



# Freedom of expression and journalistic autonomy

1. What is journalistic autonomy and why is it important?
2. How is journalistic autonomy safeguarded in selected European (Mediadem) countries?

# Journalistic autonomy

- **Whose autonomy? Who is considered a journalist?**
- The High Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism:  
*“Within the shifting sands of the current media environment, the HLG regrets to refrain from offering any firm and consensual definition of either journalism or journalists” .*
- Among Mediadem countries:
  - status based definition;
  - activity based definition.
- Definition of professional journalists is formulated by law in Belgium, Croatia and Italy.



# Three levels of journalistic professional autonomy

- ❏ **Journalists** (individuals/personal autonomy) ought to be free in selecting information and in covering stories;
- ❏ **Newsrooms** (organizations/collective autonomy) ought to be independent from external influences, such as commercial or political constraints.
- ❏ **Media institutions** (society/institutional autonomy) ought to have guaranteed press freedom and ought to be free from all kinds of censorship.



# Factors influencing journalistic autonomy

- Political, economic and technological frameworks as the sources of *external* influence;
- organisational and procedural frameworks as the sources of *internal* influence (editorial practices, internal hierarchies and relationships in the newsrooms, working conditions and trade organisations);
- professional frameworks (codes of conduct, journalism education, professional ideology).



# Journalistic autonomy in Mediadem countries

- Differences between ‘established’ European democracies and ‘new’ democracies and
- along ‘media systems’ (Hallin & Mancini 2004):
  - Greece, Spain and Italy – Polarised Pluralist model;
  - Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Germany – Democratic Corporatist model;
  - The UK – Liberal model;
  - CEE countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Romania, Slovakia;
  - Turkey.



# Political influence...

- ... through state involvement in the media
  - legal regulation;
  - indirect and direct subsidies.
  
- ... through the relationships between politicians and journalists.



# Economic conditions determining journalistic autonomy

## ▣ Organisation's level:

*“Making money and surviving in the new competitive environment have become the key concerns of commercial media”* (Obijiofor and Hanusch, 2011: 160).

## ▣ Individual level:

- Job security;
- Job market.



# Factors stemming from immediate work environment

- Self-censorship;
- Editorial autonomy;
- Self-regulation.





# Trade unions

- Strong trade unions: Finland, Denmark, Germany
- Weak trade unions: Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria



# Conclusions

- The protection of the autonomy of an individual journalist is an all-European problem.
- The limits of journalistic autonomy depend on:
  - Political and economic background;
  - The overall size of media market and number of jobs available;
  - Level of commercialization and technological advancement;
  - Workload and work intensity;
  - Level of professionalism and overall journalism culture.

