanović, editor-in-chief, *Objektiv* No1, Čačak in Media Sustainability Index 2016, page 130

¹⁰¹Media Sustainability Index 2016, page 130

¹⁰²Media Sustainability Index 2016, page 130

charges of which just two were resolved with the court ordering psychiatric treatments for the attackers.¹⁰³

“Official government announcements against journalists can mislead prosecutors, resulting in their inactivity. (...) One example of a prosecutor’s poor judgment: In the town of Leskovac, the prosecutor concluded that the sentence “I’d put a bullet in your forehead” is not a threat.¹⁰⁴

Saša Gajin, law professor at University Union, Belgrade (UUB) said, “The authorities and political elites understand media as a remedy to fulfill their political interests. Therefore, judicial norms in laws may reflect European standards, but in practice, the laws are too weak to defend media independence.”¹⁰⁵

There are no available international reports for 2016 in January 2017, but NUNS (Independent Journalist Association of Serbia) wrote that “the trend of reducing freedom of speech, as well as journalistic and media freedom, have been continued during the last year (2016). Generally, it can be said that the causes of the described state lay in the policies of the current government, but also in empowerment of conservative ideologies, such as extremism, nationalism, and intolerance.

¹⁰³Media Sustainability Index 2016, page 128

¹⁰⁴Media Sustainability Index 2016, page 128

¹⁰⁵Saša Gajin, a law professor at University Union, Belgrade (UUB) in Media Sustainability Index 2014, page 109

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